

LIFE IN ARMENIA

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

SEPT 1ST, 2024 | NO.19 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

DOING LAUNDRY WITH A PURPOSE

CREATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOTHERS OF DISABLED CHILDREN IN ARMENIA

A NEW APPROACH TO DESTINATION MARKETING

HOW AN AUSTRALIAN PRODUCED AN ARMENIAN MONOPOLY GAME TO EXPLORE THE ENTIRE COUNTRY

INSIDE IMPACT HUB YEREVAN

ARMENIA'S INNOVATION HUB FOR STARTUPS AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

FROM CONCEPT TO COMMERCE

HOW THINKING DIFFERENTLY BOOSTS RETAIL BUSINESSES IN ARMENIA

BUILDING THE FULL CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

USING TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR WOMEN WORLDWIDE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM ARMENIA'S UPCOMING HR CONFERENCE

THE INTERSECTION OF HUMAN BEINGS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

HOPE IN THE FACE OF DESPAIR

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION IN ARMENIA

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MATHEW ZEIN

EDITOR'S LETTER

Behind the scenes, there are people making a difference and contributing to a better world for all of us every day, even if we don't notice. They're like the superheroes we read about growing up, except these heroes are real.

In this magazine issue, we're highlighting several initiatives from Armenia that have positively impacted the lives of countless individuals locally and globally. These initiatives continue to grow and expand their influence, led by true figures of inspiration.

One initiative provides opportunities for single mothers caring for disabled children, another offers a full circle of support system for women suffering from abuse, and the third incubates Armenian-based social enterprise projects and helps launch them globally. I've also talked about my understanding of the retail sector in Armenia and a few other interesting topics I came across in Yerevan, which I couldn't but share with you through this magazine issue.

I went beyond the usual topics to offer our readers a more diverse range of content. I wanted to ensure they could experience life here from various perspectives, not just the technological one. I believe you'll find these stories inspiring and informative, providing a glimpse into the true essence of Life in Armenia: finding purpose and pursuing it with passion.

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Discover how an Australian-Armenian turned a simple idea into the world's first Armenian Monopoly game. Learn how this unique board game became more than just entertainment—it's now a tool for exploring and promoting Armenia's rich culture attractions!

DOING LAUNDRY WITH A PURPOSE CREATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOTHERS OF DISABLED CHILDREN IN ARMENIA

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Find Out how Mariam Torosyan is revolutionizing support for abused women worldwide with Safe YOU, an AI-driven app offering safety, financial empowerment, and lasting change. Learn how this innovative platform is creating a full circle of support and transforming lives across the globe!

INSIDE IMPACT HUB YEREVAN ARMENIA'S INNOVATION HUB FOR STARTUPS AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

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A NEW APPROACH TO DESTINATION MARKETING

HOW AN AUSTRALIAN PRODUCED AN ARMENIAN MONOPOLY GAME TO EXPLORE THE ENTIRE COUNTRY



**SEVAN
HANIMYAN**

CREATOR OF ARMENIAN MONOPOLY



**GREGORY
CHAHROZIAN**

CONTRIBUTOR, MONOPOLY
ENTHUSIAST AND EDUCATOR



A NEW APPROACH TO DESTINATION MARKETING HOW AN AUSTRALIAN PRODUCED AN ARMENIAN MONOPOLY GAME TO EXPLORE THE ENTIRE COUNTRY

I'm Sevan Hanimyan, the Australian-Armenian who once owned nearly every landmark in Armenia. I thought I had it all, but then my wife came along and rolled a double six, bankrupting me in a matter of minutes. Turns out, even in Monopoly, love can be a game-changer! Bear with me as I share my story of **licensing and creating the first-ever Armenian Monopoly board game** and how I transformed it into a travel planner, not just a game!

I approached Hasbro's Global Licensing team with my initial designs and requested a global license for an Armenian Monopoly edition. After extensive negotiations, they approved my proposal, allowing me to create and sell this iconic board game worldwide. At that point, things started taking a different path, and what I started for fun suddenly became a real project with financial commitments and a real license. **Was I panicked? A bit. Excited? Absolutely!**

In October 2023, while networking in Australia to promote bespoke Monopoly board games, I mentioned to a friend how surprised I was by the variety of Monopoly versions. This led me to wonder if an Armenian Monopoly existed.

After researching and finding that it didn't, **I decided to create a mock-up of the box lid and board**, planning out the locations and overall design. Back then, I did it for fun; I just wanted to see how the Armenian version of the game would look. I added my favorite places, streets, and attractions. Honestly, it was more like the Armenian Monopoly board, but the Sevan Hanimyan limited edition.

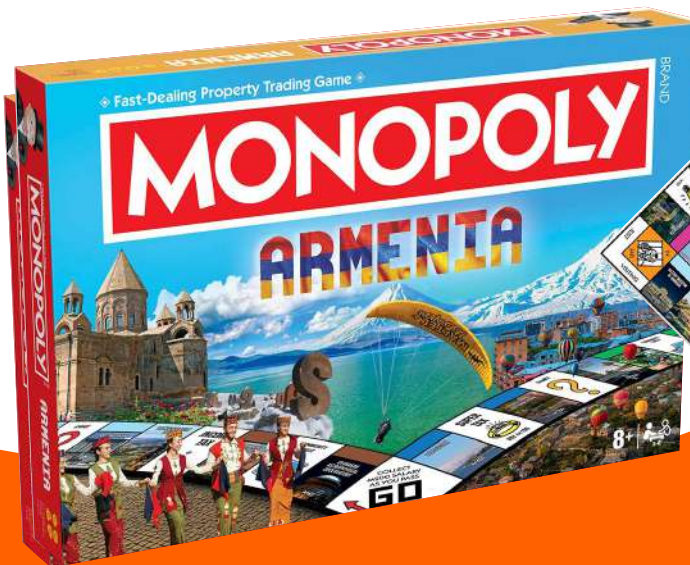
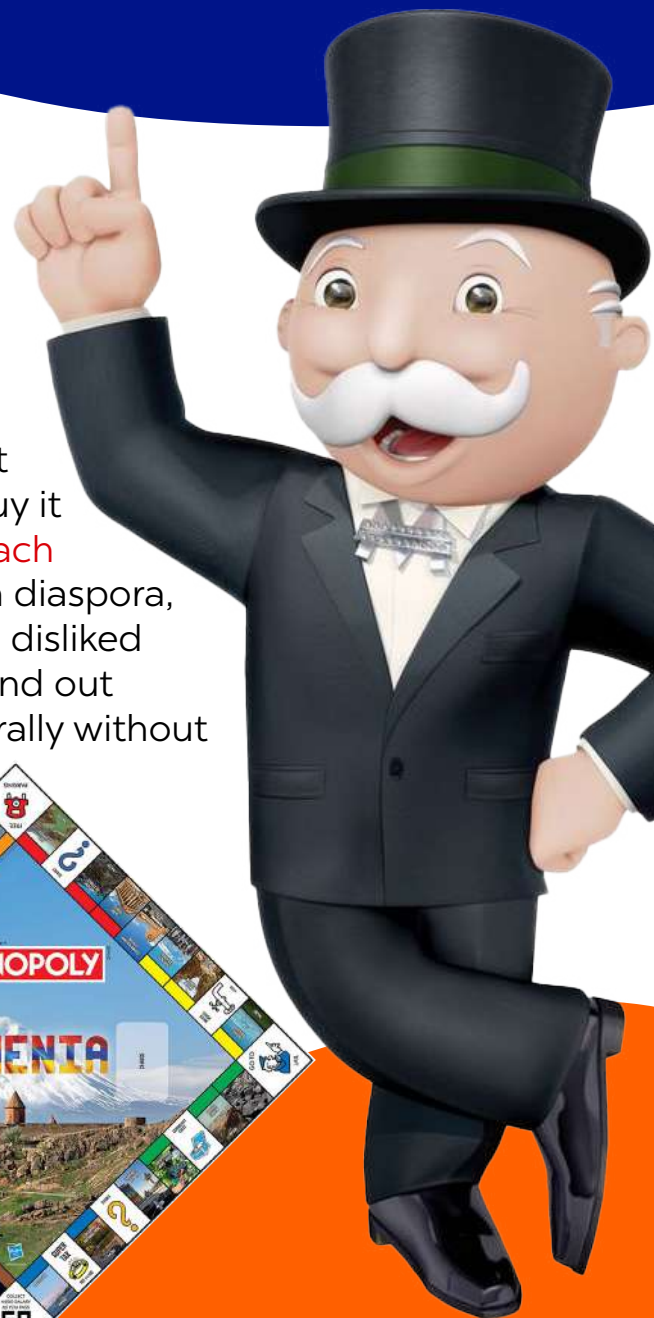




