



**Children of Armenia Fund, Armenia Office**

## **2015 ANNUAL REPORT**



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# Education Program Annual Report 2015

The goal of the COAF Education Program is to improve overall quality of education in beneficiary communities by both providing infrastructure and learning environment as well as improving capacities of teachers and students, so that the education activities are directed to whole-child development. Overall, the program aims to develop leadership potential to equip rural students with knowledge, skills and attitudes to be able to adapt to the changing needs in the world.

- **Expansion** of education programs in Lori and Aragatsotn marzes – 61 % increase (working with increased number of target schools from 13 (2014) to 21 in 2015)
- **Cooperation with partners:** major grant awards include:
  - HSBC – Professional Orientation project and Scholarships: around USD 70,000
  - US Embassy - Online English and Access projects: around USD 150,000
  - US Peace Corps – in COAF villages there were 3 PCVs in 2014, and there are 7 PCVs now with another 3 expected to arrive in March 2016.
- **Sustainability of programs:** Debate clubs in “veteran” schools in Armavir run by the schools, some after-school clubs continue operations without COAF funding (judo in Shenik, chess in Myasnikyanyan with Karakert students attending).
- **Shift from individual to both individual and institutional capacity building:** student councils, debate clubs, after school clubs.
- **English villages:** introduction of English course for Hatsik teachers, creative writing courses for students in Hatsik, Lernagog, Karakert, Arteni, Sardarapat, 3 trainings for English teachers of Armavir and Aragatsotn schools.

*The summary of main program outputs is provided in Appendix 1.*

## 1. Program Component: CAPACITY BUILDING OF TEACHERS

### **Background**

Through this intervention the program aims to motivate school and kindergarten teachers and administrators to improve teaching by providing technical support and professional development opportunities in various areas. Support to school administrators to create a platform for sharing best practices and learning from other schools is another area emphasized.

It is expected that the activities will impact overall teaching and learning environment in the school and result in improved performance achievement of students.

### **Implementation**

**ICT training for teachers** has enabled teachers of Hatsik, Vanand, and Toumanyanyan to use smart boards in instruction. Teachers of professional orientation program were also trained in basic use of technologies in education.

**Early Music Education** has supported kindergartens and pre-schools to develop inclusive, goal-oriented and child-centered inclusive education in Armenian villages, by creating a long-term sustainable model through capacity-building of teachers and educators.

**DreamDO** project has been designed to train rural teachers on how to plan and implement a project, how to generate student engagement into supporting their learning and/or improving their learning

environment, and actually put their suggestions into action. 10 classes from 6 villages have participated in DreamDO Schools Program during the second semester of 2014-2015 academic year.

**Support to School Administrators:** Network of 14 school administrators expanded to 24. Two visits were conducted: one to Mkhitar Sebastatsi Education Complex and UWC Dilijan (Dilijan International School). During these events school administrators came together to discuss implementation of COAF projects in respective schools, learn from each other, and observe best practices of advanced and progressive schools in Armenia. As principals witnessed, such opportunities have provided critical contribution to enhancing their professional outlook.

**Professional Orientation Program** has capacitated local teachers to provide mid- to high school students with access to information and resources required for improving their college and career readiness to make informed decisions about viable professional opportunities that match their strengths, interests and talents.

### **Outputs**

- 70 teachers trained to use ICT as part of their teaching.
- Early music education training and workshops conducted in 10 villages, working with more than 140 children and 20 teachers.
- 10 projects implemented as part of DreamDo projects, including a newspaper published on the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide, folk dance costumes and costumes for performance knitted for Vanand, Arteni and Dalarik primary school.
- Network of 14 school administrators expanded to 24. Meaningful meetings being conducted to demonstrate best practices and lead towards strengthening schools as institutions.
- 22 specialists participated in methodology training provided by Methodology Center for Professional Orientation and COAF.
- A Database is created in Karakert to track students' involvement in various activities.
- 10 teachers of Vanand school took part in social-emotional development training.

*"In just 6 short months, COAF has already provided the ground work for change. Students, teachers, and community members are taking a much more active role in their community. COAF doesn't just come into a village to help, it comes to change lives and create promise for the entire community."*

Brian Leopold, US Peace Corps  
Volunteer in Tumanyan, Lori



Teacher training in Toumanyanyan Creativity Lab

## **2. Program Component: AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

### **Extracurricular groups**

#### **Background**

COAF regards the development and implementation of extracurricular activities and clubs as a positive and meaningful contribution to the lives of community students. Extensive research<sup>1</sup> proves the

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<sup>1</sup> Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard Family Research Project  
<http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/overview>

positive impact of after school activities in terms of improved academic performance, social and emotional development of enrolled students, along with respective behavioral changes.

COAF afterschool activities seek to offer an invaluable setting for a child's learning and skills development. They provide students with the following opportunities:

- to develop socially through engaging in activities which shape and strengthen character, leadership skills, and social skills;
- to enlarge the interest and knowledge outside of standard classroom environment;
- to improve students' academic performance with a focus on writing and reading skills, creativity, critical thinking, communication, presentation skills;
- to contribute to their physical and social-emotional development.

### **Implementation**

In 2015, COAF has supported operation of 21 afterschool clubs in 12 villages/Arteni, Aragatsavan, Lernagog, Dalarik, Karakert, Shenik, Sardarapat, Vanand, Hatsik, Dsegh, Toumanyanyan, Karinj/ throughout the year, which include the following: Basketball, Chess, Judo, Ethnography, Choir, Handicraft and Macramé, Arts & Crafts, Puppet making, Theater, National costume making /Taraz/, Social-emotional course, Photography, Wood craft.

### **Outputs**

- 500 participants from 12 villages were involved in afterschool activities in 2015, which is 54% more compared to 2014.

## **Championship Activities**

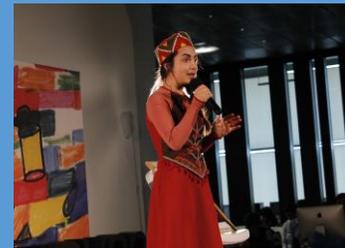
### **Background**

While sports are considered as part of afterschool clubs in schools, intercommunity competitions are organized to support club activities and provide opportunities for the students to compete with their peers from other communities. In its previous experience COAF used to provide salaries to local sports teachers to prepare their sport clubs for competitions, with a hope that it would trigger creation of sport clubs in participating communities. However, this hypothesis did not hold true in cases, where communities would only participate in a championship but not retain any sport club activity beyond it. Hence, in 2015 it was decided to only support championships, without providing a specific pay to trainers to prepare their teams for it. This approach proved to be right, as competitions were attended by not only operating sport clubs, but also some villages located their own trainers to prepare a community team for the championship: i.e. for football.

### **Implementation**

*"Before COAF came, marriage was the only option for a young girl from a village. That's a good choice, too. But COAF has demonstrated that we have a lot more opportunities. We can have better education. People in our village feel that they are part of a bigger world!"*

Ani, 16 years old, Karakert.



Ani at TEDx kids talking on Carpet making club impact

In 2015, Education Team has closely worked with both local sport teachers and community mayors to encourage their participation in championships, by taking the full ownership for preparatory rehearsals. While COAF has supported a few far located villages with transportation, many of others covered their transportation needs on their own.

In 2015, the program organized a Sportland for kindergartens in 4 villages, a Student Football championship among 6 communities, as well as supported the organization of a basketball friendly, initiated by student councils of Hatsik and Lernagog.

### **Outputs**

- 3 championship events were organized, involving 12 communities
- Around 180 children participated in championship events
- 8 students of Chess Club participated in International Chess Competition organized in Jermuk in July 2015

## **3. Program Component: DEMOCRACY AND CIVIC ACTIVISM**

### **Background**

The program includes support to Student Councils, Debate Clubs, and Aflatoun program.

The programs aim at:

- bringing up civic values in students
- developing critical thinking
- implementing community and school based projects.

### **Implementation**

**Student Councils (SC):** Monthly visits and activities of SC specialists were emphasizing students' and administration capacity development to establish democracy and instill democratic values in school communities. Interventions resulted in increased students' participation in various events, taking initiatives to address issues their communities face, and volunteerism.

Since 2015-2016 first semester, a new approach is being used in the program: only monthly meetings are held with the students, while more responsibility is left on school administrators.

On their turn, administrators responsible for student councils' activities had an exchange meeting in October to share their experience on how to support student councils and address common challenges.

**Debate Clubs:** In 2015, in addition to running the debate clubs, extensive teachers training was conducted to prepare a pool of local teachers for new villages. Along with support that COAF provided to the old debate teams, four new COAF Debate Clubs have started functioning in Lori and Armavir as afterschool clubs since September 2015. It should be mentioned that three out of four schools involved in the program agreed to run the clubs on their own.

In June, a two-day long debate ToT was held for Armavir marz teachers from Sardarapat, Vanand, Hatsik. Teachers were selected from Vanand and Hatsik to lead newly formed debate clubs. Afterwards similar ToT was organized for Lori marz (communities of Tumanyan, Dsegh, Karinj and Marts), and out of them Dsegh and Tumanyan teachers were selected to run debate clubs at their respective schools.

For the new clubs, an intercommunity debate game was organized on the topic of “Student Councils should be banned”. As many participants stated, this particular topic was an eye-opener both for participants and for the event audience, as they learned about many interesting and important factors of a well-performing student council.

**Aflatoun:** 8 Aflatoun clubs in Armavir and Lori regions have been functioning in Lori and Armavir marzes. The program has 2 components: teachers training and afterschool club running.

There were 2 groups of 15 students from January to May in Getashen and Dalarik. Two projects were implemented. Starting from September 2015, Aflatoun functions in 8 villages of Vanand, Getashen, Hatsik, Dalarik, Marts, Karinj, Dsegh, Tumanyan.

### **Outputs**

- More than 20 members of student councils volunteered during summer camps
- More than 15 teachers trained to lead quality debates
- 4 new debate clubs formed
- 80 students improve critical thinking skills by participation in Debate Clubs activities
- COAF-supported Debate team participated in Jinishyan Memorial Foundation National Debate Championship
- COAF Debate club team was invited to have a TV debate on August 23 on the motion of “Children’s Telephone and Cyber Communication should be Controlled by Parents” broadcast by Yerkir Media TV. Eventually, COAF-supported team had a draw.
- 16 teachers trained and 6 selected to run Aflatoun after school clubs
- 150 students enrolled in the program
- All beneficiary schools had a chance to visit National Assembly of RA
- Intercommunity links have been strengthened through meetings to tackle common problems and SC electoral observation in nearby communities by the students.

## **4. Program Component: ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION**

### **Background**

English is considered as a second foreign language in Armenia after Russian, along with German and French. Very low percentage of rural population has Basic English skills due to several reasons: English teachers in villages are of low professional quality and lacking proper skills, still using the traditional teacher-centered instruction methodology, limited teaching resources, low motivation of teachers and students, no opportunity to learn English in the community, etc.

Having the vision of providing opportunities for children to achieve their full potential and in turn contribute meaningfully to their communities, COAF activities consider development of the so-called 21st century skills, one of which is communication. Effective communication requires also the ability to communicate in several languages.

COAF offers three interventions for English program beneficiaries to enhance their language skills:

- a. Promoting English in Rural Areas
- b. English Access Microscholarship Program (Access)
- c. Online English program

## **Implementation**

### **Promoting English in Rural Areas**

In 2015, COAF launched Promoting English in Rural Areas Project, the goal of which is to develop English communication skills of the rural population in two villages of Armavir marz (Karakert and Hatsik villages). As part of the project, a US Peace Corps Response Volunteer was invited to work in Karakert, Armavir. After lesson observations, a series of training sessions for teachers on methodology, use of ICT, and classroom management was conducted, involving COAF English teachers to take part in presentations as well as other US Peace Corps Volunteers. Birthright volunteers were engaged to teach Creative Writing to students in the villages, as well as conducting English course for adults.

