

**Remarks by
Robert F. Cekuta,
U.S. Ambassador**

Opening of a River Crossing/Water Management System in Gam-Gam Community, Guba May 19, 2015

Distinguished participants, hörmətli sakinler

Ladies and gentlemen, Xanımlar ve cenablar

Good afternoon. It is a great pleasure to join in opening your community's new bridges crossing the cuğacuğ River. As American Ambassador, it is a great source of pride and happiness to see this network of crossings and this system of water management today here in your community that the United States was able to help make possible through USAID and its Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA) program.

This network of bridges and the improvements in water management for Qam-Qam is an example of the governments of the United States and Azerbaijan coming together to help local communities address problems, to help communities find answers to the needs they face.

Just as important, completion of this network of river crossings is a clear example of what can be achieved when local communities have the chance to help themselves. After all, who better understands and has more interest in the well-being of a community than the people of that community themselves?

The Qam-Qam community worked many hours side-by-side with a local NGO – UMID – as well as with municipal and ExCom officials to set priorities, create a plan, and then to achieve their goal of improving their community through the implementation of this high priority project. When communities come together and work with their government, wonderful things can be achieved, as this new river crossing system today so clearly shows.

Before this project, local residents had difficulties traveling from one part of the village to the other, particularly during flood seasons. I have been told it even affected children's attendance in school. This system we are dedicating today, however, addresses those problems by providing a dependable means to meet the immediate needs of the people of Qam-Qam, such as the ability of their children to get easily and safely to school and the ability of others in the community to engage in commerce or other interaction.

But perhaps the best thing about this project is that it was constructed thanks to the dedication of the community members who decided and acted to improve their living conditions. The citizens of Qam-Qam elected a group of volunteer citizen representatives to a Community Development Council, which includes local municipal and ExCom members. With the strong support of its local NGO partner, the Community Development Council developed a plan to improve their community, and this system of river crossings comes out of that planning and collaboration. You have shown clearly the kind of success that can be realized in a community when citizens participate in decision-making and collaborate effectively with local authorities.

And so in closing, I would like to thank Mr. Adigezalov, chairman of the Community Development Council, for leading these efforts.

Icma Inkishaf Shurasinin gorduyu ishlere gore cenab Adigozelova teshekkur edirem.

I would also like to thank the Ministry of Economy and Industry, the local Executive Committee, and the municipality for their strong support for this project.

Layiheye verdikleri guclu desteye gore Iqtisadiyyat ve Senaye Nazirliyi, Icra Hakimiyyeti, belediyyeye teshekkur edirem.

Finally, I would like to thank our colleagues from East-West Management Institute and UMID for working with the community to construct this facility.

Layiheni ugurlu etmek uchun icma ile birge ishleyen Sherq Qerb Idare Etme Institutu ve UMIDE teshekkur edirem.

The citizens of Gam-Gam should be proud of their accomplishment, and I congratulate you on this achievement.

Thank you.