The first question that crossed my mind was how to create an authentic Armenian Monopoly board game **without insider information from Armenia**. So, I turned to my friend Gregory Chahrozian, who had relocated from Australia to Armenia with his family four years ago. He immediately loved the concept. As a Monopoly fan, he was eager to contribute to the project's success.

We began by researching the local Armenian market for any Monopoly versions. We discovered a few unlicensed and locally available board games. These **commercial versions focused on promoting businesses and private facilities**, deviating from the true essence of Monopoly.

Gregory and I spent hours discussing how we didn't want our game to be promoted with the typical "buy it because it's about Armenia" campaign. **That approach didn't align with our values**. As part of the Armenian diaspora, we've encountered such campaigns frequently and disliked their concept. We decided the game needed to stand out through its value proposition, promoting itself naturally without relying on the "About Armenia" campaign.



Gregory connected me with Sisian Boghossian, the Head of the Tourism Committee at the time. She and her team embraced the concept, believing it **could be a valuable tool to promote tourism in Armenia**. They requested that the board layout be redesigned to align with their branding, which I readily agreed to. After all, they were more familiar with the Armenian landscape than I was. However, there was one location on the board that I wouldn't change, and that was Lake Sevan, as I **felt that Lake Sevan was a way to represent me** as the creator of this game.

While the tourism committee redesigned the board layout and provided licensed images, Gregory began researching the suggested locations in Armenia. This organically led to the creation of the informational booklet included in each game.

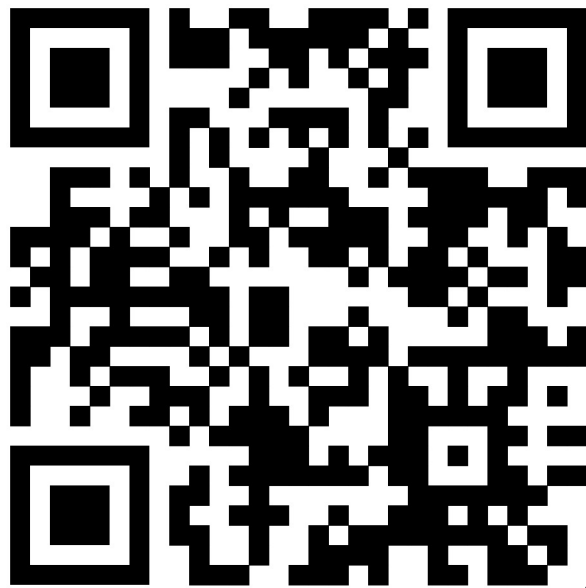


Hopefully, this booklet will help educate more Armenians worldwide about our beautiful country. We replaced typical street names in Yerevan with attractions from all over Armenia, **shifting the focus from the capital city to all regions**. Our goal was for everyone playing the game to learn more about Armenia in general. Perhaps a few Americans playing with their Armenian-American friend will discover the country through the game. When they decide to visit, **they'll have a travel plan in mind** and be eager to explore the places they've encountered on the board.

MONOPOLY

ARMENTIA

for more info



What began as a simple mock-up I created for fun is now evolving into a project to promote my homeland. I found myself reading for hours every day about destination branding and how different countries uniquely market themselves to international travelers. As a result, we decided that **our carefully created Monopoly board game needed unique tokens**, which was another lengthy process trying to decide what tokens would work and be exclusively Armenian. And so Greg also included them in the information booklet.

The final piece of the puzzle was finding a charity to support. I felt a strong desire to give back to the Armenian community and contribute wherever possible. Therefore, a portion of all Armenian Monopoly sales will be donated to the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) and the Armenian Global Relief Fund.

When Gregory met with Mathew in Yerevan and introduced the concept, he was immediately **impressed by the game and its unique approach**. He could instantly tell how the board differed from traditional Monopoly boards and how it was clearly a destination branding project rather than just a game. For this reason, he offered to share the story with the magazine's readers.

I'm proud to say that I created the world's first official Armenian Monopoly Game by Hasbro. Am I panicked? A bit. Excited? Absolutely!"

This game is only available to pre-order online until the 30th of September and will be delivered by December. To pre-order your copy, go to our website.



DOING LAUNDRY WITH A PURPOSE

CREATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOTHERS OF DISABLED CHILDREN IN ARMENIA



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



INTERVIEWING

**SHOGER
ATANESYAN**

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR AND
FOUNDER OF ARDOOK



DOING LAUNDRY WITH A PURPOSE CREATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOTHERS OF DISABLED CHILDREN IN ARMENIA

We often talk about caring for others and wanting the best for those in need, yet many of us fall short of taking concrete action. While it's easy to express support verbally, [translating those words into meaningful deeds can be challenging](#). Perhaps we doubt our ability to help effectively, or maybe the overwhelming scale of need makes it difficult to know where to begin. This can create a sense of inadequacy, leading some to question the impact they could make. I'm not claiming to be different. Like many others, I also think about doing good but find myself hesitant to dream too big when it comes to taking action.

Last month, I met a woman who truly touched my soul during a small gathering at [Impact Hub Yerevan](#). This woman didn't just feel sorry for those struggling; she felt their pain and took action. She poured her heart and soul into [creating a startup that could make a real difference in their lives](#). [Shogher Atanesyan](#) is a mother and a social entrepreneur who identified single mothers in Armenia with disabled children as her target group.



A New Path Forward

Traditionally, these women are often stay-at-home caregivers who require remote work opportunities to balance their responsibilities; they find themselves isolated, burdened by caregiving responsibilities, and with **limited opportunities for economic independence**. This can lead to feelings of helplessness, depression, and a diminished sense of self-worth.

Shogher wanted to **provide these women with a sustainable, dignified income**. This means not just a one-time aid but an income they can earn through their own efforts. It means not adding to their burdens but offering a way for them to feel empowered and useful. It means an income that sustains them and their families, allowing them to live with dignity.

Her solution was [Ardook](#), a social enterprise she founded in Armenia. Later, it won the Social Impact Award organized by Impact Hub International and the Creative Spark Award from the British Council. It has also won several grants from European Union programs.

The concept is straightforward: Ardook equips these single mothers with **professional ironing equipment and cleaning supplies**. Since kindness and positive actions can create a ripple effect, [Dyurin](#), an Armenian-based company, provides Ardook with free cleaning supplies as part of its social responsibility.

After providing comprehensive training in the laundry industry, Ardook collects laundry from customers throughout the city. These mothers then complete the laundry work, including ironing, in their homes. Finished orders are returned to a supervisor for final inspection before delivery to clients.