### **English Access Microscholarship Program (Access)**

The program, conducted in Arteni, Hatsik, Karakert, Lernagog and Sardarapat, in eight groups for 96 students was completed. English Summer Camp was organized Tsakhkadzor for all the students as a closing event.

### **Online English Program**

More than 80 students, aged 17-35 completed English classes in a blended format to improve their English proficiency and become more competitive in labor market. They enrolled in the Online English program, representing 4 learning hubs: Armavir, Gavar, Yeghegnadzor and Goris.

The program was successfully completed in March 2015, in recognition to which the US Embassy extended the grant by over USD 115,000, to continue the program in 2016-2017.

### **Outputs**

- 200 students improved their English skills (including Access and Online English students)
- 3 local teachers from Gavar, Goris, and Yeghegnadzor were trained by an experienced teacher on teaching methodologies
- An online platform was created
- 12 English teachers from Armavir and Aragatsotn marzes were trained
- Professional development opportunities for 3 COAF English teachers were created, including participation in TOT planning with the US Peace Corps Response Volunteer, and in the Annual Conference of Association of English Language Teachers of Armenia.

## **5. Program Component: SUMMER SCHOOLS**

### **Background**

While providing fun and recreational environment for rural kids to enjoy their summer vacation, many of whom would lack such opportunity otherwise, the program also combines it with developing certain life-skills and knowledge to make their pass-time also meaningful and have them



Creative Writing in Arteni

*“The kids I have worked with through COAF have never ceased to impress me as students, and as people. They are some of the most thoughtful, caring and polite individuals I’ve ever met. I am eager to see Armenia’s future because I know if these kids have anything to do with it, it’s going to be amazing”.*

Maral, Birthright Volunteer

stay connected to a learning environment before the school starts. While doing so, the program initially trains local teachers and school administrators on organization of respective indoor and outdoor classes and interactive sessions, which they actually practice during the summer school. This in turn, is deemed to have a positive influence both on their professional competences as teachers, as well as on improving their interpersonal communication with their students in a non-formal learning environment.

### **Implementation**

This year, with the expansion strategy, the COAF summer schools were implemented in 9 villages. The new communities involved Hatsik in Armavir and Toumanyán, Marts and Dsegh in Lori. The summer schools were organized in 3 shifts in 3 cluster villages, each lasting 10 days. Students aged 7-15 years old were enrolled in a subject-specific groups with focus on a particular area of their interest, such as arts, theater, music, puppet making, sports, juggling and circus art, reading, intellectual club, handicraft, professional orientation, healthy life style, etc. Excursions have been organized with consideration of areas of their interests. For example, Armavir group of theater and reading attended a performance in "Mher Mkrtchyan" artistic theatre in Yerevan, while Lori group visited Vanadzor Fine Arts Museum and attended a performance in Vanadzor State Drama Theatre. Upon completion of each shift, all the participants came together and demonstrated the products of their 2-week learning. In comparison with 2014 summer schools, almost all teachers were from villages, only 2 out of 22 teachers implementing the program were selected from Yerevan for Armavir Summer Schools, which means that there is a core group of capable teachers, which are able to develop and offer a good quality service for summer school program implementation.



Emin Azarian, Los Angeles, visited COAF Summer Schools and posted his reflections on Facebook.

*"You hear many people talk about their own personal 'revolution' in Armenia. I believe there is a much different type of revolution happening right now through the education of these village children. "*

Another accomplishment for this year was involvement of volunteers - younger students from the schools and members of student councils. The volunteers organized games and activities for primary school students, they were involved in everyday planning and agenda preparation.

### **Outputs**

- 10 local teachers were trained on developing summer school thematic group curriculum, with utilization of interactive and fun learning techniques,
- 10-day summer schools were organized in 3 cluster villages, involving participants from 9 villages,
- 750 students attended the summer schools, which is 31% more compared to 2014.

## **6. Program Component: MEDIA LITERACY SUMMER CAMP**

### **Background**

Media literacy is becoming a priority field in education throughout the world. In Armenia this is still very new and the skills of media consumption and production are not widely available for kids in the

schools. The project opens up the opportunity for obtaining competencies vital in the 21 century digital society.

This program intends to create a network of media literate, active young people in COAF villages who are interested in their community life and are eager to write about their local problems and achievements and COAF activities.

The goals of the program include:

- equipping children with media literacy skills that are important for 21st century citizens
- initiating a network of young journalists who will cover local stories
- creating another opportunity/platform for highlighting COAF efforts in the villages.

### **Implementation**

As a result of the 4-day training 19 students and 2 teachers from 7 villages participated and gained the basic skills of media production (text writing, photo/video shooting and editing, online sharing) and media consumption (critical thinking, fact checking, working with sources of information). As a showcase they did group works and delivered presentations which were guided by specialists of the Media Initiative Center (MIC) who also ran the whole summer school.

Along with the area specific sessions, students enjoyed some sightseeing in Yerevan.

The valuable skills obtained through the project:

- Becoming more savvy media consumers and users,
- Analyzing information,
- Developing communication skills,
- Learning media language for expressing their ideas, concerns, sharing their stories,
- Becoming more socially active and involved.

### **Outputs**

19 students and 2 teachers from 7 villages attended the Media Literacy summer school and gained media skills.

## **7. Program Component: SCHOOL CONNECTIVITY**

### **Background**

During the summer of 2015, student groups of two US based Armenian schools (Ferrahian school and Manoogian-Demirjian AGBU school) visited COAF beneficiary schools in Lernagog and Arteni. The goal of these meetings was first of all to establish links between the schools and give them opportunity to start connectivity or Sister School program.

### **Implementation**

Overall, 20 students from each school met in creativity labs in Lernagog and Arteni. Team building exercises and group discussions were organized during one-time visits of Ferrahian and Manoogian-Demirjian AGBU schools. Based on this experience it is expected to have more expanded and project-based sister school program in 2016.

### **Outputs**

Overall 40 participants from 2 villages were involved in school connectivity activities.

## 8. Program Component: VISIT TO TUMO

### **Background**

Since 2013, within the framework of partnership with Oriflame, 20 students from Dalarik and Myasnikyan have been supported to have 2-year enrollment in TUMO classes and workshops on Game Development, Web design, Drawing and Photography.

### **Implementation**

The students visited TUMO twice a week and attended Cry Engine, Web Development and other workshops. Due to the success of the students, Oriflame prolonged its contract with COAF and in addition to the previous 2 years of their studies, students will have a chance to continue their lessons till June 2016.

### **Output**

- 20 students enrolled in TUMO classes
- 3 best students awarded prizes by Oriflame: laptop for the first-ranked student and tablets for the second and third.

## 9. Program Component: SCHOLARSHIPS

### **Background**

Starting from 2014, COAF has been partnering with HSBC Bank Armenia, which has been providing annually USD 20,000 grant for scholarships to cover university and college fees of students from COAF beneficiary communities. The students are being selected based on the M criteria:

- (a) **Merit-based:** These awards are based on a student's academic, artistic, athletic or other abilities, and often factor in an applicant's extracurricular activities and community service record.
- (b) **Need-based:** These awards are based on the student's and family's financial record. They can also be given to students with disabilities.
- (c) **Career-specific:** These are scholarships awarded to students who plan to pursue a specific field of study, usually for careers in high-need areas, such as Psychology, Pedagogy, Social Sciences/Social Work, and Agriculture.

#### Ovsanna's chance

Ovsanna, from Vanand had a dream to study at university. But after she got her addition at Pedagogical University in 2012, shockingly, she had to drop out a week after for not affording the tuition fee.

*"Luckily, COAF was starting a student scholarship program with HSBC bank then. They asked me if I was ready to apply and take exams one more time. I had just a month to prepare but I took the risk and passed the exams! I became a history student and got a full scholarship from COAF! That's an incredible gift for me. Due to COAF, I realized I should never give up" Ovsanna says.*

### **Implementation**

Out of 20 students selected in August, 2014, 10 continued receiving scholarships in 2015. The decision to continue students' scholarship for the second year was taken on **Merit-based** and **Need-based** criteria, while also considering their demonstrated commitment and record for initiating and carrying out community service projects.

With the new grant in 2015, an announcement for scholarships award was disseminated in all COAF villages. More than 80 students applied and underwent similar selection process like in 2014 (applications, home-visits, interviews, shortlisting). As a result, 19 students have been selected from Armavir, Aragatsotn, and Lori marzes.

### **Output**

- 14 students received scholarships to continue their studies in higher educational institutions for the second year.
- 19 students received scholarships for 2015.
- 10 community projects implemented by the scholarship recipients, including running of various after school clubs for school students, environmental projects, etc.

## **10. Program Component: SPECIAL PROJECTS, ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

### **Background**

The necessity of establishing a COAF Alumni Association has been discussed in early 2015 and became a reality in December 2015, after some meetings with the group of active graduates of COAF programs from different villages in Armavir and Aragatsotn regions.

The purpose of the project is on the one hand to create links with all COAF graduates, so they engage in supporting COAF programs and causes with/through their volunteer involvement in fundraising and/or PR events. On the other hand, the project aims at giving assistance to all new graduates in their relevant fields with consultancy and counseling and also at showing and confirming that the idea of giving back is in the core of COAF mission and sustainability.

### **Implementation**

Overall, graduates from 8 villages have joined as the founding board of the association. The board will meet at least once a month and will let all members know about the topics they discuss and decisions they make during the meetings. It is expected to have 3 gatherings for all the members of the Association. In addition, meetings in each village in Armavir will be conducted to recruit new members.

## **11. OTHER INITIATIVES**

Other activities not included in the annual plan and implemented in 2015 are:

- COAF kids' participation in TEDx Kids and TEDx Youth;
- Three courses on Summer Schools and extracurricular activities, initiating community projects in partnership with volunteers of the US Peace Corps, Birthright Armenia, AUA interns, etc.;
- Creative Writing conducted by Birthright volunteers for all Access students for more than 6 months;
- Arts therapy and music therapy workshops conducted for teachers by 2 volunteers in Lori and Armavir marzes;
- Cooperation with the American University of Armenia to involve intern students in COAF projects;
- Celebration of International Child Protection Day in Lori and Armavir marzes in June;
- Sports equipment was provided to Toumanyan School gym, following \$1000 donation from an individual from the US;
- Technical contribution was provided for the development of SMART curriculum.

