



THE ALTERNATIVE WAY OF DEVELOPMENT IN MARTS VILLAGE, LORI REGION, ARMENIA

GLOBAL ADVOCACY TEAM



INTERNATIONAL
ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

This community-led development plan is part of a groundbreaking series created by the Centre for Community Mobilization and Support NGO and people of Marts village in partnership with the Global Advocacy Team initiative, convened by the International Accountability Project.

This initiative unites inspiring community organizers from around the world to conduct community-led research, engaging 945 people across 7 countries. Through co-designed and shared learning, this three-year journey has resulted in a series of transformative community-led development plans focused on locally rooted, globally connected solutions.

Explore other community-led development plans to see the full range of powerful, community-driven solutions.

Learn more here: <https://accountabilityproject.org/work/global-advocacy-team/communities-leading-the-way-inspiring-community-led-development-plans/>

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Introduction

The community-led development plan for Marts Village was developed according to the principles announced by the Global Advocacy Team. The Global Advocacy Team is a collective initiative created by the International Accountability Project to strengthen community-led development strategy and planning around the world, which includes 7 community activists from 7 countries: Armenia, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Philippines and Zimbabwe.

During the development of this plan, components of the Global Advocacy Team's "Citizens' Voice and Action" and CCMS's "Community Needs Assessment Card" methodologies were applied. These methodologies ensured the broad participation of community stakeholders, including vulnerable groups and public service providers and recipients. Special emphasis was placed on involving citizens belonging to vulnerable groups within the community, as well as youth, women, farmers, and local government representatives. These groups played a major role in both the development and implementation of the project.



The People of Marts

We, the people of Marts, are the bearers of the best traditions, memories, and material and non-material values of our village. We are the owners and protectors of nature –fields, forests, mountains, springs, and rivers. We define, uphold, and guarantee the development visions and goals of our village. We are not only participants in the development of our village, but also in the development of our community, region, and the Republic. We contribute to the preservation of nature, climate change resistance, and harmony with nature at the global level.

Our Village

Our Village of Marts is located in the Tumanyan community of the Lori region in the Republic of Armenia, in the north of Armenia, at an altitude of 1,050 meters above sea level. It is 39 km from the regional center of Vanadzor and 154 km from the capital, Yerevan. The total administrative area of our village is 7,117 hectares. Marts is surrounded by high mountains, dense forests, and historical monuments; in the Middle Ages, the village town of Motkor was located in our territory. Currently, 512 people live in our village: 258 women and 254 men, with 100 individuals between the ages of 0 and 18.

What is development for us?

We believe that development is a process that manifests itself in the equality of human and natural phenomena, where both sides care for each other and give each other the maximum that both need, which is vital for the coexistence and well-being of people and nature. For us, development is social justice, where everyone has equal opportunities to create and build their own future. It is a state where everyone is honest, supportive, and responsible, where decisions are made with everyone's participation, and those responsible for implementing those decisions are accountable and trustworthy. In this environment, every citizen and resident becomes an advocate.

With this vision, we will have a community where people live well and happily, interact with other cultures, and where young people do not migrate from the village because the village can offer all the conditions for their creativity and self-expression. It will be a place where women are equal, where there are no vulnerable groups, and any vulnerability is overcome by success and prosperity. Farmers will thrive, the green economy will flourish, citizens and nature will be protected, and the legislation of the Republic of Armenia will be respected. In such a community, the development plan will be created and implemented in a participatory manner.

Our values, which guarantee the development and unity of our village, are as follows:

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- Transparency
 - Diligence
 - Mutual aid
 - Interaction
 - Mutual understanding
 - Mutual respect
 - Cooperation
 - Love of nature
 - Responsibility
 - Equality
 - Justice

The Primary Problems of Marts Village, by Sector

Environment

The territory of our Marts Village is rich in minerals and non-ferrous metals, particularly gold reserves. This makes our village vulnerable to gold prospecting and the opening of mines by various mining companies. We, the residents of Marts Village, have repeatedly fought against this threat, but the village remains vulnerable in this regard. We have heard that parties interested in mining are planning to conduct experiments here again to start mining activities. If a mine is opened in our village, it will compromise our right to live in a clean and healthy environment, halt alternative development prospects for our village, and hinder the growth of tourism and agriculture.