In more detail, the courier of Ardook collects laundry from customers throughout the city. Upon pickup, couriers weigh the laundry order, and prices start at 2,900 AMD for 1 kg of ironing (typically 5-6 items) and 3,900 AMD for washing and ironing. After the mothers complete the laundry work, including ironing, in their homes, finished orders are returned to customers. Ardook differentiates itself from competitors not only through its unprecedented social impact but also with a standard 24-hour turnaround time and personalized customer service.



The emotional toll of caring for a child with disabilities is immense. Ardook's approach, while providing economic and social benefits, does not ignore the challenges these women face. However, by **offering a path to independence and financial security**, the enterprise can significantly improve their overall well-being and quality of life. This financial security can alleviate a significant source of stress and anxiety.

In addition to individuals, **Ardook partners with businesses**, including hotels and restaurants. Their client list includes well-known names such as Avanta Clinic and Ankyun Italian Restaurant. This collaboration highlights Ardook's professionalism and reputation in the industry. These contracts increase the workload, generate higher incomes, and enable support for more women. Within a short time, Ardook's team grew to include ten women working from home.

I also learned about Ardook's core team members: Kristine Arakelyan was the first mom to join Ardook and was eventually promoted to operational manager. Additionally, Anush Gevorgyan is Ardook's marketing specialist. Despite her physical disability, she has a brilliant mind and endless innovative ideas!



During our conversation, Shogher mentioned how they initially operated the social enterprise as a phone-based service. It later transitioned to a website platform, expanding accessibility for customers. The next step is to develop a mobile app to facilitate ordering and increase the available workload.

Additionally, they plan to **install self-service laundry drop-off closets in key city locations**. Customers can conveniently drop off their clothes anytime using a unique code. Ardook's delivery team will collect the items, send them to be cleaned by one of their home-based workers, and then return the clean laundry to either the closet or the customer's address.



Shogher Atanesyan

Social Entrepreneur and
Founder of Ardook

As a social enterprise, delivering service quality on par with, or even surpassing, commercial competitors is crucial. To succeed and sustain your business, maintaining comparable or superior quality standards is essential.”



Shogher Atanesyan

Social Entrepreneur and Founder of Ardook

When your social enterprise offers a subpar service, people might buy it once out of sympathy or to support your cause. However, they'll likely choose a market competitor the next time they need a similar service. That's why maintaining competitiveness is crucial for the success of any social enterprise."

Sympathy Doesn't Pay the Bills

What I admired when Shogher told me her story was not just her accomplishments but the fact that she built her venture from the ground up. With her initial idea, she began pitching to various startup hubs and was accepted at Impact Hub Yerevan to develop her social enterprise and receive the necessary support. They were also accepted into the Iris Business Incubator as well, which is backed by the European Union. Later, she secured the required funding from the European Union programs and invested in top-quality ironing equipment to maintain the highest work standards.



Next, she secured additional funding and purchased a vehicle to expedite delivery and [gain a competitive advantage](#). This allowed the clothes to be hung within the minivan, ensuring they arrived in excellent condition for clients.

Today, [Ardook is a profitable social enterprise](#) capable of sustaining itself without external funding, a feat not every social enterprise can accomplish. Rather than relying solely on charitable donations, Ardook operates as a for-profit entity, ensuring long-term sustainability.

By combining social purpose with business acumen, Shogher has developed [a model that can be replicated in other communities](#).

There are people you're happy to have met, and then there are those you feel blessed to have met because they're so unique. Shogher falls into the latter category. She was the one who found purpose in doing laundry and thought about people, often overshadowed by their own problems. I hope one day I can be as courageous as she is when I think about helping others in need, and I hope this article inspires you when doing the same and informs [you about the kind of creative minds and kind souls](#) you can find when relocating to Armenia.

To learn more about Ardook's journey and its impact, follow their Facebook page to stay updated on their latest news and initiatives.



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BUILDING THE FULL CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

USING TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR WOMEN WORLDWIDE



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



INTERVIEWING

**MARIAM
TOROSYAN**

FOUNDER AND CEO AT SAFE YOU

BUILDING THE FULL CIRCLE OF SUPPORT USING TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR WOMEN WORLDWIDE

I used to wonder why women in abusive relationships stayed. Why would they isolate themselves from loved ones, return to their abusers after such harm, or seem trapped in a toxic cycle? I didn't know about the complexities and challenges victims face until I met [Mariam Torosyan](#) during the FemInno Global Conference last year in Yerevan. I'll never forget the moment she took the stage and spoke with words of anger, confidence, passion, and defiance. By the time she finished, the audience was on their feet.

Mariam Torosyan is a young Armenian advocate for women's rights. But for her, advocacy is not enough. How could it be when women need help and are **drawn into abuse with no way out but to give up to more abuse**? As a mother, she was determined to instill in her daughter the importance of action over mere words. For that reason, she founded [Safe YOU](#).

Abuse against women takes many forms. While we often focus on physical abuse with visible injuries, it's important to recognize the many other ways women are victimized daily. **From financial control to emotional manipulation**, abusers exploit women in various ways. When women need help, they require immediate and accessible support. Safety should be a top priority, with no delays in providing assistance, **especially in situations where violence escalates and threatens lives**.

Safe YOU functions as both an app and an AI-based multi-stakeholder ecosystem. This platform provides a virtual safe space and essential safety and support resources. The Safe YOU mobile application is designed to provide immediate assistance to women experiencing abuse.



When a woman is in danger, her primary needs are safety and support. The app's interface makes it easy for women to use, even in stressful situations. With a simple touch, users can send alerts to pre-selected contacts who can immediately offer emotional support, provide physical assistance, or notify law enforcement. Additionally, Safe YOU can connect women to local organizations that offer shelter, counseling, legal aid, and other vital services. This ensures that women can access the necessary resources to rebuild their lives.

The ultimate goal of Safe YOU's technology is to prevent violence and create system-wide transformation. Luckily, AI technology embedded in Safe YOU can help with data analytics to inform policymakers about preventive policies.

Featured in Forbes, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNFPA Equalizer Fund, and a Cartier Women's Initiative winner, Mariam has been a shining star for the past few years. However, following her [LinkedIn account](#) is enough to keep anyone informed about these glamorous moments she had and will have in the future. I waited a full year to meet Mariam in person again before featuring her in "Life in Armenia" because I wanted to talk about something different, something that could inspire others reading this article to consider a social impact.



Given the question I asked earlier, I'd like to understand how she plans to address the root causes of the problem and create sustainable solutions that prevent victims from returning to abusive situations after seeking help. How does she plan to expand the app globally and develop a sustainable business model to ensure continued support for women, even if initial funding were to end?

An Open End Means Going Back

While providing instant support and safety is essential, Mariam discovered that many women tolerate abusive situations due to a lack of viable alternatives after reporting the abuse.

Through conversations with Safe YOU users, she learned about the challenges women face, including financial dependence on their abusers and limited options for escape. The consequences of this predicament can be devastating, often leading to a cycle of escalating abuse and a perilous fight for survival.

This isolation can lead to feelings of loneliness, despair, and a loss of connection with friends and family. Additionally, the stigma associated with being a victim of abuse can make it difficult for women to find employment or maintain healthy relationships. Without a strong, unbroken network of assistance, women who are victims of abuse may find themselves trapped once again.

Mariam understood what was happening and was determined to make a difference. To provide a vital lifeline for women seeking to escape abusive situations, Mariam planned a financial support program. Offering loans with favorable terms would empower these women to secure shelter, provide for themselves and their children, and ultimately rebuild their lives.