Appendix 1

**Table 1: Summary of main Education program outputs 2015**

| <b>Program components and outputs</b>  | <b>Achieved in 2015</b> |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>1. Capacity Building of Teachers</b>  |                         |
| Number of teachers trained as part of all education programs   | 183                     |
| Number of kindergarten students participated in early music education workshops conducted in 10 villages   | 140                     |
| DreamDo projects implemented, including a newspaper published on the Centenary of the Armenian Genocide, folk dance costumes and costumes for performance knitted for Vanand, Arteni and Dalarik primary school. | 10                      |
| School principals enrolled in administrators' network  | 21                      |
| <b>2. After school activities: Extracurricular groups and Championship Events</b>  |                         |
| Extracurricular groups/clubs operated in 12 target villages at programs' support   | 21                      |
| Participants involved in extracurricular groups  | 500                     |
| Number of students participated in championship events   | 188                     |
| Kindergarten students participated in Sportland in June 2015.  | 80                      |
| <b>3. Democracy and Civic Activism</b>   |                         |
| Number of schools involved in Student Councils project   | 11                      |
| Members of student councils volunteered during summer camps  | 20                      |
| Number of debate clubs   | 7                       |
| Students engaged in Debate Clubs activities to improve critical thinking skills  | 80                      |
| Number of students enrolled in Aflatoun clubs  | 150                     |
| Number of Aflatoun clubs   | 8                       |
| <b>4. English Language Instruction</b>   |                         |
| Number of students improved their English skills   | 200                     |
| Number of beneficiary villages   | 8                       |
| <b>5. Summer Schools</b>   |                         |
| Number of students enrolled  | 750                     |
| Number of beneficiary villages   | 9                       |
| <b>6. Media Literacy Summer Camp</b>   |                         |
| Number of students enrolled  | 19                      |
| Number of beneficiary villages   | 7                       |
| <b>7. School Connectivity</b>  |                         |
| Number of students enrolled  | 40                      |
| Number of schools  | 2                       |
| <b>8. TUMO</b>   |                         |
| Number of students enrolled  | 20                      |
| <b>9. Scholarships</b>   |                         |
| Number of beneficiary students   | 31                      |
| Number of community projects initiated by students   | 10                      |
| <b>GENERAL STATISTICS</b>  |                         |
| Number of partner schools  | 21                      |
| Number of volunteers from Peace Corps, Birthright, and other organizations served for Education projects   | 18                      |
| Number of target villages  | 18                      |

## Health Program Annual Report 2015

Health Program is an integral part of COAF's holistic approach to sustainable rural development. The program has worked closely with rural population and health providers to ensure high quality of primary health services, promotion of healthy behaviors, early detection and timely management of diseases. COAF prioritizes health promotion, prevention and early detection of diseases as incomparably higher cost-effective health care interventions, as compared to treatment, including costs associated with reaching to far-located high quality secondary and tertiary facilities concentrated in the capital of the country. COAF strongly believes that good health of children and their caregivers is essential for sustainable rural development.

In the reporting period, the program worked in 4 regions of Armenia: Armavir, Aragatsotn, Lori and Gegharkunik. Much effort was made to develop sustainability mechanisms and unify the program intervention approaches in Armavir and Aragatsotn regions, where those have reached their advanced stage. In the region of Lori where COAF has rapidly entered and expanded in the last year or so, health programs were introduced in a new mode considering its remoteness from our country office in Yerevan and lessons learnt in our "elder" target areas, leading to make programming revisions for utmost effectiveness and efficiency.

The main Health Program components for 2015 included:

- School Health Promotion
- School Nutrition
- Dental Health
- Improving Primary Health Services
- Health Screenings and Community Health Education.

*The summary of main program outputs is provided in Appendix 2.*

To complement interventions planned for 2015, the program has successfully engaged with partners and volunteers to bring an added value in target communities and COAF's positioning in health improvement. Below are a few highlights of those intervention, while others can be found in the last section of Health Program report.

- *Joint Event with ABMDR (Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry)* was organized for celebration of the World Marrow Donor Day. Over 200 people donated blood samples in Myasnikyan community Health Center, and over 150 swab samples were given by those interested to become enlisted in the Registry. This 2-day event had the largest media coverage among all COAF events in 2015.
- *AAHPO (Armenian American Health Professionals Organization) Mission* in 2015 was the largest one hosted by COAF, compared to those held in previous years. During their 5-day visits Diaspora Armenian doctors and nurses from the US served over 200 patients, and mentored local health personnel in Lori target communities.
- COAF has been part of "One Symbolic Village Project", along with 5 other major local organizations, to commemorate the Centennial of Armenian Genocide. Being the lead coordinator for health developing in Martuni village in Gegharkunik region, COAF's

interventions included renovation of Martuni Health Post, population health screenings, including dental screenings for children.

## 1. *Program Component: SCHOOL HEALTH PROMOTION*

### **Background**

A variety of health promotion interventions for schools were implemented through health education training sessions, healthy lifestyle clubs, school campaigns, small grants for schools, whole-school events and other activities. This year's focus was enriching curriculum of health education topics and introducing the program in a new region of Lori. The program has targeted *school students, parents and teachers* of twelve schools from 11 villages of Armavir/Aragatsotn region (Myanikyan, Shenik, Lernagog, Arteni, Karakert, Dalarik, Argina, Hatsik, Getashen, Vanand and Sardarapat), and 10 villages of newly introduced Lori region (Karinj, Marts, Dsegh, Debet, Tumanyan, Dzoragyugh, Antaramut, Mets Ayrum, Akori and Arevatsag). The *goal* of the project is to improve health literacy and develop life skills, as well as to ensure healthy environment which are conducive to individual and community health.

### **Implementation**

*Health education seminars:* School-based health education seminars covered healthy nutrition, general and oral hygiene, eye care. Children from all grades participated in seminars on healthy nutrition and oral hygiene, while 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> graders also participated in seminars on eye care. In addition, a new topic on reproductive health was first taught to the 12<sup>th</sup> graders. The seminars were carried out by COAF-trained health educators from target schools.

*Training of trainers:* Continued support and professional development of local health educators was ensured throughout the year in old and new villages. TOT topics included:

- First Aid as a new topic to enrich Healthy Lifestyle Club curriculum for relatively new villages of Armavir/ Aragatsotn (Sardarapat, Hatsik, Getashen and Vanand);
- Reproductive Health as a new topic to be taught to the 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders in all 12 beneficiary schools of Armavir/Aragatsotn;

- Oral Hygiene and Eye Care for all 10 schools in Lori.

*Healthy lifestyle clubs* from all 12 schools of Armavir/ Aragatsotn continued to function with COAF’s support. First aid training was added as an additional topic for healthy lifestyle clubs and taught for one whole semester.

*Health Promoting School Grants* are intended to support schools in implementing bright ideas requiring some financial investment for whole-school health promotion. This year the grants were announced among 12 schools of Armavir/Aragatsotn regions and 7 schools proposed projects. The selection committee, consisting of COAF employees and partners from other Armenian NGOs involved in school health promotion and adolescent health, has chosen 3 finalists including Karakert School #2, Sardarapat and Lernagog schools. Karakert School implemented a series of events for promotion of healthy nutrition and physical activity, including puppet theater about health benefits of fruit and vegetables, cooking classes in cafeterias, bicycle marathon throughout the village and others. Sardarapat School repainted their gym to get rid of a toxic paint vapors inhaled by students and arranged number of sports competitions for students and teachers. Lernagog School obtained hiking equipment and supplies to arrange hiking trips and teach the students first aid tips.



*“I decided to make an anti-smoking presentation for my fellow soldiers. I also demonstrated them some anti-smoking posters and DVDs that COAF had given to me. Actually, a couple of them gave up smoking after the presentation and the lieutenant colonel thanked me for that! Thus, I can definitely say that COAF has contributed to the healthy lifestyle of a whole battalion!”*

Manuel, healthy lifestyle club alumnus

The first-aid training course for Armavir region health educators was a real life-turning point for Anna, Karakert village Health Educator. “I couldn’t even think that I would put the course knowledge into action very soon. However, my first aid skills became really handy when a gym teacher had an epileptic seizure and fell down at a school staff meeting.” As a fellow teacher remembers, “Everybody started screaming and panicking. Anna was the only one who moved all the furniture and put the gym teacher into a position where he would have no chance to get harmed. She just calmly did all the right things and the guy regained consciousness.”

*Inter-village Competition on First Aid* was organized between 8 schools of Armavir and Aragatsotn regions. This competition allowed healthy lifestyle club students to enhance their knowledge gained through one whole semester of learning first aid skills. The competition contained theoretical and practical tasks with simulations. Jury consisted of COAF doctors, a representative from the Ministry of Health and a doctor reanimatologist from Erebuni hospital. Lernagog students won the grand prix (bowling game in Yerevan), generously provided by one of the jurors, a doctor-reanimatologist Hasmik Kocharyan. This competition was a real success worth repeating annually.

*Health Education Materials:* To support its school and community-based health interventions COAF continuously develops and reprints various leaflets, booklets, books. This year the following new materials were developed and

printed: booklet for patients with hypertension, healthy plate booklet for patients with hypertension, healthy plate booklet for patients with diabetes, book on reproductive health for school health educators. COAF also provided schools with CPR mannequins and dummy jaws to teach students CPR and oral hygiene skills.

## Outputs

- Health education seminars were carried out throughout the year for all children from **12 schools**.
- **20 health educators** were trained on reproductive health as a new topic in health education curriculum and were provided with technical support throughout the year. Training of health educators is viewed as local capacity building, which facilitates passing ownership of the health education activities to schools.
- **180 high school students** participated in healthy lifestyle club meetings on weekly basis
- **3 schools** received small grants for implementation of health promoting projects within their schools, such as healthy nutrition and physical activity whole-school promotion events, repainting of gym, sports contests and hiking. Local initiative and ownership of programs improved due to small grant opportunities for schools.
- Over **3,500 students** from 12 school continuously received healthy messages through health education seminars and whole-school events, resulting in improved knowledge and promoting healthy behavior among children.

## 2. Program Component: SCHOOL NUTRITION

### Background

Poor nutritional status of children was shown to have a detrimental effect on their general health and academic performance. Provision of healthy meals at schools is very important for a growing body. Unfortunately, most of Armenian schools do not provide nutrition due to lack of appropriate infrastructure and resources. The majority of Armenian children skip the breakfast and stay hungry at school or consume unhealthy snacks sold in and around the schools, resulting in the development of unhealthy habits and health problems. COAF Nutrition Program is trying to address the issue in rural areas by providing healthy meals to primary school children in rural schools. In the last 4 years COAF renovated and equipped 13 school cafeterias and installed 14 brushodromes = school-based tooth brushing stations.

### Implementation

Overall 13 schools received support from Nutrition Program in 2015, where 6 schools continued receiving financial support to cover the cost of food and hygienic supplies, 6 schools were newly renovated and fully equipped, but haven't started receiving financial support for food and hygienic supplies yet, and 1 school was both renovated and started receiving financial support from COAF in the reporting period.

*Renovation and Equipment of School Cafeterias:* This year we have changed our approach of cafeteria renovation by providing renovation materials only, instead of covering all renovation costs. This allowed to support more schools and decrease per school renovation costs. Beneficiary schools were selected on a competitive basis, where the amount of their financial and in-kind input was the main selection criterion. As a result, 5 schools in Lori (Karinj, Dzoragyukh, Debet, Tumanyan, Dsegh) and 1 school in Armavir (Dalarik) received materials and did renovation of schools on their own. It is worth mentioning that schools committed and actually had a substantial input both financially (purchasing additional materials and paying the workers) and in-kind (participation in renovation). During renovation, one could observe a picture where the principal, teachers, parents worked on the site helping each other out. Even though the quality of renovation varied from school to school, overall it was pretty good and quite high in some of the schools. Children, parents and teachers were very happy to acquire this “bright spot” in their schools on the background of really dilapidated conditions. Along with the mentioned 6 cafeterias, a cafeteria in the village of Getashen (in Armavir Region), whose renovation was completed in the first quarter of 2015 as part of the capital renovation of the entire school, brings the number of newly established cafeterias to 7 in the reporting period.