In the administrative area of our Marts Village, on the Marts River, there are three hydroelectric power plants (HPPs), which worsen the environment of Marts Village and surrounding areas. As a result of the HPPs' operations, the water in the Marts River has become scarce, leading to a decline in animal life and fish populations. The lack of water negatively affects the environment, our lands, and forests because moisture has decreased and continues to do so. Additionally, the companies that are operating HPP within the village and causing environmental damage do not implement any socio economic responsibility projects for the community.

Garbage collection in our Marts Village is carried out once a week, but this is not enough. We witness the accumulation of garbage in various places around the village and the dumping of garbage directly on the streets, which does not contribute to the development of tourism. It is necessary to create a culture of waste sorting and cleanliness and to educate the population accordingly.

Over the past 30 years, the forests of Marts have been mercilessly and illegally cut down. While control over the forests has increased and self-regeneration is currently underway, it is necessary not only to continue but also to strengthen this control, as it will take a long time for the forests to fully recover.

There is no sewage system in the Village of Marts, which worsens the sanitary and hygienic conditions of the environment and poses an obstacle to the development of tourism.

The lack of sufficient awareness among the village population has resulted in instances where villagers burn agricultural residues, such as grass and leaves, as well as household waste. This practice negatively impacts both the environment and people's health. To address this issue, it is essential to raise public awareness and establish local mechanisms to monitor and prevent such activities.

The Village of Marts lacks alternative energy sources, with only a few farms equipped with solar water heaters. The primary heating materials used by residents are wood, electricity, and gas, which contribute to environmental and social challenges.

Local Self Government

Local self-government does not ensure balanced development between the villages that comprise the Tumanyan community. The existing mechanisms and procedures do not ensure the principle of social justice and do not make people's voices heard, as a result tangible development projects are not implemented in Marts Village. This is due to the incomplete and inefficient use of mechanisms designed to facilitate cooperation between rural settlements within the community.

We, the residents of Marts Village, do not have enough knowledge about the mechanisms of direct participation in local self-government and local government legislation, which makes our voice less audible to local, regional and national authorities.



Research Team members is talking with the head of Tumanyan region (Photo by Centre for Community Mobilization and Support NGO)

Education

The school in Marts Village is planned to be merged with a school in another settlement as part of the optimization program for public education schools of the Republic of Armenia. As a result, the school in Marts Village will be closed, and the children will have to attend a school in another village. According to us, the residents of Marts Village, this circumstance will lead to internal migration among the population, as the school in the village plays an important role in maintaining the population.

The village preschool does not have a separate building and is currently located in one of the school rooms. It is necessary to create a separate kindergarten building in the village and introduce a complete system of preschool education. This will ensure that children receive full preschool education and upbringing, allowing parents to be assured and direct their potential during the working day towards the development of the village and their own well-being.

The laboratory of the village school needs new equipment to improve the quality of education in this regard.



Research Team members during the survey interview with the villagers (Photo by Centre for Community Mobilization and Support NGO)

Social and Economic Sphere

The lack of public, inter-community transportation creates significant obstacles for the socioeconomic development of the village and its residents, contributing to external migration from the village. The HPPs operating in the village do not assume corporate social responsibility for the damage they cause to our environment. They do not compensate for this damage by implementing mitigation measures of socioeconomic development programs in our village.

We, the residents of Marts Village, emphasize the importance of repairing intra-village roads to ensure safety and well-being and promote tourism development.

There are few opportunities for development and entertainment for young people in our Marts Village, which contributes to the external migration of young people and their parents to other settlements within the Republic.

Health

We do not have a primary health care center in the Village of Marts, nor are there appropriate building conditions with all the necessary equipment. The village nurse has to perform her services by going from house to house. These circumstances make it difficult for the residents to access quality healthcare.

We do not have water treatment plants in the Village of Marts, which creates health risks for the population and can be an obstacle to the development of tourism.



Agriculture

Our Marts Village does not have an internal irrigation water network. People irrigate their lands with drinking water or with mountain springs, sometimes transporting the water by car to cultivated lands. This situation is unsatisfactory and hinders the development of agriculture in the entire village. For the development of modern agriculture, we, the residents of Marts Village, lack sufficient knowledge about modern and innovative methods, and ways to attract investment. This also hinders the development of agriculture and the socioeconomic progress of the village.

The lack of slaughterhouses in the area hinders the development of animal husbandry. People are forced to transport their animals to slaughterhouses tens of kilometers away at great financial expense. According to us, the residents of Marts Village, the mechanisms introduced by the state regarding slaughterhouses are not effective and hinder the development of animal husbandry in remote villages like ours.

