

## Fact Sheet #3 New Armenia from 1991 to 2009

- Independent Armenia
  - o Became independent in 1991.
  - o Not quite 3 million people (severe loss of population due to emigration).
  - o About 98% are ethnically Armenian (a drop in the minority population from 20 years before)
  - o Oil has to be imported from Russia. Under the Soviet Union, the Russians provided oil at low prices. Now Armenia has to pay full price, and its economy is suffering tremendously.
  - o The big industries and large agriculture of the Soviet era are shut down. Now there are small businesses but no job security.
  
- Kirovakan/Vanadzor. \*\*\* The name was changed to **Vanadzor** in 1993, so it's not Kirovakan any more!\*\*\*
  - o By 2009, Vanadzor has a population of between 70,000 and 80,000 people (less than half of the population 20 years before).
  - o There is a high unemployment rate; many other people have jobs but are underemployed (working only part-time and trying to support their families). So people are struggling to feed their families.
  - o There is widespread poverty. Some people live in houses that have not been fully rebuilt after the earthquake of 1988.
  - o The surrounding hillsides have been mostly de-forested since people desperate for fuel cut down and burned the trees to stay warm.
  - o Because of the fuel shortage, people don't heat their homes/offices/schools very much. Since Vanadzor is at a high elevation, it has a cool climate with a long, cold winter. It is not uncommon to wear a coat inside a school or home.
  
- Technology
  - o Most people have cell phones (though very inexpensive models – without all the modern applications).
  - o Most young people have access to computers at school (maybe 5-10 computers per school). They also may pay to use them at an internet center. Few have internet connections at home, and internet connections are very slow. Most people do not have keyboarding skills, and type slowly.
  - o A family is lucky to have a car. Teenagers aren't allowed to drive and can't imagine owning their own cars.
  
- Schools
  - o There are now 12 grades. Grade 11 was added in 2007-2008; grade 12 in 2008-2009.

- Grades 1-12 go to school in the same building, but there is talk of creating a separate high school. (Kindergarten, unlike in the U.S., is not considered a grade but is in the pre-school building next door.)
- Students go to school Monday – Saturday, from 9:00 – 2:00 every day. There is no lunch served.
- Students stay in the same classroom all day; teachers move from class to class. (So students in class 10A – high school sophomores – don’t ever have classes with students in 10B – the same grade.)
- Class periods are a bit shorter – since there are 6 periods in 5 hours. Students have a different schedule every day – since English meets twice a week while math classes meet more often.
- Because of the short amount of time and many subjects, students get homework in every class. They are expected to answer questions very quickly in class. The teacher will not wait for a student who is unprepared or goofing off. Such a student just gets a 0 for the day.
- Students learn 3 languages (which have 3 different alphabets): Armenian, Russian, and English. Since they study Armenian and Russian from the beginning and English from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, many of the young people are very proficient in all languages by high school. (Thus, modern students are tri-lingual; their parents are “only” bi-lingual in Armenian and Russian – not English.)
- Students all take the same subjects. Besides learning 3 languages, students also take various science and math courses (though there are not real science labs), history (world and Armenian), art (though girls and boys do different *kinds* of art), PE, writing/literature, etc. Students from 8<sup>th</sup> grade up are required to take a national defense class (in which they even learn to shoot rifles – at a target in the basement hallway!), rather like our JROTC classes but with real weapons. (Because of the hatred of Turkey – because of the genocide in 1915 – and Azerbaijan – because of the recent over Karabakh, students are taught to regard these countries as the main threat.)
- All boys are required to serve in the Armenian military for one year after their high school graduation.