*“Hot meals for the younger students, a basketball team, a puppet theater, a healthy lifestyle club... We have all these things due to COAF but we are not going to stop at this. Now that we have the “tools” we’ll do our best to improve the community life.”*

Koryun Makaryan, Lernagog School Principal



*Supporting school cafeterias with fresh food and hygienic supplies:* To ensure sustainability of Nutrition Program COAF provides financial assistance for provision of food in established cafeterias in 3 consecutive phases. In the first phase COAF fully covers costs of fresh food including dairy, meat, fruit and vegetables. In the second phase COAF covers 50 % of the fresh food costs, while schools involve parents, local farmers and other sources to cover the remaining costs. Hence, in September 2015, 6 school cafeterias in Armavir/Aragatsotn already entered their second phase of COAF support. These cafeterias included Karakert (2 schools), Hatsik, Getashen, Aragatsavan, and Vanand cafeterias. Only Lernagog cafeteria continued to receive full support from COAF. This exception was made due to extreme poverty of the village and inability of parents to share the costs of food. It is worth mentioning that Lernagog is the only one among COAF target communities included in the World Bank list of the poorest communities of Armenia. In the third phase COAF will support beneficiary schools in searching alternative sources, donors and supporters to continue covering 50 % of food costs continuously for at least a year. Another factor contributing to the sustainability of COAF nutrition program is the partnership with World Food Program, which in addition to fresh food we give provides schools with “dry” foods including grains, flour, and vegetable oil. Besides covering food costs, COAF also covers the costs of hygienic supplies of established cafeterias. While relatively old cafeterias of Armavir and Aragatsotn regions entered into the second phase of COAF support, the newly established cafeterias (5 in Lori and 1 in Armavir) will start receiving financial support to cover fresh food and hygienic costs starting February 2016.

## **Outputs**

- **5 cafeterias** in Lori and **2** in Armavir were fully renovated and equipped for the benefit of **448** primary school **children**.
- **737 children** from **7 schools** in Armavir/Aragatsotn were provided healthy meals on daily basis and hygienic supplies.
- In addition to providing meals on a daily basis throughout the schoolyear, the cafeterias were also utilized to support other activities, such as:
  - ✓ provision of food to children attending summer camps – **565 children** from **6 villages**;
  - ✓ catering and provision of food related to school events, guests and donors visiting the villages;
  - ✓ cafeteria kitchens were utilized to teach healthy nutrition, cooking and serving techniques by teachers of life skill lessons and healthy lifestyle clubs.

### 3. Program Component: COMBATTING DENTAL CARIES

#### Background

Prevalence of dental caries is extremely high in Baghramyan district of Armavir Region. Dental screening of primary school children revealed mean of 9 affected teeth per child. Even newly erupted permanent teeth in children were already decayed. In 2015 COAF conducted another screening in new target region of Lori where the prevalence was also quite high (mean of 6 decayed teeth per child). Reasons for high prevalence of dental caries are complex, including lack of knowledge and skills on dental hygiene in children and their parents, unhealthy nutritional habits, low affordability and accessibility of dental care and fluoride deficiency in drinking water. This multidimensional program including education, prevention and treatment components is directed to combat dental caries – a major public health issue among rural children in Armenia.

#### Implementation

*Oral hygiene:* The intervention consists of health education activities and oral hygiene activities. School children from 12 villages are continuously trained to brush teeth properly. Brushodromes (school-based tooth brushing stations) were utilized to further promote tooth brushing habits in children. Many of the school children have no running water in their houses, others do not have a toothbrush. COAF provides the first and second graders with toothbrushes and toothpastes to brush their teeth every day in school brushodromes adjacent to school cafeterias established by COAF. We believe that this intervention will help children develop a lifelong healthy habit.



New Brushodrome with toothbrushes installed under water taps in Getashen School

*Dental Fluoridation:* Topical dental fluoridation through application of fluoride gel on teeth is another component of the program directed to protect teeth from decay. The intervention has been done twice a year in all primary school children from 9 villages of Armavir/Aragatsotn (Lernagog, Dalarik, Miasnikian, Karakert, Shenik, Baghramian, Arteni, Yervandashat, Bagaran). This service is provided by a trained nurse. COAF intends to evaluate the program effectiveness before expanding it to other villages. Midterm evaluation is planned for 2016.

*Free Dental Care:* Treatment of decayed teeth of children is often not affordable for many rural families. The program supports provision of free dental care to children from socially vulnerable families in two dental clinics, established by COAF. Types of free care include dental fillings and extractions. The service is provided by COAF-contracted local dentists. Special effort is made to save and treat permanent teeth in children.

### **Outputs**

- **7 new brushodromes** were established in addition to 7 already existing, bringing the number of facilities up to **14 functional brushodromes**;
- **474 first and second grade children** from 8 schools received toothbrushes and toothpastes. These children brush their teeth every day in brushodromes throughout the academic year;
- Around **800 children** from **9 villages** underwent topical dental fluoridation to prevent tooth decay;
- **356 children** benefited from COAF-sponsored free dental care. **Overall 689 tooth fillings and 39 tooth extractions** were done for free among children from socially vulnerable families.

## **4. Program Component: IMPROVING PRIMARY HEALTH SERVICES**

### **Background**

The program includes a set of activities for local health providers and health facilities, including supportive supervision, continuous medical education, networking of doctors, supporting health facilities with equipment and provision of some basic medication. The goal of the program is to improve the quality of primary health services in rural areas.

### **Implementation**

*Supportive supervision (SS)* was implemented through observations, monitoring and hands on trainings of family doctors. To achieve its goal this program introduces evidence based guidelines and application of specific quality assessment indicators into practice, where possible. In view of COAF's expansion, target health services for supportive supervision were narrowed down to include the following four areas of pediatric care: well-baby visits, integrated management of childhood illnesses, child health screenings at schools, and health facility infection control. To unify these assessments in a large number of target villages, specific instruments were developed and applied for each of these areas. The instruments were already tested in villages of Armavir and Lori and will further be used for regular assessment of health services. COAF supportive supervisor pays special attention and works closely with health providers to improve the gaps revealed through the mentioned assessments.

*Continuous medical education (CME):* Due to COAF's partnership with a number of Diaspora Armenian doctors, doctors and nurses from target villages are regularly exposed to news and developments in their respective fields through lectures and seminars provided by foreign doctors. This year we had the following CME events:

- 1) 6 lectures were carried out for rural doctors in Myasnikyan community by Diaspora Armenian Doctors, members of the Doctors' Mission 2015 on June 26th. Overall around 30 health providers were present at the lectures from Karakert, Hatsik, Myasnikyan, Armavir city, Aragatsavan.

Lectures covered topics on eye diseases, pediatric care, anemias, STIs and modern methods of contraception, rehabilitation therapy, and music therapy provided by doctors Larry Najarian (ophthalmologist), Garbis Baydar (pediatrician), Debra Ferman (oncologist-hematologist), Lucy Tovmasian (gynecologist), Anna Dermenchian (RN), Varujan Maljian (psychiatrist) respectively.

- 2) Canadian Armenian doctor Raffi Vartazarmian visited villages of Karakert, Hatsik and Dsegh to showcase portable ultrasound machine for early diagnoses and management of emergency conditions in a remote rural setting. COAF, along with Dr. Vartazarmian, will further try to find potential donors for providing rural facilities with portable ultrasound machines and train the health providers to use them.



- 3) Diaspora Armenia midwives Martha Budakian and Brenda Surabian visited COAF-supported communities of Myasnikyan and Arteni to exchange experience and examine pregnant women with local rural midwives, as well as to provide counseling for healthier pregnancy outcomes.

*Network of rural doctors:* Doctor and nurse networking meetings were dedicated to the discussion of important primary healthcare topics and implementation of new programs in rural health facilities. The following two networking meetings were carried out in 2015.

- 1) The first meeting took place in village Byurakan, attended by almost 40 doctors, nurses and invited health professionals. The results of last year's population screening and community health education programs were presented by Armavir rural health facilities on the first day of the meeting, followed by the discussion of successes and challenges. The second part of the event on that day was organized in cooperation with Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), which invited three lecturers from Yerevan State Medical University to deliver lectures on bone marrow donorship, detection and management of hematologic diseases at primary care, chronic pain management. The lectures were provided by doctors Mihran Nazaretyan (hematologist), Yervand Hakobyan (hematologist), Nara Movsisyan (anesthesiologist).
- 2) The second meeting was held in December in Yerevan at Izmirlyan Medical Center and Kumuryan podiatric center. Rural doctors had a chance to tour around two clinics and get familiar with their services and hear lectures on two important topics: detection and management of vascular and proctologic diseases at primary level. The lectures were held by Dr. Vardan Voskanyan (vascular surgeon) and Dr. Aram Hakobyan (proctologist).

*Equipment and drugs:* Rural health facilities were provided with some basic equipment, supplies and medication including ECG machine spare parts, rapid strep tests, urine tests, prenatal vitamins, Ob/Gyn speculums, fetal doppler monitors, urinary catheters, gloves, etc. Some part of these supplies was kindly donated by Diaspora Armenian doctors visiting COAF villages and the other part was purchased and provided by COAF.

## Outputs

- Supportive Supervision of around **50 rural health providers** was carried out.
- **30 rural doctors** attended seminars held by Diaspora Armenian doctors
- Around **30 rural health providers** were involved on the Doctor/Nurse network meetings
- Rural population of all target villages benefited from improved primary health services, diagnostic tests and medications.

## **5. Program Component: HEALTH SCREENINGS AND COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION**

### Background

This program implies transferring ownership of 2 programs, previously implemented solely by COAF doctors, to local health providers and health care institutions, providing them with financial and technical support for implementation. The above mentioned programs include Women Health Screenings and Community-based Health Education. The goal of Women Health Screenings is early detection and improved management of breast cancer, thyroid diseases, cervical cancer, and prevention of abortions. The main goal of Community-based Health Education Program is improved management and compliance to treatment of patients with chronic illnesses (high blood pressure, asthma, diabetes) and ensuring healthier pregnancy, delivery and child care among pregnant women and young mothers. Five villages/ primary health care facilities (Hatsik, Vanand, Yervandashat, Bagaran, Sardarapat) started to implement both programs on their own in addition to 7 villages (Karakert, Argina, Dalarik, Lernagog, Miasnikian, Shenik, Baghramyanyan) which have already been implementing the program on their own since 2014.

### Implementation

*Introduction phase:* Before launching the program, we have taken the following steps to ensure its smooth implementation:

- Introduction of the program among rural health providers
- Selection of program implementing teams from each facility
- Development of a training schedule and implementation plan by rural health providers
- Training for teams on their specific tasks
- Signing institutional contracts with all health facilities to implement the program.

Throughout the initial phase, teams consisting of a doctor and 1-2 nurses were selected from each health facility. Each team covered their respective village and a smaller village affiliated to their facility. Rural nurses played a key role by performing most of the screenings and health education tasks supervised by rural and COAF doctors.

In the *Implementation phase* the teams carried out the following tasks:

- *Early detection of breast cancer and thyroid diseases:* Trained health providers carried out breast and thyroid gland palpations. As necessary, women were further referred to the Myasnikyan Health Center for ultrasound examination. Surveillance of findings, patient follow-up and referrals were ensured. All women also got individual counseling and booklets on breast self-exam techniques. In the village of Sardarapat the implementation costs of this component were co-shared with UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief).

- *Early detection of cervical cancer:* This program component earlier implemented by COAF started to be fully covered by the State since 2015. In the reporting period COAF had no financial investment in this component, but provided some technical support on smear taking technique. This is a good example of success towards ensuring sustainability. The program initially started by COAF has been fully adopted locally and will continually receive financial support from the State.
- *Health Education on Prenatal and Postnatal Care for Pregnant women:* Groups of expecting women and young mothers were educated by trained health provider based on COAF's health educational modules.
- *Patient Education for Patients with Chronic Illnesses:* Group seminars for patients with hypertension and diabetes were carried out by a trained nurse based on COAF's health educational modules.
- *Counseling on Family Planning and Breast Self-exam:* All women involved in screenings received counseling and educational leaflets on modern methods of contraception and early detection of breast and cervical cancer.