Mariam Torosyan

Founder and CEO
at Safe YOU

Breaking that cycle of abuse can only be effective when you close the circle of support. Otherwise, the circle of support will have an open end, and as a result, abuse will always find its way back into women's lives."

The collaboration between Safe YOU and US credit unions empowers domestic violence survivors through financial inclusion. Safe YOU app users gain confidential access to vetted credit unions offering trauma-informed financial coaching, addressing economic abuse. Credit unions provide tailored financial products, credit rebuilding opportunities, and

economic independence pathways. Exemplified by the Safe YOU and CU SAFE partnership in New Mexico, the program offers financial literacy assistance and specialized loans for survivors without stable jobs or credit. This collaborative approach provides immediate financial relief and paves the way for long-term economic security and independence for domestic violence survivors.



By partnering with credit unions, Mariam can ensure the loans offered are accessible, affordable, and **tailored to the specific needs of abused women.**

This approach provides immediate relief and lays the groundwork for long-term financial stability and self-sufficiency. Only in this way can she **confidently encourage abused women to break free** and move on with their lives, knowing that they have a reliable support system in place.

Mariam contacted credit unions in the United States, proposing a collaborative partnership. As a result, **a pilot program is set to launch in select American states**, offering financial support to women in need. The goal is to assess the program's effectiveness and expand its reach to more states and eventually to countries where Safe YOU operates.

Who Pays? The Abuser or the Survivor?

Many people assume that Safe YOU is consistently funded by international organizations, ensuring financial stability for the team. However, this isn't the case. So, who pays for the platform—the abuser or the survivor? In reality, Safe YOU operates on a sustainable financial model that allows it to function as a hybrid social enterprise, moving away from traditional reliance on donations.

Again, **this brings us back to the mentality of its founder**, Mariam, who wanted to build a fully standing circle of support, not a temporary solution that could be lost overnight.

As the Safe YOU platform is a tool for case management, live monitoring, and data analytics, it provides value to governments, civil society organizations, and International organizations. By partnering with governments worldwide and UN agencies such as UNFPA, the platform has secured a sustainable revenue stream while fulfilling its mission of protecting women. Governments, recognizing the app's potential, are investing in its implementation. This strategic approach has **enabled Safe YOU to rapidly expand its reach and impact**. More or less, Safe YOU operates under the B2G and B2B business models, providing services to governments, NGOs, and INGOs.



In 2020, Mariam initiated her outreach in Georgia. She offered the app and her team's expertise to local women's organizations. By providing training and implementation, Mariam **ensured the app's effective integration into Georgian society**. The success in Georgia and winning international awards paved the way for Safe YOU's global expansion.

Recognizing Safe YOU's impact, the United Nations began collaborating with the organization. Through UN connections, **Safe YOU reached more governments**. Currently, the app operates in Armenia, Georgia, Iraq, Romania, and the New Mexico-United States. At the end of October, it will be launched in Poland with expansion **plans to 6 more US States and Eastern European countries** next year.



Mariam Torosyan

Founder and CEO at Safe YOU

When you address the issue of abusing women in the world, you contribute to reduced violence, fewer psychologically impacted children raised in these societies, and, as a result, a safer world for all of us in the long term.

As I conclude this article, I remember Mariam's speech at that conference. It's inspiring to know that people like her exist—individuals who **aren't comfortable as speakers but are passionate about action**. They are the ones who take initiative, stand up for their beliefs, and find joy in serving others. Their commitment to making a difference makes our lives better, **whether their actions directly or indirectly impact us**.



INSIDE IMPACT HUB YEREVAN

ARMENIA'S INNOVATION HUB FOR STARTUPS AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

INSIDE IMPACT HUB YEREVAN ARMENIA'S INNOVATION HUB FOR STARTUPS AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Just four months ago, Yerevan was ranked 221st on the Global Startup Ecosystem Index (GSEI) by StartupBlink, an annual ranking of startup ecosystems in 1,000 cities and 100 countries. Today, it's **climbed 21 spots to 200**, inching closer to the top 100 startup cities worldwide. This is a huge deal, especially considering that many larger countries with more resources and established economies aren't seeing the same kind of growth. It might seem surprising to outsiders, but **this is par for the course in Armenia.**

I recently had a productive meeting with [Lucineh Kassarjian](#), an early member and devotee of [Impact Hub Yerevan](#). I enjoyed every minute of the conversation as she shared the inspiring story of how the organization came to be and how she has been mentoring many projects and mentees that originated within the hub.

It's difficult to convey the full scope of Impact Hub Yerevan to those unfamiliar with it in a few paragraphs. So, for now, I can say it's a **community dedicated to making a positive impact on Armenia** by offering a collaborative environment where individuals and organizations can work together to create a better world. It's a hub for innovation, entrepreneurship, and social impact. In fact, there is a global Impact Hub Network of over 110 Impact Hubs worldwide, trying to pool experience, knowledge, and expertise with each other for an even broader global impact.

Anyway, I'll skip the details of the founding story for now and save them for a future article. However, there's one particular part I couldn't resist sharing with you.



A Microcosm of Connections

Lucineh explained how **Impact Hub Yerevan** was a goldmine for **inspiring stories** and invited me to their annual gathering with members and partners to prove her point. I attended the event, and honestly, it turns out she knew exactly what she was talking about.

At the event, I kept meeting incredible people from the Armenian startup ecosystem. I met startup founders, successful entrepreneurs, well-known community members, and tens of people I had only known through LinkedIn. It was a great opportunity to finally put faces to names and talk to them in person.

Here, I must highlight that Impact Hub Yerevan supports social enterprises that blend a **social or environmental mission with a profit-making model**. Therefore, the startup ecosystem we're referring to primarily focuses on social enterprises rather than technology startups.

In fact, during this event, I met Shogher Atanesyan, founder of Ardook, the social enterprise featured in this same issue of the magazine. Just like that, one creative mind after another, **I spent almost 3 hours of meaningful networking** and scheduled nine meetings for the week following the event. Each meeting meant a new, interesting story for Life in Armenia.



Let's go back to what might surprise outsiders about Armenia's startup ecosystem. While some might think the startup ecosystem is solely about startups and funds, the reality is that such a narrow focus would never create a thriving ecosystem.

A true ecosystem is **not just startups and funds but everything in between**. It's about communities of like-minded individuals, consistent daily interactions, and a network that functions much like a brain, with connections forming between every node, regardless of distance.

Impact Hub Yerevan is a small example of such an ecosystem, and there are many others like it in Armenia. Together, these small ecosystems form the full Armenian startup ecosystem, which has contributed to the impressive climb of 21 positions in the rankings over the past four months. It's worth mentioning there are two other Impact Hubs in Armenia. Impact Hub Syunik in Goris City and Impact Hub Gyumri.



The Mushroom Effect

Mycelium, the root-like structure of a mushroom, forms vast, interconnected networks beneath the soil. These networks can extend for miles, contributing significantly to soil health. Scientists have always admired how mushrooms planted in one place contribute to the healthy soil in distant areas.

Impact Hub Yerevan exemplifies this same principle. Their projects often have ripple effects, **positively impacting various sectors of Armenian life beyond their initial scope**. The seeds they are planting today will likely blossom into something beneficial for the common good years later.

Next week following the event, I had a short conversation with [Tijay Jeghelian](#), Programs Director at Impact Hub Yerevan. She introduced me to the many programs they currently have and discussed **their recent focus on the circular economy** and establishing its roots in Armenia.

