

# Jinishian JOTTINGS

...from poverty and despair to self-sufficiency and hope



## Partner with us for success!

### Letter from the Coordinator



Eliza Minasyan

In this edition of *Jinishian Jottings* our Country Program Directors and I wanted to share with you a brief history and the current state of the Jinishian Memorial Program (JMP) in response to the many inquiries we

have had from our readers. Also, I want to thank you for your interest in and generous support for the service we have provided for nearly 50 years.

JMP history begins with Vartan Jinishian, who at age 96 made a momentous decision to establish an ongoing source of support and hope for Armenians in need and despair. This has been accomplished through the establishment of an endowment fund with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that has provided service to hundreds of thousands of Armenians in Armenia, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Jerusalem.

Starting with relief and emergency assistance, JMP is maturing into a development agency while maintaining our relief capabilities. Our number of partners and supporters has grown to help in this transition. Along with relief services to those in critical need, a number of unique projects have been developed and are running full scale, attracting international recognition. JMP continues to grow because of its many successes. We are proud that we have gained respect as an international leader of innovative programs that effectively and efficiently address many acute needs of the Armenian populations that we serve.

At this time of financial crisis we have experienced shortages of funding and are facing tough decisions regarding the prioritization of our work in different areas. The beneficiaries of our relief projects are those most vulnerable—the elderly, children, people with disabilities. Through no fault of their own, these are the least able to help themselves, and we will not abandon them. Meanwhile, as a development agency we continue to produce innovative ideas and projects to make sustainable change regardless of the shortages we face.

Thanks to your understanding, participation and support, we have been able to replicate our successes and to create even greater change. Please contact our offices if you would like to receive our annual report from Armenia.

## JMP Lebanon Continues its Long Legacy of Compassion

By Seta Pamboukian, Country Director Lebanon

The Jinishian Memorial Program (JMP), an ecumenical relief and development agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), began work in Lebanon in March 1966, assisting the Armenian population and the community at large.

Since its inception JMP has worked with community organizations and churches by supporting targeted projects. It has responded with emergency relief after disasters like floods and fires, and during the civil war and the war on Lebanon in 2006.

JMP has conducted social and developmental research seeking more adequate ways of meeting the problems and needs of Armenians. It has developed and implemented social service programs of its own, including day care centers for children of working mothers, employment services, family social services, orphans and widows programs, services for the elderly, medication to the chronically sick and microlending.

Over the years the concept of self-development has increasingly informed our work, leading us to introduce a revolving loan fund and projects focused on affordable housing, vocational training, health awareness and Christian discipleship. In recent years community development has become a central concern, and we implemented a community-based development pilot project. At the grassroots level, people were encouraged by supporting one another. They prioritized their needs, devised plans for addressing these problems, and organized to meet chosen objectives: security in the neighborhood, environmental safety, physical exercise, and recreation and

care for children and adolescents.

The domestic and regional political situation is adversely affecting the country's stability and economic situation. The high cost of living and low wages make it difficult for families to be self-sufficient, especially when facing serious health problems, unemployment or the death of the primary breadwinner. Of special concern are the elderly who live on their own and have no income, pension or caretakers. The government provides no assistance to them.

It is the ongoing mission of JMP in Lebanon to respond to and support people in need, reducing human suffering and helping individuals function more effectively in their communities. JMP is committed to being involved in self-development and community development while also providing relief.

JMP, as a relief and development agency, collaborates with Armenian and non-Armenian NGOs and over the years has gained a good reputation. The steady decrease of funding from its main source, the Vartan Jinishian endowment, has presented an acute challenge to JMP continuing its commitments.

JMP needs additional funding to carry on the work of helping people move from poverty and despair to self-sufficiency and hope. We invite any who identify with the predicament of "the least of these" among us to give to JMP so that they can find their way forward.



## Steadfast Hope in Syria

By Ani Cholakian, Country Director Syria

The Jinishian Memorial Program serves three sites in Syria: Aleppo, in the northeast, with the largest Armenian population; Kamishly, in the east, an agricultural area; and Damascus, in the southwest, the capital of the country.

Operations in Aleppo started in 1966, in Damascus in 1970, and in Kamishly in 1980. Aleppo is where most of the Armenians who survived the Armenian Genocide of 1915 came and found refuge. Some were highly skilled workers and professionals in various fields and helped develop and organize the community by building successful institutions and a strong sense of cohesion. Many famous Diaspora Armenians can trace their roots to Syria.

The Syria offices have followed closely the original model of relief suggested in the Will of Vartan Jinishian. In recent years it has moved from traditional charity work into self-development programs that mobilize and inspire the population.

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## The Church is Alive and JMF Thrives in Armenia

By Gary Payton, Regional Liaison for Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Armenia, and Poland



I first traveled to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh in 2011, and I can't wait to return. The stories of the Christian churches, the Jinishian Memorial Foundation, and the people etched themselves forever on my consciousness.

In word and images, I was regularly reminded of the ancient story. Two of Jesus' apostles, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, preached the Christian message among Armenians between 40 and 60 A.D. The faith grew. And in 301 Armenia became the first nation to adopt Christianity.