### Outputs

- Around **1,095 women** from **12 villages** underwent breast and thyroid gland palpations by rural health providers. All women received counseling and leaflets on modern methods of contraception and early detection of breast and cervical cancer. **490 women** further underwent breast and thyroid gland ultrasound exam at the Myasnikyan Health Center.
- Pap smears were taken in **518 women**.
- Around **400 patients** with hypertension, diabetes and asthma and around **386 pregnant women and young mothers** participated in seminars on Patient Education and Pre/Postnatal Care respectively.
- **12 rural health facilities** (7 in 2014 and 5 in 2015) took over women health screenings and community-based health education responsibilities previously implemented by visiting contracted health providers. The program focused on strengthening the capacity of rural nurses. 18 nurses, 9 family physicians and 1 pediatrician were trained to provide all of the above mentioned services.

## 6. Additional and cross-cutting activities

*Joint Event with ABMDR (Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry):* Two organizations partnered for the celebration of the World Marrow Donor Day, organized globally for the first time on September 19<sup>th</sup>. The first action of the event took place in COAF beneficiary villages, by organizing a donor drive resulting in 216 villagers donating blood samples to ABMDR, an unprecedented large number of donors registering in the AMBDR in one day (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVFBRoZuymw>). The second action took place in Yerevan, Cascade area where the public had a chance to get acquainted with the programs of both COAF and AMBDR, and give swab samples to become enlisted in the Registry. Famous show business stars and public figures, such as Tigran Hamasyan, Vahe Ter-Minsayan, Tigran Petrosyan, Arminka, Alla Levonyan, DJ Vaccina joined the cause (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=keam1by940g>). Partners of the event were Cafesjian Center for the Arts and Gourmet Dourme chocolate brand. The event was also attended by COAF Founder Garo Armen, ABMDR Directors Mihran Nazaretyan and Sevak Avagyan, Deputy Minister of Health Sergey Khachatryan and other esteemed guests.

Rural children from COAF-supported villages prepared a flash mob dance and released 100 air balloons to symbolize the culture of giving. It is worth mentioning that this event has become the one having the largest media coverage among all events COAF implemented in 2015. It was also covered and acknowledged by the International World Marrow Donor Day Organizing committee and was nominated for an award (<https://www.facebook.com/events/1665133673766163/>).

*“We were all impressed with how much the local health care providers want to learn and share information. Many of us are planning to remain in communication after we return home”.*

Garbis Baydar, MD took special satisfaction that the doctor he worked with will help many more patients than the ones he was able to see alone. This is his second mission and many of us want to return here as well.



Dr. Lawrence Najarian in action

*AAHPO (Armenian American Health Professionals Organization) Mission in COAF target villages:* COAF hosted the largest in its history mission of Diaspora Armenian doctors and nurses from the US in summer 2015, including Dr. Garbis Baydar (pediatrician), Larry Najarian (ophthalmologist), Lucy Tovmasian (gynecologist), Greg Koobatian (gastroenterologist), Joyce Kurdian (dentist), Debra Ferman (oncohematologist), Meline Karakashian (psychologist), Varujan Maljian (psychiatrist), Anna Dermenchyan (RN), Lousine Daderian-Huckabay (nurse), Rosine Der Tavitian (nurse), Zarmine Naccashian (nurse), Claire Alexanian (medical student), Ani Ohanian (medical student).

This large group of health professionals visited COAF target villages of Miasnikian in Armavir marz and Dsegh in Lori marz to see patients and to deliver lectures for rural doctors. During the 5 intensive days of work, the mission’s doctors, coupled with local doctors, saw over 200 patients from the mentioned and surrounding villages and consulted on certain complicated cases with each other. Diaspora Armenian doctors also delivered lectures on various health topics for the rural doctors (see CME section above). Reflections of both sides on this experience were very positive and it was decided to repeat the initiative on annual basis (<http://www.aahpo.org/blog/?s=Garbis+Baydar>).



First interactive session between town Tumanyan and Netherlands

*First Interactive Session at Tumanyan SMART Room:* The first interactive health education session on the importance of healthy nutrition and physical activity was carried out in Tumanyan SMART Room, with the participation of 16 high school students and 4 teachers from Tumanyan, as well as the SHE (Schools for Health in Europe) coordinator Goof Buijs, the Netherlands-based Nutritionist. The session provided useful links to school health promotion and showcased the application of technology in the newly built SMART rooms, allowing children and youth from the most remote and neglected rural areas of Armenia to connect with the best experts around the world to gain knowledge.

*One Symbolic Village Project:* COAF became a part of this project along with 5 other organizations including Armenian Missionary Association of America, World Vision, Fund for Armenian Relief, Development Principles and Shen NGO to commemorate the Centennial of Armenian Genocide. Village Martuni in Gegharkunik region was chosen as a target, since many of the village founders were Genocide survivors. The expected duration of this project is 3 years. Each organization undertook specific field of involvement for developing Martuni village. COAF undertook health interventions and has already accomplished the following:

- a. Renovation of Martuni Health Post. COAF provided construction materials for the renovation of the health post which was in quite dilapidated conditions. The renovation itself was done by the village municipality. Physical conditions of the health post are now appropriate for the village nurse to provide care, as well as to host doctors from COAF and regional health facilities for population screenings and care.
- b. Population Health Screenings: COAF doctors, along with contracted ultrasound specialist, visited the village of Martuni several times in the reporting period for health screenings of the population. Local nurse, family doctor, and gynecologist from higher level health facility of town Tchambarak were invited to participate in these screenings and gain technical support from COAF team.
- c. Screening of School Children for Dental Caries: The local schoolchildren were screened for prevalence of dental caries to assess the need for interventions. The prevalence was quite high (mean of 7 decayed teeth per child). Next year we are planning to implement educational activities to improve oral hygiene habits of Martuni children.

*Health Program Volunteers 2015:* This year we had quite a large number of volunteers and interns including Brenda Surabian, Jaimie Collar, Lousine Aga-Sargisian, Anahit Movsian, Maral Hindoyan, Alexandra Kiladjian, Karin Karbouian, Janani Karali. Obviously, COAF was able to utilize their skills in quite an effective way, thus substantially enriching our health educational resources, collecting and entering quantitative data, improving skills of local health providers and health educators (<https://www.coafkids.org/villagelog?=&storyid2265=72&ncs2265=3>).

*Establishing and Maintaining Partnerships:* The program has effectively continued to work with existing partners and establish new partnerships with a number of organizations and individuals including Fund for Armenian Relief, Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry, Karageusian Foundation, Yerevan State Medical University, College of Health Sciences at the American University of Armenia, European Network of Health Promoting Schools, Save the Children, World Vision, United Methodist Committee on Relief, Development Principles, Armenian Missionary Association of America, Armenian American Health Professionals Organization and others.

## Appendix 2

### Summary of main health program outputs 2015

| Programmatic directions and outputs | Achieved in 2015 |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>4. School Health Promotion</b>   |                  |
| Schools involved in the program     | 12               |

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| School health educators trained on new topics   | 20           |
| Students involved in healthy lifestyle clubs  | 180          |
| Schools receiving grants for health promotion   | 3            |
| Students exposed to healthy messages  | 3,500        |
| <b>5. School Nutrition</b>  |              |
| Cafeterias renovated and fully equipped   | 7 (total 13) |
| Children getting healthy meals at schools on a daily basis  | 737          |
| <b>6. Combatting Dental Caries</b>  |              |
| Brushodromes established  | 7 (total 14) |
| Children utilizing brushodromes on daily basis  | 474          |
| Children undergoing dental fluoridation   | 800          |
| Children receiving free dental care   | 356          |
| <b>7. Improving Primary Health Services</b>   |              |
| Rural doctors benefiting from Supportive Supervision  | 50           |
| Rural doctors benefiting from seminars provided by Diaspora Armenian doctors                      | 30           |
| Rural health providers participating in Doctor/Nurse network meetings                             | 30           |
| <b>8. Health Screenings and Community Health Education</b>  |              |
| Women undergoing breast and thyroid clinical exam   | 1,095        |
| Women undergoing ultrasound exam of breast and thyroid gland                                      | 490          |
| Women screened for cervical cancer  | 518          |
| Population participating in community-based health education seminars                             | 786          |
| Rural health facilities implementing screenings and community-based health education on their own | 12           |
| Doctors and nurses trained to provide screenings and community-based health education             | 28           |

# Child and Family Support Program Annual Report 2015

In 2015 Child and Family Support program provided rural children and their parents with psychological, social assistance as well as support in speech and learning difficulties, helping them to overcome various challenges, difficult life conditions and problems, and developing their skills to become more self-sufficient.

The main programmatic components for 2015 were as follows:

- Social Assistance
- Psychological Assistance
- Support to Children with Speech Difficulties
- Support to Children with Learning Difficulties.

*The summary of main program outputs is provided in Appendix 3.*

## 1. Program Component: SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The project goal is to mitigate social vulnerability risks of underprivileged children and families through ensuring access for them to professional social work services.

### **Background**

Throughout the year, COAF social workers have provided social services in 8 communities of Armavir and Aragatsotn regions, namely Myasnikyan, Getashen, Karakert, Dalarik, Lernagog, Hatsik, Arteni, Aragatsavan. The provided services included social-legal counseling and support to vulnerable children and their families to address difficult life conditions and various social issues, as well as to enhance their awareness and take advantage of different state systems of social support and benefits. The collaboration with multi-professional team was a good approach to provide comprehensive support and assistance with sustainable solutions. Another important approach was that the social workers tried to involve the beneficiaries themselves in developing solutions regarding their own lives, by providing beneficiaries with necessary information or knowledge, helping to develop life and communication skills.

### **Implementation**

In 2015 an important change was made in the approach of implementing social services. Before, the main focus was to provide legal-counseling services regarding state benefits, preparing necessary documents, etc. However as new social workers (SW) were recruited and trained, their scope of work was also revised to address various social issues and problems in communities. Namely, once a beneficiary applies to the SWs, they implement an overall assessment of the family conditions, social vulnerability, other issues or specific situations within the family and investigate the identified needs and problems deeply trying to reach to the roots and causes of the identified problems.

Among the main problems identified, the following issues should be mentioned:

- Interfamily unhealthy relations between couples which affects also their children
- Violence, negligence and lack of care towards children
- Domestic conflicts
- Bullying and peer oppression at schools and social environment, often accompanied with violence.

- Children’s school drop-outs
- Children rights violations.

Among the causes of the above mentioned problems, addressing the following has been at focus:

- Economic vulnerability, often extreme poverty, causing also social hardships.
- Lack of parental and household skills
- Law literacy and/or motivation in children’s upbringing and development
- Lack of knowledge and skills to create an enabling and nurturing atmosphere for children.

However, the experience and observations show that in many cases along with the mentioned problems there are other serious reasons as well, like lack of elementary skills of household keeping and managing wisely the family budget.

#### A case of poor money management

*A group of community youth collected and donated some money to a mother of vulnerable family, to buy “the daily bread”. But the mother spent all the money at once by buying sausages of rather suspicious quality and freshness, cigarettes, some sweets and the like. Instead, she could buy rice, vegetables or fresh meat and prepare healthy food for her children for several times.*

To tackle all the above mentioned issues the following interventions were implemented:

#### Support to vulnerable children and their families, including:

- Social assistance to vulnerable children or children in difficult living conditions and their family members through needs assessment, problem identification and referral to respective specialists, social-legal counseling, providing support in various social issues including finding health assets like eyeglasses, wheelchairs, etc.
- Provision of social-legal counselling to children and their family members
- Continuous capacity building for local social workers to be able to provide more professional services and interventions
- Referral of beneficiaries to state and non-state social institutions as per identified needs.