It's worth noting that Impact Hub Yerevan, in partnership with other international organizations, is currently hosting the [Circular Startup Grants](#) program. Six winners will receive grants of up to \$50,000 to support their transition to circular business models.

When I asked Tijay about their current interests, she mentioned wanting to find international mentors in different sectors and spheres. She hopes to connect with industry experts who can share their knowledge with Impact Hub Yerevan startups.

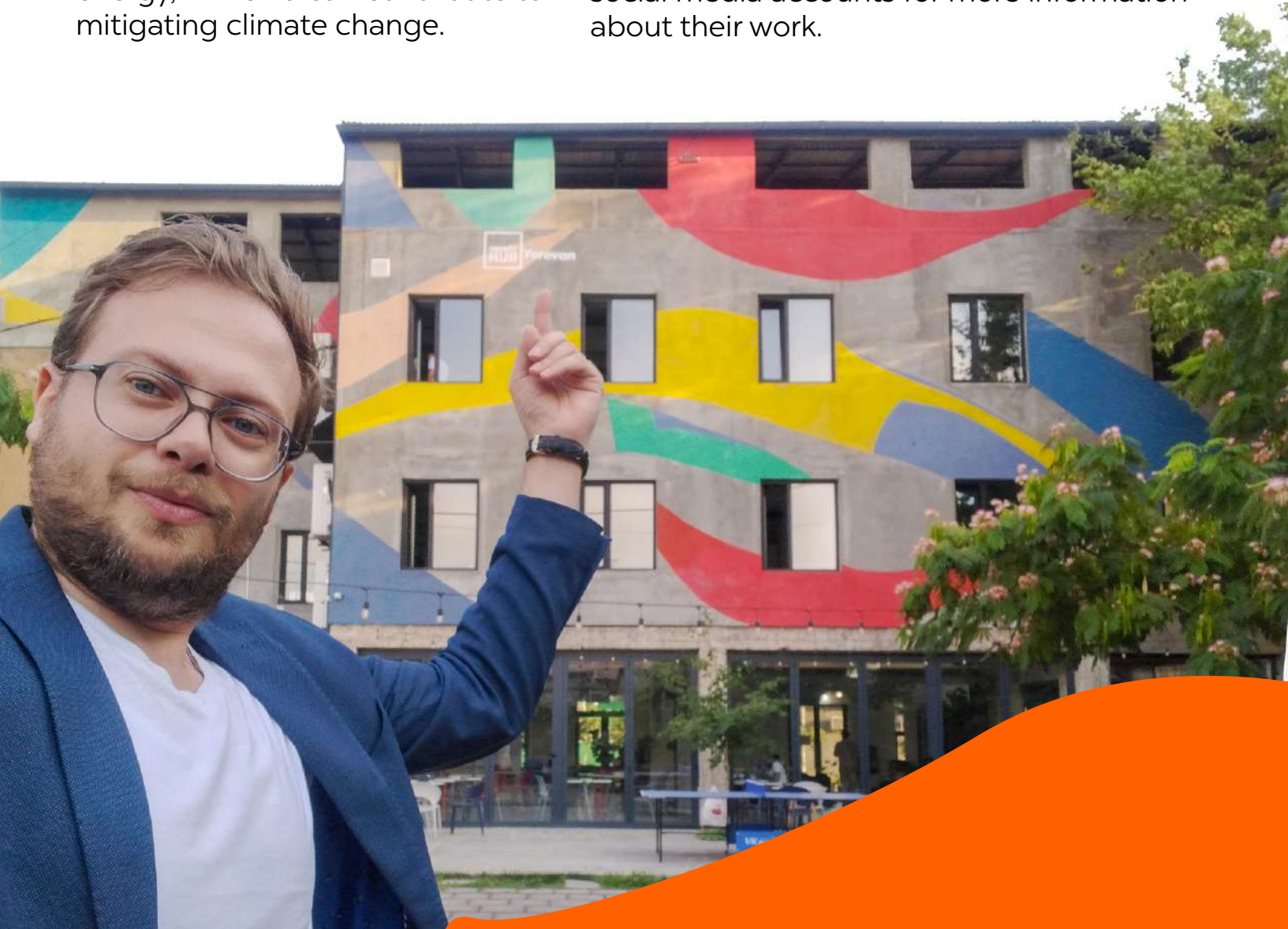


But why focus on the circular economy in Armenia? By maximizing the use of domestic resources and minimizing waste, **Armenia can reduce its dependence on imported materials**, saving foreign exchange. Additionally, a circular economy helps conserve Armenia's limited natural resources, such as minerals and water, for future generations.

Circular economy practices help reduce pollution from waste disposal and emissions from resource extraction. By reducing waste and promoting renewable energy, Armenia can contribute to mitigating climate change.

Circular economy initiatives can help improve the quality of Armenia's air and water resources. A cleaner environment and reduced pollution can lead to improved public health. Ultimately, a sustainable and resource-efficient economy can **contribute to a higher quality of life for Armenia's citizens**.

Is this all of it? In fact, no. As I mentioned at the beginning, it would be difficult to summarize everything Impact Hub Yerevan is about in just a few pages. Given the number of projects, programs, and initiatives they've launched, introducing them fully would take much more than that. I've only highlighted two examples of what I've encountered. I recommend you explore their [website](#) and social media accounts for more information about their work.





ARMENIA
The Hidden
Track



YEKWON SUNWOO
PIANO



MAXIMILLIAN HORNUNG
CELLO



HAYK MELIKYAN
PIANO



STEPHEN WAARTS
VIOLIN



NIKITA MNDOYANTS
PIANO



SERGEY SMBATYAN
CONDUCTOR



NABIL SHEHATA
CONDUCTOR



LUIS ANDRADE
CONDUCTOR



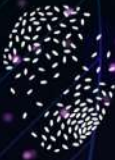
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OCTOBER 4

HIGHLIGHTS FROM ARMENIA'S UPCOMING HR CONFERENCE

THE INTERSECTION OF HUMAN BEINGS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



in

**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



in

INTERVIEWING

**ARPI
KARAPETYAN**

FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN OF
THE ARMENIAN HR ASSOCIATION

HIGHLIGHTS FROM ARMENIA'S UPCOMING HR CONFERENCE THE INTERSECTION OF HUMAN BEINGS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Two months ago, I had the pleasure of meeting [Arpi Karapetyan](#), the woman everyone calls the “mother of HR in Armenia.” To start with, I would say Arpi is different. She’s not the typical woman you would encounter at an HR conference, nor is she the stereotypical HR professional you see online today. I wouldn’t say she’s an out-of-the-box thinker because, honestly, she, as a person, is [completely living and operating outside of the box](#). Therefore, everything she discussed seemed like the norm in her own world, which many would find unique.

While everyone else I’ve seen in Armenia looks to the West for professionals and experts to enrich their events, Arpi went East and built [strong relationships with experts throughout the Gulf area and South Africa](#). I’m not saying she doesn’t value Western professionals because she does, too. But when someone plans an event in Armenia, and the list of speakers includes experts from the Emirates, Egypt, and Oman, combined with Danish and British professionals, that’s unique.