In the Village of Marts, there are no milk and berry processing facilities or companies, which hampers the development of livestock and agriculture. People struggle to consume the products they produce, negatively impacting their socioeconomic situation.

The agricultural machinery available in the Village of Marts is insufficient for effective agricultural activities. As a result, residents sometimes rely on machinery from other communities, which imposes an additional social burden on them and limits the potential for expanding agricultural and horticultural opportunities in the village.

Climatic changes have led to frequent hailstorms, causing significant economic damage to the agriculture of Marts. This, in turn, lowers the socioeconomic standard of living for the residents. The existing anti-hail stations in the village are both insufficient and ineffective, with frequent malfunctions, and even when operational, they fail to meet the community's needs in terms of quantity. While the climatic conditions of Marts are favorable for beekeeping, only a small number of residents engage in this activity due to financial and economic challenges, as well as a lack of relevant knowledge and skills.

Human Rights

The residents of the Village of Marts need to raise their awareness about local government, environmental, and other related laws, and to gain knowledge about the mechanisms to protect their own rights, including environmental rights.

There are no active local public organizations or groups in the Village of Marts that contribute to community development, protection of interests, non-formal education, and raising awareness in the village. There is a need to develop the local civil society.



The Primary Development Directions for Marts Village, According to the Residents

- Development of agriculture and horticulture
- Development of greenhouse farms
- Hospitality skills and services
- Development of tourism (gastro, eco, hiking)
- Development of light industry (milk and berry processing, establishment of crafts to enhance the offerings to tourists)
- Implementation of climate resilience and energy efficiency projects
- Development of an agricultural machinery park
- Creation of youth educational and entertainment opportunities
- Creation of an irrigation water network
- Increasing drinking water supplies
- Improvement of water lines
- Improvement of intra-community roads
- Creation of a sewer network

Community–Led Plan for the Development of Marts Village

The people of the Village of Marts are eager to include the vital points of this development plan as part of the 5-year development plan for the Tumanyan community.

Environment and Climate

	REFORM	IMPLEMENTER	TIMEFRAME	NECESSARY ACTIONS
1	Develop a climate resilience and adaptation plan for Marts Village.	Local Self-Government (LSG)	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG for development of the plan.
2	Promote the installation and use of alternative energy sources, including solar photovoltaic panels, plants, and water heaters.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG to include adoption of alternative energy in the five-year development plan and to seek donor investment and aid from international organizations toward this goal.
3	Improve the quality of garbage collection and educate citizens on waste management and sorting.	LSG, Centre for Community Mobilization and Support (CCMS)	2024-2025	Apply to the head of the community and CCMS.
4	Prohibit the burning of grass and leaves in the village and provide environmental education to community residents.	LSG, CCMS	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, CCMS, and other organizations for the organization of ecological education courses.
5	Improve the ecological condition of the Marts River, draw the attention of the relevant authorities to the problem of the lack of water resources during the summer months and study its causes.	LSG, Residents of the Community	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, the environmental protection and subsoil inspection body, and the RA Ministry of Environment.

Local Self Government

	REFORM	IMPLEMENTER	TIMEFRAME	NECESSARY ACTIONS
6	Improve land resource management policy and halt violations.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG to address previous illegalities and inaccuracies.
7	Implement mechanisms and policies for the distribution and conservation of drinking water in the village.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG.
8	Apply to the local government to have the council of elders declare the Village of Marts a settlement dedicated to the development of agriculture and eco-rural tourism, where any activity that harms nature is prohibited.	LSG	2024-2025	Submit the matter to the LSG for discussion and approval by the council of elders.
9	Submit this community-led development plan of Marts Village to the approval of the community council, and include its most important components in the community's five-year development plan.	LSG	2024	Submit the matter to the LSG for discussion and approval by the council of elders, and advocate as needed for its implementation.