#### Summer Camps for socially vulnerable and disabled children

- In July, 4 children with physical disabilities from Dalarik, Karakert and Myasnikyan villages participated in a summer camp organized by Pyunic NGO. Camp activities included special rehabilitation exercises and procedures for disabled children.
- In August, 18 socially vulnerable children from Lernagog, Karakert, Myasnikyan, Hatsik, Aragatsavan were selected to attend summer camps in Tsakhkadzor organized by Tiramayr Hayastan organization from Gyumri. The children included in the list are either orphans or socially vulnerable children.

#### Trainings for parents and teachers

1. Child protection
2. Violence
3. Parental skills teaching
4. Pregnancy, legal issue
5. Child’s rights

#### Trainings for social workers

6. How to identify and assess vulnerable children and implement respective work
7. Case management
8. Counseling skills
9. Individual rehabilitation plan development skills
10. Conflict resolution
11. Capacity building for Getashen school inclusive team.

Another noteworthy intervention took place in Hatsik community where young people, along with COAF social worker, decided to clean the school area from garbage. The young people were so motivated by this initiative that decided to clean also other public areas in their community. This initiative was welcomed by the community members and the head of the community who suggested young people his support in their further activity.

### **Outputs**

- 1,757 home visits and individual counseling were made by social workers.
- 584 beneficiaries from 8 villages received social services like social-legal counselling, needs assessments and further work for solutions.
- 1 three-day professional enhancement workshop and more than 70 individual working sessions were held for local social workers.
- More than 300 children, parents and teachers participated in trainings.
- 22 socially vulnerable children were directed and supported to participate in summer camps, organized by Tiramayr Hayastan benevolent organization.

## **2. Program component: PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE**

The project goal is to create positive and supportive environment for child development through preventive and corrective psychological services and counseling.

### **Background**

At the beginning of the year only few of target communities had school psychologists. Even if they had, they were poorly capacitated with no guidelines or methodological tools provided. The majority of school psychologists had no practical experience and didn't even have the basic skills for working with schoolchildren. Therefore, CFSP project started providing support to school psychologists to capacitate them by providing methodological guidance and professional tools and materials. The COAF psychology expert developed a number of tools for school psychologists to be used in their everyday work. Also periodically on-job practical working meetings and theoretical trainings were organized for them.

Initially, the psychological assistance was provided in Myasnikyan, Karakert, Hatsik, Dalarik, Lernagog, and during the year Aragatsavan and Arteni joined the project. The support to school psychologists was provided in Myasnikyan, Karakert, Hatsik, Dalarik, Lernagog, Sardarapat, Baghramyán and during the year school psychologists from Getashen and Aragatsavan were also invited to participate in capacity building activities. During the

*As Kristine Tigranyan from Hatsik states, she had neither professional experience nor any materials for her work and did not know what to do. "I was afraid to enter school because I had no idea what I was going to do. But now everything has changed due to the support of COAF psychology expert. Now I enjoy my work and I know exactly how I can help my little clients"*

year, the second school in Karakert and Myasnikyan hired new psychologists and were included in COAF intervention as well.

The psychological assistance to beneficiaries was provided through individual and group psychological counseling, organizing workshops and seminars for parents and school staff, as well as promoting organization of community events. In communities where COAF had no local psychologists the services were provided through school psychologists with continuous methodological and technical support by COAF psychological expert.

Program beneficiaries included socially vulnerable children and children with difficult live conditions, their families, school psychologists and teachers.

The program has also two special interventions such as **A)** operating the **Myasnikyan Child Development Center (CDC)** and **B)** establishing a **Psychological Theatre**.

A) CDC has enrolled preschool children who do not attend kindergarten and have no opportunities to early learning development with a variety of activities and interventions aimed at developing their educational, social, and psychological potential. CDC has served toddlers (3-4 years old) and preschoolers (4-5 years old and 5-6) with socially vulnerable background and with various psychological problems and deviations.

*5-year-old Gayane from Myasnikyan has autism-like symptoms. She had serious delays in speech and general development and didn't want to communicate even with her family members. She was very aggressive to her younger brother. She didn't even let her mother take care of her. After being involved in CDC, Gayane has changed a lot. Now she participates in group activities, she communicates with her family members and other children and has even started to take care of her little brother.*

B) Psychological Theater was established in 2015 in Getashen as an alternative way to address psychological issues children suffer from. The theatre is an excellent opportunity to develop children's potential and talents along with identifying and addressing various issues, helping them. The theatre encourages children to analyze and understand their own problems, become friendlier and develop their communication skills, to overcome their interpersonal or interfamily difficulties through art and creativity instead of solving them by violence and aggression.

### **Implementation**

The psychological assistance and services were provided in three directions:

1. Psychological assistance through individual and group works
2. Myasnikyan Child Development Centre
3. Psychological Theatre

**Psychological assistance to socially vulnerable children and children with difficult life conditions and their parents, pregnant women, preschoolers, school psychologists, namely:**

- Individual and group psychological counseling, including home visits
- Awareness raising and capacity building trainings
- "Happy motherhood" - school for pregnant women
- Assessment of pre-school children for school readiness and undertaking corrective actions
- Psychological trainings for kindergarten children to improve their cognitive, emotional and communication skills
- Continuous local capacity building for local psychologists and school psychologists

- Publication of psychological leaflets.

As mentioned above, the cooperation with school psychologists was an important part of the psychological assistance component. Therefore, throughout the year continuous support was provided to them through capacity building trainings, on-job sessions, practical and methodological guidance. Another important promotion was developing and providing them with various practical tools and materials necessary for their everyday operation and work at schools. These were methodological guidelines, work plan samples, assessment tools and questionnaires, etc. During the reporting period support was provided to 15 school psychologists from beneficiary communities, of which 4 joining in at the beginning and the rest joining in during the year.

### Events

The local psychologists also organized and implemented a number of events in Karakert, Aragatsavan, Arteni, Getashen, Hatsik, Myasnikyan on “Family day”, “The sun in my heart” on Mothers’ Day, “Children against violence”, “Anti-bullying days in Karakert” which was implemented with COAF health project team.

#### **A) CDC provided the following services:**

- Emotional and Cognitive development of pre-school age children through reading and creating tales, art, and music therapy, sand therapy and other developmental games.
- Multi-aspect diagnosis and provision of specialized services - psychological, social, speech, educational needs and others.

#### **B) Psychological Theatre**

The methodological guidance and activities were conducted by the theatre director with support of a local specialist. The foreplay was a wonderful event for the whole community to celebrate the fact of having a community theatre group and see how various problems were overcome and resolved. Apart from the main sessions the group had a chance to participate in a session organized in the Gafesjyan Art Center where they participated in art therapy group work entitled "Cubism in art". Also, the theatre group children were enthusiastic to prepare a small Christmas performance for Getashen community children. It was presented by the end of December as a part of Christmas and New Year celebrations.

### Outputs

#### Psychological services:

- 38 group workshop/counseling for children, parents and teachers were conducted by psychologists involving 532 participants, on a range of topics related to child vulnerability risks mitigation, child abuse and prevention, positive parenthood behaviors.
- 98 beneficiaries have received individual psychological counseling. 1,052 psychological consultations were provided by psychologists.
- 189 home visits were made, accomplishing 51 issues resolved.
- 380 pre-school children were assessed for being ready for school. Respectively 380 parents were counseled regarding the results of the assessment.

- 27 pregnant women attended psychological training sessions called “Happy Motherhood”.
- 178 kindergarten children participated in group psychological trainings to improve their cognitive, emotional and communication skills.
- 15 school psychologists have received coaching and mentoring by COAF psychologist. In total, 198 on-job counseling was done.
- COAF local psychologists and school psychologists have organized a number of seminars for parents, teachers and schoolchildren, involving 618, 180 and 2,008 participants respectively.
- 12-14 community events were held with 986 participants.

#### CDC

- 122 children received primary assessment and counseling services.
- More than 101 children from Myasnikyan, Hatsik and Karakert villages benefited from the CDC program.
- CDC has conducted 189 home visits, accomplishing 51 issues resolved.

#### Psychological Theatre

- 26 children with psychological issues participated in theatre sessions including developing scenario and performance.
- More than 72 sessions were held.
- 1 premier performance and 1 short performance were carried out.
- 1 Christmas performance was conducted.

### **3. Program Component: SUPPORT TO CHILDREN WITH SPEECH DIFFICULTIES**

The goal of the program is to identify children with speaking disorders and delays in general development leading to learning difficulties, and helping them overcome causes and consequences of their situation.

#### **Background**

In 2015 many schools in the country became inclusive schools. However, not all schools had special educators, so their main service providers were COAF local specialists under the guidance of speech therapy expert. Also, the specialists in schools were not provided with relevant guidance and practical information necessary for their everyday work. To fill in these gaps, capacity building trainings were organized for them.

In 7 communities the local speech therapists, under supervision and guidance of the speech therapist expert, have provided corrective services to children having various kinds of speech difficulties and delays in speech development. The parents and teachers of beneficiary children have also been involved in the process to provide a comprehensive approach for the corrective and development processes.

#### **Implementation**

The speech therapy activities were implemented in Arteni, Aragastavan, Lernagog, Karakert, Hatsik, Dalarik and Myasnikyan.

During the implementation, the speech therapists have cooperated with psychologists, social workers and with specialists who provide support to children with learning difficulties since the speech disorders or delays in speech uttering are in many cases connected with psychological or social problems children are experiencing in their families. Therefore, the approach was comprehensive with the involvement of multi-professional team to provide best results.

In order to capacitate special educators from inclusive schools a training was organized on inclusive education to help the respective specialists get information and knowledge regarding the specifications and requirements of the inclusive education processes. Teachers, psychologists, special educators and speech therapists participated in the training from Myasnikyan, Lernagog, Dalarik, Getashen, Karakert, Sardarapat, Aragatsavan and Arteni.

In November Lernagog community beneficiary children participated in a contest of Special Education and Speech Therapy called “In the Planet of Speech Therapists” organized by the Yerevan State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan. They made a special poster presenting what speech therapy is in their understanding and won the 1<sup>st</sup> place in the contest.

*For 5-year-old Davit with Down syndrome from Lernagog, the program “Support to children with speech difficulties” became the open door to the big world. Before getting involved in the program his world was limited to their house because his family was afraid of stigma and did not take the boy to kindergarten or anywhere else. As a result, his speech was not developed at all and he was not able to communicate with other people. After several months of work with speech therapists Davit has become one of the most active visitors of sessions, who is able to talk and communicate and make friends with other children attending the sessions.*

#### Support to children with speech difficulties included:

- Screening and assessment of elementary school children
- Corrective and developmental interventions
- Teacher and parent involvement into intervention activities
- Capacity building for local speech therapists
- Lesson hearings at schools and reflection meetings with teachers.
- Training for psychologists, teachers, speech therapists on “Inclusive education in secondary schools”

#### Output

- **246** primary assessments were conducted throughout the year from which **98** children became beneficiaries as per identified needs.
- **98 children** having speech difficulties received speech therapy services. Evident progress was recorded in around **50** percent of beneficiary children, **24** of which are completed cases with proven record of full success. Among the progressive cases which still need to be continued are uttering correctly sounds, progress in reading and writing skills, coherent speech progress, vocabulary improvement, less stammering in speech, etc.
- **1,763** individual sessions and **134** group sessions were held.
- **158 school children** participated in speech development group seminars.
- More than 25 lesson hearings and observations were conducted at schools, and 35 reflection and discussion meetings were held with teachers.

- 1 training on inclusive education organized for 27 teachers, psychologists and speech therapists.

#### 4. Program Component: SUPPORT TO CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

The goal of the component is to support children overcome their learning difficulties, start to re-integrate into the class activity and re-involve into the learning processes.