Arpi Karapetyan

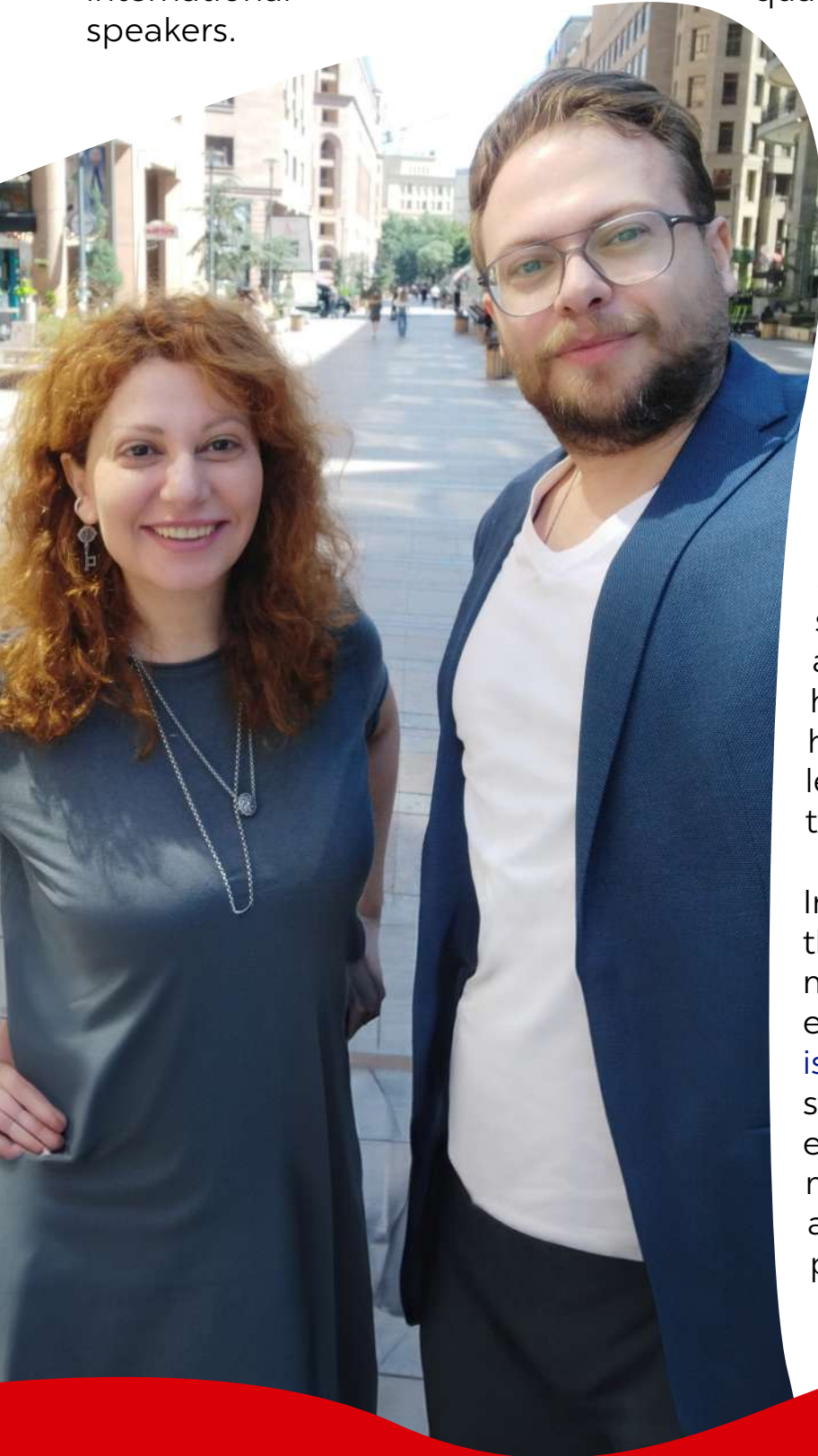
Founder and Chairman
of the Armenian HR
Association

There is no new normal—only the absence of normal is to be accepted in the formula of future leadership.”



In Armenia, it's unusual for a conference to sell out completely, especially when the tickets are priced higher. I've attended many large-scale events with plenty of empty seats, even those offering tickets for free and featuring renowned international speakers.

However, [Arpi's annual HR conferences are always fully sold out](#). Her unique event planning extends to the venues she chooses. For instance, she held an HR conference in a horse stable to demonstrate the parallels between horseback riding and leadership qualities.



For the past 12 years, Arpi's [Annual Regional Conference](#) has served as a hub of learning, bringing together great speakers from all over the world and attracting about 3,500 people from 40 different countries. This year, the theme is "The Science of Leadership". Arpi and her international guests will [explore how the human brain, artificial intelligence, and psychology all shape leadership](#). Practical sessions, discussions, networking, and exciting keynote speeches will help everyone understand how the human brain works and how the leadership mindset is changing in the contemporary world.

In the following lines, I'll walk you through some topics that interested me personally from the upcoming event. Kindly [keep in mind that this is an editorial article](#), not a paid or sponsored one. There are many events happening in Armenia every month, and I only tend to write about the ones I find valuable personally.

Tarek **JOMAA**



Ahmed **ADEL**



Nadia **AIT**



As we become more and more dependent on AI in everything, we're starting to lose human connection. Today, it's no joke that many seek AI's help when replying to the simplest email. As a result, **business leaders are now more than ever required to master body language** when dealing with team members. Words alone are no longer sufficient to influence, as AI is homogenizing communication.

Nadia Ait is flying from Denmark to Armenia to discuss the use of body language for effective leadership in the age of artificial intelligence.

Our humanity remains our greatest asset against the vast adoption of artificial intelligence in every walk of life. It's true that technology can automate many tasks, but our unique human qualities—creativity, empathy, and critical thinking—are irreplaceable. As businesses increasingly rely on automation, those **utilizing AI to enhance their abilities rather than being replaced by it** will thrive.

Ahmed Adel is flying from Egypt to Armenia to discuss the human advantages in times of AI.

In the high-stakes world of motorsport, every millisecond can mean the difference between victory and defeat. The integration of artificial intelligence with traditional engineering practices is becoming essential. By harnessing the power of AI, motorsport teams can optimize their operations, enhance decision-making, and achieve peak performance. This can lead to **more accurate predictions, improved vehicle performance, and enhanced safety**. Additionally, AI can optimize strategies, such as pit stops and race tactics, based on real-time data and simulations. Just as AI has transformed the world of motorsport, it can also revolutionize business operations. By integrating AI into their strategies, businesses can optimize efficiency, enhance decision-making, and achieve peak performance.

Tarek Jomaa is flying from the United Kingdom to Armenia to discuss uniting motorsport engineering and AI for peak team leadership.

Vanessa **POZZALI**



Said **AL SHANFARI**



Mohamed **SAMIR**



Neuroscience can help leaders cultivate empathy, an important trait for building strong relationships and fostering a positive work environment. Additionally, by studying the brain's reward system, **leaders can learn how to motivate and inspire their teams**. Neuroscience can provide insights into cognitive biases and decision-making processes, enabling leaders to make more informed and ethical choices. As artificial intelligence continues to evolve, the way we lead is also undergoing a transformation. Neuroscience offers valuable insights into human behavior and decision-making. By understanding the neural underpinnings of leadership, **we can develop more effective strategies in the age of AI**.

Vanessa Pozzali is flying from the United Kingdom to Armenia to introduce neuroscience-driven leadership in the age of AI.

AI can be a powerful tool to enhance leadership, but it **must be used ethically to ensure sustainable business operations**. By collaborating with AI, we may redefine the very nature of leadership, creating a new model that becomes the standard in the future. **Said Al Shanfari is flying from Oman to Armenia** to talk about blending AI with leadership.

Some argue that AI can be a valuable ally, enhancing the coaching process and improving outcomes. Others, however, express concerns about the potential for AI to replace human coaches and diminish the personal connection between coach and client. Ultimately, **the effectiveness of AI in coaching depends on how it is used**. When used thoughtfully and ethically, AI can be a powerful tool for enhancing the coaching process. However, it is essential to recognize the limitations of AI and the importance of human connection in building strong coach-client relationships.

