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| **From Classrooms to Creativity Labs: A Look Into Rural Armenia** |  |  |
| |  | | --- | | http://www.designshare.com/images/Armenia_lab_3_01.jpg The former Soviet Republic of Armenia is celebrating its first ever Creativity Lab recently established by The Children of Armenia Fund ([www.coafkids.org](http://www.coafkids.org/)). The Lab was designed in accordance with a modern classroom model in mind. The country is scattered with dimly-lit, decaying, gloomy learning institutions of the Soviet era. This new Creativity Lab in the village of Lernagog is sunlit from the east to the west. The room is separated into different work areas so that students can work individually, in small groups, collectively as a class or specifically in the technology section.  The Creativity Lab features lightweight and mobile furniture that can be arranged into 40 different styles for various group activities. The Lab also contains a large creative wall on which students can write using erasable markers. Mobile and glass blackboards have also been installed which are novelties in Armenian classrooms. There is also a curtain that allows for the room to be partitioned into two sections if needed.  http://www.designshare.com/images/Armenia_lab_2.jpg Classrooms, libraries, computer rooms have historically been detached from one another throughout the country’s schools. The new Creativity Lab was deliberately designed to merge these different sections in a single room, enabling the implementation of several simultaneous activities and further stimulation for learning. Books used to be locked and stored away in bookcases, limiting their access to schoolchildren. COAF insisted on building open bookshelves allowing students to retrieve books freely. This environment is ideal for increased differentiated and personalized learning to take place. Students now have more opportunities to exercise kinesthetic, visual, and tactile learning styles.  http://www.designshare.com/images/Lab_before_image2.jpg School environments in Armenia have been limited insofar as they have allowed only for traditional teaching methods to be employed. In other words, students were primarily expected to listen and retain passive roles. The new environment envisioned by COAF aims to foster creativity and active individual participation among Armenia’s schoolchildren. Project-based learning, performing arts and interactive games are now becoming actual possibilities for this new generation of students.  http://www.designshare.com/images/Armenia_lab_1.jpg Lernagog’s Creativity Lab is allowing students to work collaboratively, which is less commonly implemented throughout the country due to constraints involving the physical structures of most classrooms. Modern furniture, newer teaching tools and methods and more expansive classrooms are just a few of the advantages enabling increased learning. The teacher is no longer the main focal point in the classroom working directly with students. This new environment promotes essential student interaction, which has been proven to enhance learning and retention capacities.  COAF is a non-profit organization providing children in rural villages in Armenia with the opportunities they need to fulfill their potential as contributors to their communities, societies and the world. Strategic programs are employed in the areas of education, health care, child and family services, community engagement and economic development to stimulate the comprehensive revitalization of those villages while also restoring critical pieces of a village‘s physical infrastructure. The organization’s approach is fully holistic and entrepreneurial, with close adherence to best practices in international development. Priorities are determined only after close consultation with local residents and leadership. COAF focuses on development activities that enable people to acquire the skills they need to help themselves. To learn more about COAF, please visit [www.coafkids.org](http://www.coafkids.org/). | |  |  |