##### **Background**

The project's beneficiaries are children who have serious learning difficulties (not being able to write, read or count in high grades and because of this just sitting during the lesson without participating in the learning process) because of psychological or/and social problems and whose families are not able/ do not support them to solve these issues.

In many cases neither teachers nor their parents have the competency or relevant skills to address the needs related to learning difficulties. Parents have to work to earn their living and have no time to pay attention to their children's learning process. And if the child has special learning needs the issue becomes even more complicated and not only for parents but also for teachers. They do not know how to work with these children, how to address their needs and adapt the level of their capacities to the curricula or the contrary, they don't know how to communicate so as not to harm or hurt.

As they state, the assistance provided within the framework of "Support to children with learning difficulties" is crucial for both the children and teachers working with them. Many of them are truly bright and gifted children. However, this program is their only opportunity to learn and develop their potential. As the specialists providing support state there are pupils who are very strong in math and if they get necessary attention and opportunity to further develop their knowledge they might become great professionals.

*"Maybe I will become a sports commentator. I love riding a bicycle and am really good at it. My ultimate dream is to become a soccer player. COAF has taught me I should be brave and not be scared of dreaming."*

*Emin's mother, Hasmik, is convinced that almost everything is possible. "My son has even scribbled "Emin Muradyan, 2016" on a piece of paper, picturing himself playing in a soccer field... Even if it does not happen, I am sure that he will lead a happy life. COAF has created a certain atmosphere in our community where everyone is willing to help my son to live his life to the fullest."*

The methodology by which the specialists work with children who have learning difficulties is called collective learning methodology, which allows to organize a learning process when the teacher/specialist may focus on filling in the identified learning gaps in a group at the same time applying an individual approach for each child, and over course of time the teacher may focus also on children's ongoing lessons to promote their integration and involvement in their classes' learning activity. The following link provides a brief video about the program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugiEtxrKgu8>

##### **Implementation**

As stated above the implementation approach is based on a unique methodology called **collective learning process**, due to which children have the opportunity not just simply do their next day's lessons but fill in gaps of their academic performance, skills and proficiency. The stages of work are primary

assessment to identify the level of literacy of children, development of individual learning plans for each child, development of group learning plans with reference to ILPs and implementation.

In most cases the literacy level does not correspond to the level necessary for the school grade the child is attending (a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade child's literacy level may correspond to the 1<sup>st</sup> grade's level). In this case it will be waste of efforts and time if specialists would focus only on teaching next day's lessons.

In order to have more stable and sufficient results the specialists have closely collaborated with elementary grades' teachers and parents, as relevant. Periodically the specialists have conducted lesson hearings and observations and have provided teachers with respective recommendations.

The project is implemented in 3 villages, namely, Hatsik, Lernagog and Dalarik.

#### Support to children with learning difficulties activities

- Children assessment
- Support in learning processes and class preparation
- Teacher and parent involvement into intervention activities
- Capacity building for local specialists.

#### Outputs

- **150** first graders screened and assessed for learning difficulties, as a result **57 children** were selected to be involved in the program.
- More than **625** sessions were held for children with learning difficulties.
- **8** lesson hearings and observations were conducted at elementary grades to analyze the methodology and approaches teachers are using and to provide them with corresponding recommendations.

Appendix 3

**Summary of main CFSP program outputs 2015**

| <b>Programmatic directions and outputs</b>  | <b>Achieved in 2015</b> |
|---|-------------------------|
| <b>1. Social Assistance</b>   |                         |
| Home visits and individual counseling made by social workers                            | 1,757                   |
| Beneficiaries from 8 villages received social services                                  | 584                     |
| Children, parents and teachers participated in trainings                                | 300                     |
| Socially vulnerable children were directed and supported to participate in summer camps | 22                      |
| <b>2. Psychological Assistance</b>  |                         |
| Group workshop/counseling for children, parents and teachers                            | 38                      |
| Participants for group workshops/counseling   | 532                     |
| Beneficiaries received individual psychological counseling                              | 98                      |
| Home visits   | 189                     |
| Resolved cases  | 51                      |
| Pre-school children assessed for school readiness                                       | 380                     |
| Parents counseled regarding the results of the assessment                               | 380                     |
| Pregnant women attended psychological training sessions called "Happy Motherhood"       | 27                      |
| Kindergarten children participated in group psychological trainings                     | 178                     |
| School psychologists received coaching and mentoring by COAF psychologist               | 15                      |
| Seminars for parents  | 618                     |
| Seminars for teachers   | 180                     |
| Seminars for schoolchildren   | 2,008                   |
| Community events held   | 12                      |
| Community events participants   | 986                     |
| Children who participated in psychological theatre                                      | 26                      |
| Children who received primary assessment and counseling services by CDC specialists     | 122                     |
| Children benefited from CDC program   | 101                     |
| Home visits made by CDC psychologists   | 189                     |
| Cases resolved  | 51                      |
| <b>3. Support to children with speech difficulties</b>                                  |                         |
| Primary assessments conducted throughout the year                                       | 246                     |
| Children having speech difficulties received speech therapy services                    | 98                      |
| Completed cases   | 24                      |
| School children participated in speech development group seminars                       | 158                     |
| Reflection and discussion meetings held with teachers                                   | 35                      |
| Training on inclusive education for teachers, psychologists and speech therapists       | 1                       |
| Teachers, psychologists and speech therapists trained on inclusive education            | 27                      |
| <b>4. Support to children with learning difficulties</b>                                |                         |
| First graders screened and assessed for learning difficulties                           | 150                     |
| Children enrolled in the program  | 57                      |
| Sessions held for children with learning difficulties                                   | 625                     |
| Lesson hearings and observations conducted at elementary grades                         | 8                       |

## Economic Program Annual Report 2015

Being launched in 2010, COAF Economic Development interventions have ranged from improving irrigation system to interest free loans as alternative financing for farmers, supporting women business activity, increased farmer knowledge and skills, access to market information, vocational and entrepreneurial education for youth and youth agro-education via establishing a school-based greenhouse. While these programs were beneficial for their target beneficiaries, most of them were considered to lack proper effectiveness and efficiency, based on this, only a few projects were planned and implemented in 2015, such as:

- “Entrepreneurship Training and Practice for Youth” (ETPY),
- “Agro-college” pilot project, co-funded by Beeline mobile telephone operator.

The economic development is aimed at improving economic opportunities for beneficiaries, interpreted either as: a) increased income generation for parents or child-oriented institutions to provide well for the children, or b) improved readiness for children and youth to be best prepared for future economic opportunities. The two projects implemented in 2015 have primarily targeted the latter, although “Agro-college” project has also had a secondary benefit for the school cafeteria to provide free fresh food for elementary children.

### 1. Program Component: ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING AND PRACTICE FOR YOUTH

#### **Background**

The project was launched in 2013 with a purpose of improving high-school students’ awareness and general understanding on entrepreneurship and marketing concepts, and promoting their engagement in designing and implementing community development initiatives. The program believes that most of creative ideas that have potential to become good business opportunities are hidden in youth’s minds and most of the time the ideas don’t come up because the youth is not provided the opportunity to express themselves and become originators.

#### **Implementation**

In 2015 the project was implemented in two regions—Aragatsotn and Lori—including 15 high-school students from Aragatsavan and Arteni, and 19 high-school students from Tumanyan, Marts and Karinj.

The project has included 3 main activities:

- Conducting an 8-day intensive training, organized as summer school, during which participants acquired basic knowledge on business idea, entrepreneurship, price and costing, marketing and market research, profit, business ethics, and social responsibility, as well as conducted hands-on market surveys on products or industries available in the community.
- Participants were coached and mentored to design community development projects and present them to panel consisting of COAF representatives and an external expert.

While upon completion of the training participants designed and submitted community development projects, it was obvious that local school principals and village mayors had a strong influence on respective community students to direct the proposals on covering local infrastructure needs. The COAF economist has had a number of follow-up visits to discuss the proposals and suggest being more

creative rather than substituting what the local school or government is mandated to do. Notwithstanding all the efforts, no new proposal was submitted and funded by COAF, causes of which have been analyzed by the program economist. It was revealed that while there were similar challenges in Armavir target communities in 2013 and 2014, those community stakeholders including the students, were more prepared to comprehend the project concepts and to demonstrate more creativity because of the longer programmatic presence of COAF, during which they had developed certain behaviors and competences that have served as sound basis for ETPY project implementation. This experience and closer proximity of relationships with COAF has been a significant contributor for piloting the ETPY project in Armavir, but was not counted in for expanding it to communities where COAF's presence was very short (about 1 year). Based on these lessons learned, the ETPY project has been revised to make additional preparation efforts for newly targeted COAF communities.

### **Outputs**

- 34 high-school students from 5 target communities have participated in an 8-day summer camp and have acquired new skills.
- 5 training sub-groups have been provided with coaching and mentoring on designing community development projects.

## **2. Program Component: “AGRO-COLLEGE” PROJECT BY GETASHEN SCHOOL**

### **Background**

The goal of the project is to promote agriculture among the youth as a featured source of income, by applying the best practices and effective marketing, as well as using innovative technologies for efficient production.

While 57% of Armenia's population lives in rural areas (according to the National Statistics Service), not many farmers possess sufficient capacities and technologies for effective production and often face challenges to market their produce, so the youth has become less interested in intensifying their knowledge in agriculture. Instead, they prefer to emigrate from their communities with a hope to find employment in cities of Armenia or abroad.

The project was launched in February 2015 in Getashen village of Armavir marz on the territory of the local school, and was a result of COAF's continual partnership with Beeline mobile phone operator in Armenia, which co-financed the project.

### **Implementation**

The project provided the youth with opportunities to gain basic knowledge of effective agro production, with particular focus on high value crop production techniques, land cultivation, efficient irrigation and marketing tools. As many of the project participants confirm, this experience has been critical in making a final decision among the options and preferences of their professional orientation.

To support this progress, a local school greenhouse was built to host all the hands-on training from the scratch: construction and establishment of the greenhouse, making decisions on the choice of



vegetables — considering local climate, soil characteristic and seasonal peculiarities — as well as collecting the harvest and understanding post-harvest management. The school treats the greenhouse as a practice lab for its “agro-college” afterschool club, and has already utilized its harvest — fresh vegetables and fruits — to support school cafeteria operation in providing free lunch schoolchildren aged 6-12. Moreover, the school plans to increase the capacity of growing vegetables and fruits for further sales in markets, which can also become a source of income to take care of its outstanding needs, not covered by the government funding. The direct beneficiaries of the project are 30 students (6-11 grade) and secondary ones - 169 primary school students (1-5 grade) of Getashen School, receiving free lunch at the school cafeteria.

### **Outputs**

- Over 30 students learned basics of agriculture and got introduced to agriculture value chain through classroom training and field practice;
- 120m<sup>2</sup> greenhouse equipped with the best technologies was constructed on the territory of the school;
- Over 1.5 tons of product were produced;
- Over 169 primary school students (1-5 grade) of Getashen School received free healthy food in the school cafeteria, supported by the project;
- Over 150 kg of produce was successfully sold via E-agro platform and agro exhibitions;
- 3 events were organized which had large media coverage;
- Project results were presented to the schoolchildren of other villages of Armavir and Lori marzes, as potential beneficiaries of further similar projects;
- The project success was highly recognized by visiting partners, including governmental body representatives and other school principals, who demonstrated high interest for implementing a similar project in their schools.