Mohamed Samir is flying from Egypt to Armenia to discuss AI in the coaching industry.

As my two-hour conversation with Arpi ended, I wanted everyone else reading the magazine to learn about her and her upcoming event on October 4, 2024. This unique lineup of speakers in one place tells only one thing: **you'll enjoy every moment of your trip to Armenia**, both professionally and personally.

TECH EVENTS



with
ARTAK N. G.



TECH BLOGGER

EVENTS

SEPT 1	“Starlink in Armenia” webinar by Armen R. Kherlopian, Ph.D.	
SEPT 4	Business Meetup with Dubai Free economic zone representatives by Armenian Businessmen Association	
SEPT 4	Breakfast with Angel Investor	
SEPT 6-7	DataFest Yerevan	
SEPT 7	Testers day by Armenian Software Testing Qualifications Board	
SEPT 9	Navigating the Legal Landscape in the Digital World	
SEPT 10	Personal Branding as a project by PMI Armenia	
SEPT 10	A meetup about new legislation on Simple agreement on Future Equity	

TECH EVENTS



with
ARTAK N. G.



TECH BLOGGER

EVENTS

SEPT 10-11	Satellite Conference and Expo	
SEPT 13	CTO meetup by DAS Meta	
SEPT 14	AWS community Day	
SEPT 14	Info session on cybersecurity by CyberHub	
SEPT 16-18-20	Info session on PMP exam by Ligia Ghazaryan	
SEPT 25-26	EMERGE tech conference	

FROM CONCEPT TO COMMERCE

HOW THINKING DIFFERENTLY BOOSTS RETAIL BUSINESSES IN ARMENIA



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



**VIGEN
SARAJYAN**

CO-FOUNDER AT ARLI

INTERVIEWING



FROM CONCEPT TO COMMERCE HOW THINKING DIFFERENTLY BOOSTS RETAIL BUSINESSES IN ARMENIA

Having lived in Armenia for 8 years, I can say with confidence that retail isn't the golden ticket to success, at least not for everyone. Many newcomers, **charmed by Yerevan's energy and walkability**, get caught up in the idea of importing goods and selling them. I've witnessed many stories where foreigners or diasporans decide to rent a space and start a retail business after a short time of relocating, only to close it a few months later and liquidate their inventory.



Opening a retail business in Armenia should not be solely influenced by Yerevan's allure. **Retail here is a sophisticated sector that demands careful planning** and analysis of various factors before investing money, renting or buying a space, and importing goods. It's essential to approach this venture with a strategic mindset rather than being solely captivated by the city's charm.

Despite the challenges of starting a retail business in Armenia, the country's economy is far from stagnant. However, the small population size **necessitates focusing on unique offerings to sustain interest**. With a constant demand for novelty, traditional retail models may struggle.



One story that caught my attention was Vigen Sarajyan's co-founding of ARLI, a shoe store in Yerevan's city center. While you might expect a tech-centric magazine like Life in Armenia to focus on startups and digital trends, the truth is that retail businesses, regardless of industry, share common challenges and opportunities.

Considering that one day **you might be one of those newcomers interested in starting a retail business**, this article provides a blueprint for success in the Armenian retail market, at least from my own perspective.

Before starting a retail business in Armenia, remember that **the market rewards uniqueness, creativity, and differentiation**. There aren't as many customers as you might think, but there's a lot of competition. So, make sure your store has a unique selling point.

ARLI, the shoe store I mentioned earlier, was founded by Vigen's father and grandfather in the 1990s, shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 2015, Vigen and his brother Hovhannes joined the business and sought to differentiate themselves from the traditional shoe industry by **incorporating artistic elements into their Armenian-made shoes**. Their goal was to create a unique product that would stand out in the market and appeal to both tourists and locals.

ARLI caters to women who seek shoes that don't blend in. Their designs feature thick, durable outsoles combined with uniquely crafted, colorful uppers, resulting in shoes that make a statement. In 2022, they collaborated with a local painter, Arevik Bejanyan, **to create their hand-painted collection**. This was a new venture, as they developed special permanent paints that ensured the longevity of the designs.

From the outside, ARLI appears to be a shoe store, but in reality, it has **managed to shift the focus of its products from shoes to artistic items** tourists often buy to keep a lovely memory of Armenia. That's the uniqueness that can sustain your business in Armenia.



Vigen Sarajyan

Co-founder at ARLI

It's never about importing a commodity and undercutting the competition. It's about the distinctive value you bring to the table, transforming a product into something with a new and meaningful significance."



Given Armenia's relatively small population and tourist base, **repeatedly offering the same unique products isn't sustainable.** Eventually, what was once distinctive became commonplace. Many international businesses have learned this lesson, entering Armenia with trendy ideas only to find their market saturated and their novelty lost within a few years.

When launching a product in Armenia, closely monitor sales and reviews daily. **Once you identify a peak and notice a decline, pivot to something new.** In the Armenian retail landscape, having Plan A and B isn't sufficient; you must be prepared with multiple options, from C to F. As trends and unique offerings fade, swiftly transition to the next opportunity and maintain momentum.



Back to our example, ARLI recently expanded its offerings to include wallets inspired by Armenian cultural figures and themes to promote Armenian and Armenian art globally. Instead of solely focusing on one product and one line of artistic work, they shifted to something else to keep offering the customer something new in this highly competitive market.

I wanted to feature ARLI and Vigen's story shortly to make it clear how important it is to be careful when making retail business decisions in Armenia. When you make the decision, make sure you're adding a special flavor to it. Otherwise, you're just repeating the same experiment others did and **expecting different results.**



HOPE IN THE FACE OF DESPAIR

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION IN ARMENIA



**GEVORG
GHARIBYAN**

CO-FOUNDER OF THE MENTAL HEALTH
AWARENESS INITIATIVE (MHAI)



**ARTAK
BEGOYAN**

CO-FOUNDER OF THE MENTAL HEALTH
AWARENESS INITIATIVE (MHAI)



HOPE IN THE FACE OF DESPAIR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION IN ARMENIA

There is no health without mental health. While this may seem like a simple, self-evident statement, **mental health remains an area of life fraught with stigma and misunderstanding**. These barriers prevent individuals from seeking support, amplifying feelings of isolation and despair. Yet, as awareness grows, we can reflect on our significant progress in mental health awareness.

Over the past seven decades, awareness campaigns have evolved from hospital-based education efforts to widespread community movements, fostering understanding and reducing stigma. Despite this progress, significant disparities in mental health care persist in many parts of the world, where **barriers such as stigma and inaccessibility remain pervasive**.

In response to these ongoing challenges, the [Mental Health Awareness Initiative](#) (MHAI), founded in 2021 by [Gevorg Gharibyan](#) and [Artak Begoyan](#), is **stepping up to address the critical mental health needs in Armenia**. Built on solid ethics and a volunteer-centered approach, MHAI collaborates globally to deliver psychosocial support to historically disadvantaged communities. Through its professional, culturally sensitive execution of care, MHAI brings hope and healing to vulnerable populations.



Crisis Hotlines and Immediate Support

Suicide prevention has become a critical component of mental health awareness campaigns, especially as the prevalence of mental health conditions like depression and anxiety continues to rise globally.

Through establishing a crisis hotline in Armenia, MHAJ strives to provide immediate and accessible support to those in need. The hotline will bridge geographical barriers and **offer confidential emotional care to those in crisis**, addressing the critical gap in mental health services for those experiencing distress, including those contemplating suicide.