Education

	REFORM	IMPLEMENTER	TIMEFRAME	NECESSARY ACTIONS
10	Establish a kindergarten.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, include the issue in the community's five-year development plan.
11	Provide training on modern and organic farming and identify potential donors for community residents.	LSG, residents of the community, CCMS	2024-2025	Apply to the head of the community, CCMS and other local and international organizations.
12	Delivery of tourism courses for village residents (gastronomy, eco-tourism, hiking tourism, and hospitality services).	LSG, CCMS, Lori Destination Management Organisation	2024-2025	Apply to the head of the community, CCMS, and Lori DMO.
13	Prevent the Marts Village School from being closed down.	Residents of the community, LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia (RA), regional administration, and the LSG to protect the interests of the village.
14	Update the school laboratory equipment.	Head of the school, students, residents	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG and RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports
15	Educate community residents on climate change, resilience, and adaptation.	LSG, CCMS	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, CCMS, and other organizations for the organization and implementation of courses.
16	Educate community residents on alternative energy sources for improving energy efficiency.	LSG, CCMS	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, CCMS, and other organizations for the organization and implementation of courses.

Social and Economic Sphere

	REFORM	IMPLEMENTER	TIMEFRAME	NECESSARY ACTIONS
17	Increase the drinking water supply in the village.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG to study additional sources of water, increase potential reserves, and include the issue in the community's annual development plan.
18	Implement socio-economic programs within the framework of corporate social responsibility in the village by the enterprise operating hydroelectric power plant (HPP).	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the head of the community and the directorates of the companies operating HPP.
19	Create and sell branded dairy products.	Residents of the community	2024-2025	Apply to the head of the community, CCMS, and Lori DMO.
20	Create a youth center.	LSG, residents of the community	2024-2025	Apply to the local government, the head of the community and the council of elders, and the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports to include the issue in the community's five-year development plan.
21	Repair internal rural roads.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, include the issue in the community's five-year development plan.
22	Provide an inter-community public transportation.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, include the issue in the community's five-year development plan.
23	Establish milk and berry processing companies.	LSG, residents of the community	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG to promote this direction, find investors and investments, and apply to international organizations for investment.
24	Establishment of a slaughterhouse in the Village of Marts	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the head of the community and discuss the issue at the community council meeting.
25	Repair existing water lines.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG to include the issue in the community's annual plan.
26	Develop a tourism development strategy for the Village of Marts.	LSG, CCMS, Lori DMO	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, the RA Tourism Committee, and Lori DMO for strategy development.
27	Attract financial resources for tourism development and provide a conducive investment environment.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG to recruit the involvement of international organizations and investors, and apply directly to international organizations for funding and support.
28	Ensure the visibility and recognizability of historical monuments in and around the village, and build paths to these monuments for the development of tourism.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, include the issue in the community's five-year development plan.

Health

	REFORM	IMPLEMENTER	TIMEFRAME	NECESSARY ACTIONS
29	Creation of a drinking water purification plant.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the head of the community and the council of elders to include the issue in the community's five-year development plan.
30	Construct and equip a medical center with the necessary facilities.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the head of the community, the council of elders, and the RA Ministry of Health to include the issue in the community's five-year development plan.
31	Establishment of a sewage system in Marts Village	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the head of the community and the council of elders to include the issue in the community's five-year development plan.

Agriculture

	REFORM	IMPLEMENTER	TIMEFRAME	NECESSARY ACTIONS
32	Create an irrigation water system network.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, include the issue in the community's five-year development plan and in the development plan of the Lori Region.
33	Ensure access to veterinary and horticultural medicines.	LSG	2024 December	Apply to the head of the community and Lori provincial administration.
34	Replenishing agricultural machinery (lawn mowers, hitching couplers, etc.).	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, include the issue in the community's five-year development plan.
35	Establish greenhouse farms.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG to provide for the establishment of greenhouse farms and to include the issue in the community's five-year development plan and seek donor investment and aid from international organizations toward this goal. Reach out to international organizations to educate and invest in community residents.
36	Install and repair of anti-hail stations.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, include the issue in the community's five-year development plan.
37	Promote community beekeeping.	LSG	2024-2025	Apply to LSG and international organizations for donor investment and aid.

Human Rights

	REFORM	IMPLEMENTER	TIMEFRAME	NECESSARY ACTIONS
38	Increase the knowledge and ability of community residents regarding the local government sector, community management, and citizens' participation in local government management.	Residents of the community / CCMS	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG and CCMS.
39	Educate and raise awareness among community residents about human and environmental rights to ensure they can protect those rights and implement their community development plans.	LSG, CCMS	2024-2025	Apply to the LSG, CCMS, and local and other organizations for awareness training.
40	Create and facilitate an active community development and advocacy group.	CCMS, residents of the community	2024-2025	Establish an active group and provide training.

Co-Designed Solutions for and by the Marts Village, Armenia

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