Today, the Jinishian Memorial Foundation works alongside the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian Catholic Church, the Armenian Evangelical Church and dozens of grassroots NGOs. The JMF purpose is clear: enable Armenians in need to move "from poverty and despair to self-sufficiency and hope" through relief, development, and spiritual uplift. This purpose is lived out with farmers, students, children, war veterans, church leaders and more.

But while the ancient churches, the history, and the projects are important, ultimately it is about the people, Armenians living in their communities in both Armenia and Karabakh. For me, it was about visiting a cooperative to see how a former collective farmer like Vartan had transitioned from the failed Soviet agricultural model to an approach now producing highly sought after organic crops for sale to their countrymen. It was watching the swelling pride of Anoush as she completed her part of the debate before school mates, teachers, and parents. She'd done the research, presented well, and, all around – adults and teenagers – had absorbed the lesson on democracy and developing civil society. And, it was about Sister Arousiag whose vision for vocational training brought electrical, plumbing, graphic design, and culinary arts training to the people of earthquake ravaged Gumri.

The church is alive; the JMF succeeds; and, the people squarely face the challenges ahead. I urge you to take advantage of the 2012 Study Tours to be changed forever.

## Strong Success in Armenia Earns International Prestige

By Armen Hakobyan, Country Director, Armenia

Armenia became one of the first republics to secede from the Soviet Union, declaring its independence on September 21, 1991. The years preceding and following the declaration were ones of severe economic downturn and national turmoil. In December 1988 an earthquake devastated northern Armenia, which has yet to recover. The fledgling independent state soon fell into full-scale armed conflict with Azerbaijan in the breakaway of Nagorno Karabakh. Azerbaijan began an economic blockade of Armenia's vital fuel and supply lines through its territory, which until that time had carried about 90 percent of Armenia's imports. It was difficult for the newly freed Armenia to redefine itself amid years of such extreme hardship. Russia interceded and helped to negotiate an end to open conflict, and a cease-fire was put in place in 1994. But the aftermath of the war lingers, as the territory remains in dispute. Armenia is still struggling to fully emerge from these dire circumstances.



Jinishian Memorial Program (JMP) was among the first international relief organizations in Armenia, beginning its activities in 1993 as a humanitarian aid agency mostly doing relief projects, extending a hand to thousands of Armenians in need throughout the country. Since then JMP has provided relief and hope to all ages through its housing, education, health, community development, and spiritual uplift projects reaching almost every area of Armenia. Following progress in reducing poverty in Armenia, the numbers have moved up again in step with the global economic downturn. Sadly, today over a third of the population lives at or below the poverty level, and many more are hovering at its edges.

In 2003 JMP Armenia shifted its strategy from relief to development. It was time for change, both for JMP Armenia and its beneficiaries. It was time to encourage and support people to feed themselves instead of only offering provisions. JMP Armenia continues to help build a strong civil society in the villages and cities of Armenia. Youth are on the frontline of most JMP projects and are seen as the most proficient agents for bringing about lasting and significant changes.

Eighteen years on JMP Armenia is recognized as an efficient and highly reliable organization, earning the respect of many prestigious international aid organizations. We are a leader in implementing projects in community and economic development, education, and accessible and affordable health services. We are also inspiring change in civic attitudes for a more involved citizenship, instilling a sense of ownership in social and political processes to create sustainable structures and economic stability.

JMP works with a limited endowment, which is greatly stretched in caring for Armenians in need in five countries. We need funding from additional donors if we're to help create a sound foundation for Armenia's future at this critical time. Our mission is to set in motion a self-development process by which the people may overcome their personal or community environment of poverty through their own reflection and action. JMP affirms grassroots, community-based economic development. JMP encourages those in need to articulate their perceptions, to define their goals, to plan for resolving problems, and to organize themselves for meeting social objectives which they have identified and chosen.

In this transformational process your support is very important for us. Please join us by directly supporting any of our projects or activities, or by joining one of our study tours on [www.jinishian.org](http://www.jinishian.org).

### Upcoming Study Tour

June 12–24, 2012, September 9–21, 2012

[www.pcusa.org/jinishian-tour](http://www.pcusa.org/jinishian-tour)

### Steadfast Hope in Syria, *cont. from page 1*

The program operates as a partnership of Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Churches. It reaches out to the lonely and vulnerable elderly, the sick without care, the unemployed and abused children and women. It provides financial support, counseling, and Christian encouragement by giving them hope found in the Scripture.

The current regional turmoil has created a devastating situation, especially for the poor and vulnerable. Social, economic and security problems have become more complex. The crisis in Syria requires great humanitarian assistance in response to the rapidly deteriorating situation. JMP Syria's services are needed now more than ever to sustain individuals and families in these dire circumstances. JMP Syria will continue to minister from a Christian perspective at this critical time; showing compassion through its development, education and relief programs, and giving hope to its many beneficiaries. We thank you for your prayers and concerns for the people of Syria during these difficult times.