Building on global best practices, **crisis hotlines have proven to be vital in suicide prevention efforts**, offering lifelines to those in immediate distress. In the USA, for instance, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline has demonstrated remarkable success in providing urgent, lifesaving support to individuals experiencing crisis.

Studies have shown that crisis hotlines can reduce the risk of suicide and provide immediate relief to those in distress. MHAJ's emotional support hotline aims to **offer a similar safety net for people in Armenia**, ensuring that help is just a call away. Essentially, these hotlines act as a critical safety net for distressed individuals, connecting them to trained professionals and volunteers

who can provide psychosocial support and guide them through emotional crises.

The MHAJ hotline, modeled after successful services, will provide similar interventions in Armenia. It will offer a safe space for individuals to express their fears and concerns while receiving guidance from mental health professionals.

As we observe Suicide Awareness Month this September, it is essential to acknowledge both the progress we have made in mental health awareness and the persistent challenges that remain. Stigma, limited access to care, and rising mental health conditions continue to affect countless lives. In this context, the launch of MHAJ's crisis hotline represents a crucial step forward in addressing these issues.

This timely and vital service is urgently needed to **offer people in Armenia immediate, professional, and emotional support**. It provides a safe space for distressed individuals to talk, process their feelings, and receive help from trained professionals.

You may not have considered this before, but we hope you'll support us now that you know about our work. Also, if you're a psychosocial support professional considering a move to Armenia, we'd love to have you on our team. Together, we can impact people's lives.

THE 8TH "ARMENIA" INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

YOUR GATEWAY TO DISCOVER ARMENIA



SERGEY SMBATYAN

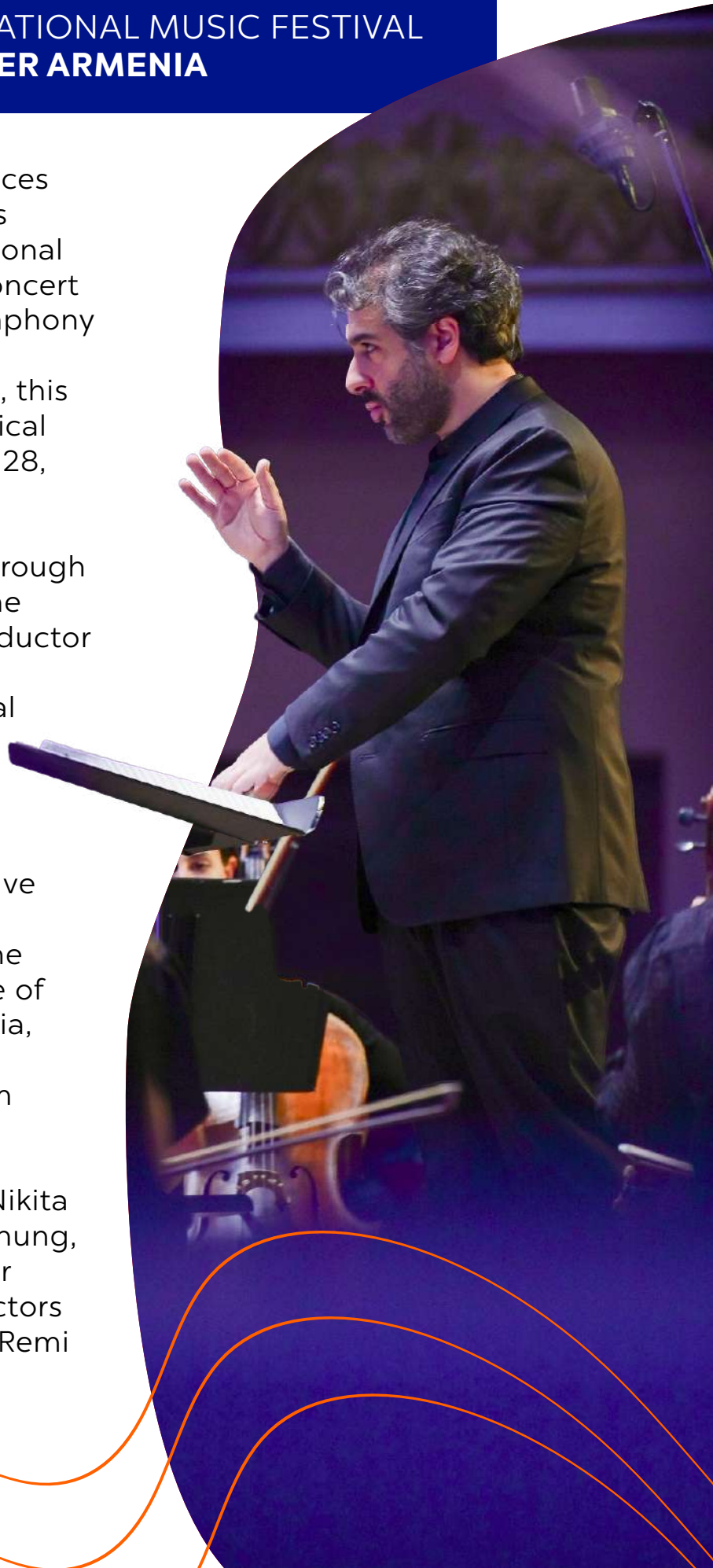
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR
OF THE ARMENIAN STATE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

THE 8TH "ARMENIA" INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL YOUR GATEWAY TO DISCOVER ARMENIA

Experience world-class performances and celebrate Armenian Culture as the 8th annual "Armenia" International Music Festival kicks off the 19th concert season of the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra on September 16, 2024. Spanning over a month in Yerevan, this festival promises a journey of musical discovery, concluding on October 28, 2024.

The festival, established in 2017 through the efforts of Sergey Smbatyan, the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra, has gained international recognition in just a few years and become a beloved event among classical music enthusiasts.

This year, the festival will feature five symphonic concerts at the Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall. With the support of the Tourism Committee of the Ministry of Economy of Armenia, the festival will delight fans of classical music with a rich program and prominent artists. The lineup includes performances by pianists Yekwon Sunwoo, Hayk Melikyan, Nikita Mndoyants, cellist Maximilian Hornung, and violinist Stephen Waarts under the baton of distinguished conductors Sergey Smbatyan, Nabil Shehata, Remi Durupt, and Luis Andrade.



The concerts will present a varied repertoire, including compositions from the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as contemporary works. Audiences can look forward to a mix of Russian and European composers like Camille Saint-Saëns, Felix Mendelssohn, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Alexey Shor, alongside Armenian composers such as Grigor Yeghiazaryan, Alexander Spendiarian, Edward Mirzoyan, Tigran Mansurian, Eduard Hayrapetyan, and Armen Smbatyan.

The “Armenia” International Music Festival is more than just music; it’s about bringing people together, uniting both locals and visitors. In recent years, the festival has attracted numerous tourists, offering them the opportunity to experience Armenian performing arts and enjoy unforgettable evenings in a city known for its warmth and hospitality.



For more information about the festival program and tickets, please visit the link





SEVAN
HANIMYAN



GREGORY
CHAHROZIAN



SHOGER
ATANESYAN



MARIAM
TOROSYAN



ARPI
KARAPETYAN



VIGEN
SARAJYAN



GEVORG
GHARIBYAN



ARTAK
BEGOYAN



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TOURISM COMMITTEE
MINISTRY OF ECONOMY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

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SPECIAL THANKS TO THE TOURISM
COMMITTEE AT THE MINISTRY OF
ECONOMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
FOR BEING COLLABORATIVE AND
PROVIDING THE DIGITAL MEDIA (PHOTOS
AND VIDEOS) TO USE IN THE MAGAZINE.

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