

AMALYA YEGHOYAN, DIRECTOR, GYUMRI IT CENTER

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By **Joseph Dagdigian**, Harvard MA, 25 August 2014

The Gyumri IT Center (GITC) was founded about 9 years ago to provide education in information technologies in the Gyumri region. Gyumri, in northern Armenia and Armenia's 2nd largest city, was heavily damaged by a 1988 earthquake. An objective of the GITC is to provide a pool of IT expertise in the area in order to attract industry and improve Gyumri's economy. The GITC was established and financed by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), the Enterprise Incubator Foundation, and Shirak Technologies Ltd together with generous donations by diaspora and local Armenians.

<https://youtu.be/JRg7lg5CBXE>

GITC's facilities are currently located in Gyumri's Ankakhutyan square but will move to Gyumri Technology Park in September or October.

JOSEPH DAGDIGIAN: Please introduce yourself and the GITC

AMALYA YEGHOYAN: My name is Amalya, I work at and am the director of the GITC. We are funded by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) and American benefactors. GITC is already 9 years old. It has operated since 2005, and we have two basic programs: academic and business. Every year the number of students as well as the number of graduates increases. Our education consists of two different sections: Web technology and mobile technology. Topics in web technology include Static and Dynamic Web development, Java Programming and all the other technologies that will make students effective web developers. In the mobile curriculum the focus is on IOS and Android computer system technology. In our program we have had a lot of success: 97% of our graduates have found work in Armenia.

J.D.: In Gyumri?

A.Y.: Unfortunately not all in Gyumri, many in Yerevan. In Gyumri there are not so many companies involved in this kind of work. But now with the establishment of the Gyumri Technology Park, many technology companies are considering opening branches in Gyumri. Our biggest partner, UNICEF Armenia, is focused on e-learning, on-line teaching, which we have been involved with for one year and which has been growing. We are implementing e-learning systems and have US based clients. An example is the Toufayan Bakery in New Jersey. We are working with different mobile and web clients in Germany. A German reporter came here and interviewed me. He returned to Germany, issued his report, and a week later we established relations with a large German company and have started to work on a project for them. They have become one of our best clients.

Our biggest issue is that we would like to be less dependent on large donors, but rather fund our operations from income derived from work projects. We also need to continue to find new clients and new orders. The rest is based on skill: we need to educate our students. In a couple of days we are graduating our seventh graduating class. We have 25 graduates.

We now have a variety of educational methods: on-line teaching, individual trainings, on-the-job trainings, evening time courses for the people who already have a job but would like to study programming simultaneously and if the company needs a specialist we will train them. And we have our traditional 2-year program.

J.D.: How many graduates have you had up to now, and how many teachers and other staff members do you have?

A.Y.: Up to now we have had 120 graduates, and nearly 350 beneficiary students as not all students complete the program and graduate. But they still can take advantage of their education. We have 120 graduates, 97% of which are working in various areas in Armenia. We have 55 students, 25 of which will graduate in a few days, and we have 30 new students which will attend our summer session courses. At the end of August we will make student selections for the coming year starting in September. Then we will see how many students we have.

You asked about teachers. We had them from Yerevan and now we have some from Gyumri, some of which are our own graduates. Every semester they can be different depending on their evaluations and their teaching quality. We are very flexible.

J.D.: What qualifications do prospective students need?

A.Y.: They must be high school graduates or have other higher education. They have to attend our summer session. At the end of August they need to pass an exam in logic and mathematics. We then make our selection for students.

J.D.: What is the tuition for students?

A.Y.: Most of the expenses come from the Fund for Armenian Relief. Tuition is 200,000 dram which is about \$500 per year.

J.D.: Thank you.

More information on the Gyumri IT Center is available on their website.