*Participation in an exhibition and presenting the harvest of Agro-College project*



## 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

### (PR, Communications, Marketing, Advocacy and Documentation)

The year 2015 has been successful and content-full for COAF operational and public activities. In particular, major accomplishments with regard to the organization's relations with its publics, communications, marketing, advocacy and impact documentation range from increase of COAF awareness, visibility and promotion, to expansion of networking and public events, reinforcement of communication and information sharing with partners, intensification of corporate relations and improvement of donor relations.

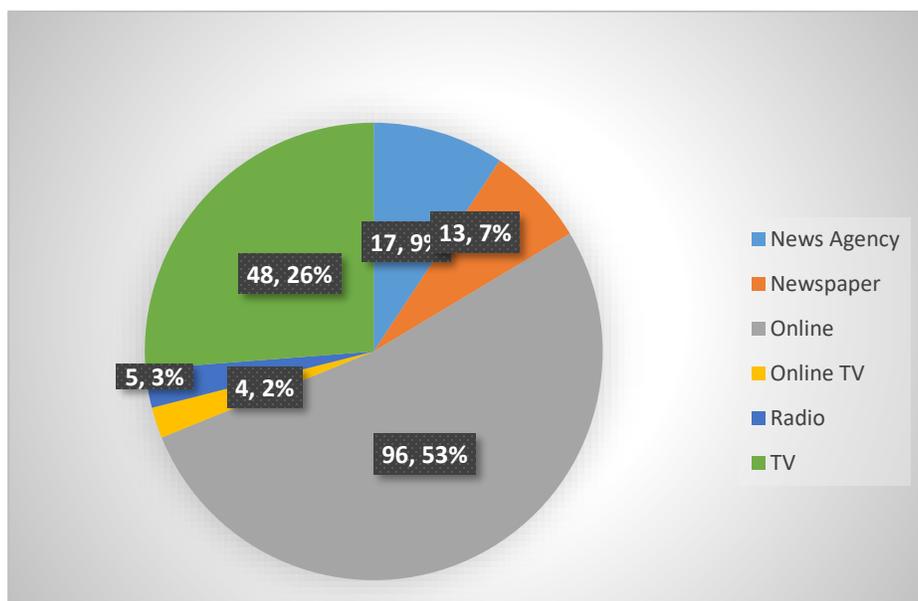
#### ***Mass Media & Social Media***

2015 was a very active year in terms of media awareness and COAF visibility. The latter were increased through a number of wide-scale events held throughout the country, which were covered both by Armenian mass media and spread through COAF social media.

14 post-event press releases were submitted to the mass media about COAF's main achievements and initiatives. Many of these events were held, partnering with well-known and highly respected organizations – U.S. Embassy Yerevan, Beeline, VivaCell-MTS, HSBC Bank Armenia, Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) and others.

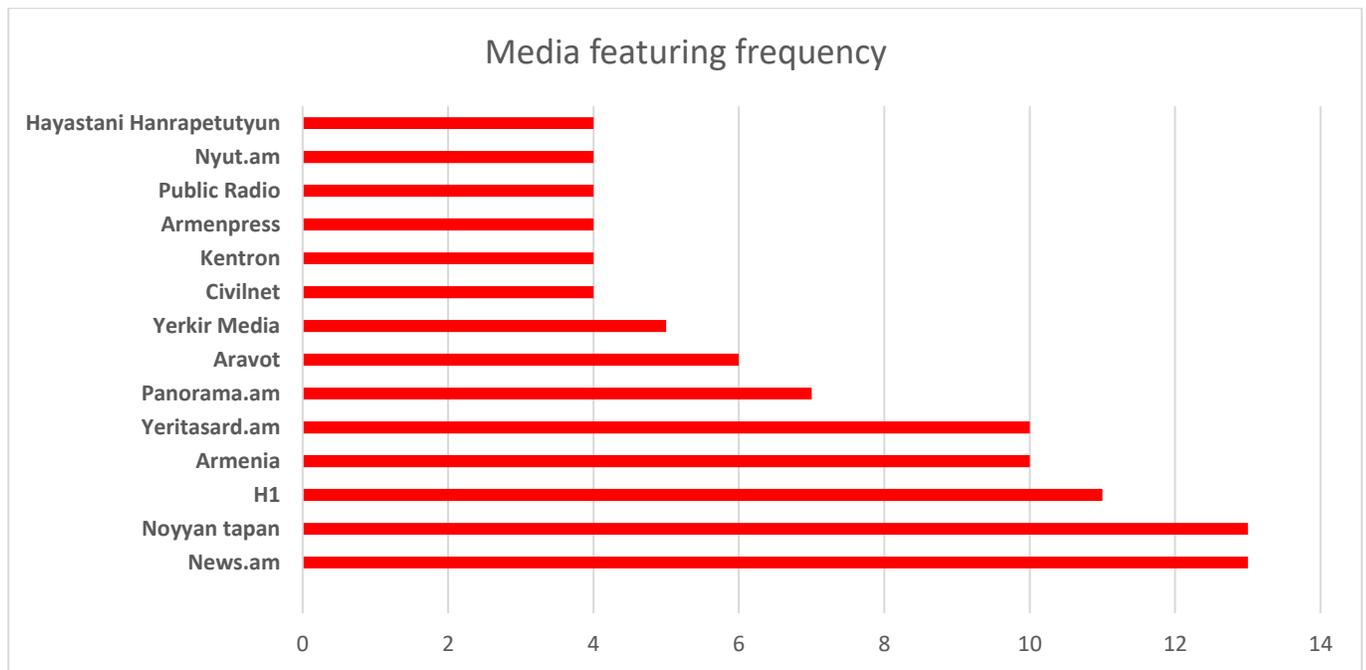
Overall, there were 183 cases of featuring COAF in the Armenian media throughout the year. The greater part of it – 96 pieces of news – was posted in online media through reposts of information shared by COAF PR Team. As for TVs, there were 48 reportages archived during this period. 2 morning TV Talk Shows invited COAF staff and beneficiaries to talk about the organization, its history, experience, strategy, developments and expansion.

The coverage statistics based on media type is presented in **Table 1** below:



**News.am** was the unique online media which not only covered the majority of COAF events, but also held media partnership with COAF within the framework of the World Bone Marrow Donor Day, celebrated in Armenia on September 19, 2015. **Noyyan tapan** was the most loyal news agency, ensuring the availability of pre- and post-event posts on COAF projects/activities. **Public TV of Armenia (H1)** was among the most collaborative media and was more interested especially in region-specific programs taking place in Armavir. The TV’s regional journalist has been loyal to COAF for a long time and kept her finger on the pulse of all developments throughout the region and COAF-supported communities, highlighting the changes brought by COAF.

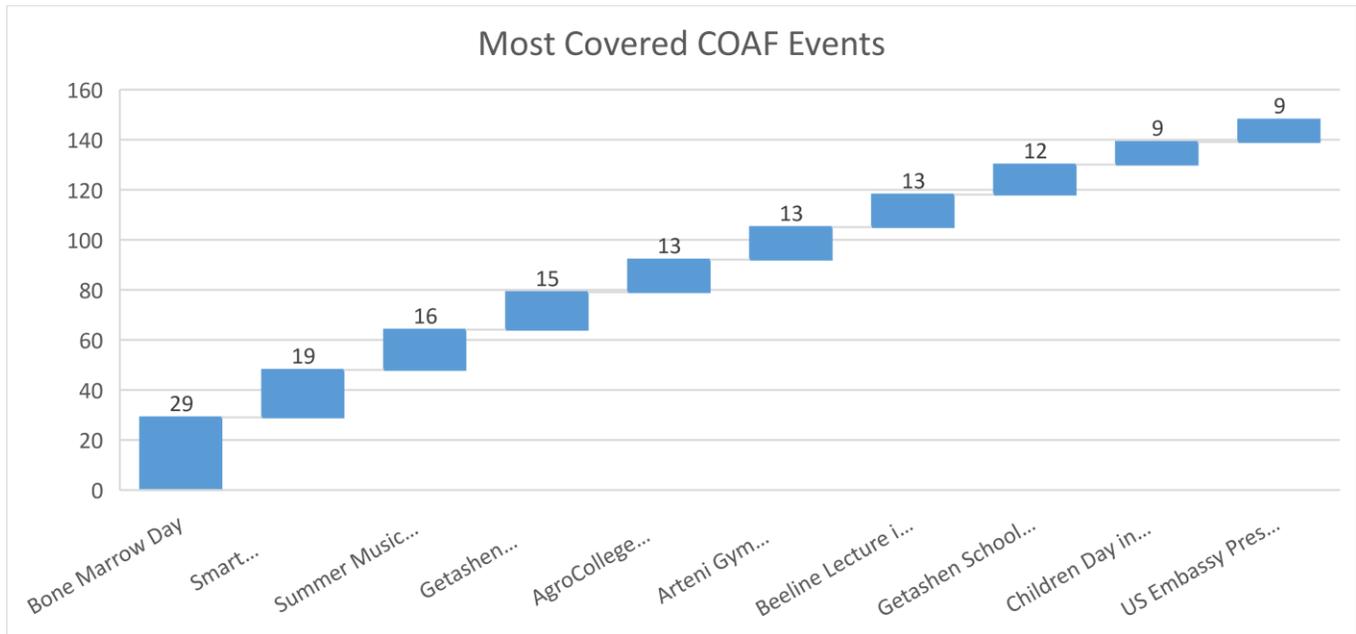
**Table 2** below shows the media that covered COAF events more than once.



The overall image has also been very positive in terms of social media and COAF Armenian and English websites. Over 45 news and stories were posted on these platforms, highlighting the development of COAF programs, their impact and future plans.

COAF events in 2015 were diverse and wide-scale. The most promoted events were World Bone Marrow Donor Day celebration with ABMDR (held in September 2015) and COAF SMART Center Groundbreaking ceremony (held in July 2015). The regional Media was also very engaged in the latter, with the participation of Lori Marz Governor and COAF’s first major public event in the new region.

**Table 3** features the most visible events and initiatives by COAF via Armenian mass media.



Within the framework of the Armenian mass media, COAF earned the reputation of an organization whose mandate is not only non-profit sector and community development, but whose goal is to be a key actor for the provision of a better vision and brighter future for Armenia and beyond.

### ***Marketing, Partnerships and Corporate Relations***

In addition to purely PR-related and advocacy-oriented activities, COAF’s focus has evolved around maintaining regular contact and expanding collaboration with partners and corporate partners, cultivating relations with other counterparts and guests, fostering fundraising activities and advocacy events, and intensifying partnerships through grant opportunities.

COAF has enhanced cooperation with long-time donors and NGOs, and established connections with new partners and contributors. The highlights of the most prominent partnerships can be found below:

- Partnership with Beeline on Agro College establishment in the village of Getashen.
- Partnership with HSBC Bank Armenia – provision of scholarships to 30 youngsters from COAF-supported communities to pursue degrees at institutions of higher education.
- Partnership with HSBC Bank Armenia as part of Professional Orientation Program in Armavir and Lori Marzes.
- Partnership with Ameriabank in the implementation of Aflatoun program in Armavir and Lori Marzes.
- Collaboration with 6 NGOs within the framework of “One Symbolic Village” project - COAF has taken up the assessment and improvement of health services in the village and renovated the local health post.
- Partnership with OneArmenia on ‘Santas Wanted’ Christmas Campaign to raise funds for NY gifts for 291 kindergarten and primary school children. The project also included donation of tablets to children with disabilities to improve their capacities and develop their IT skills.
- Expansion of English Access Micro-scholarship Program (ACCESS), as well as “Expanding English Access - Reaching Remote Regions with New Technologies” Program, funded by U.S.

Embassy Yerevan and implemented by COAF. About 320 youth and young adults are enrolled in the program.

- Exploration of other partnership opportunities with USAID-funded projects, World Vision Armenia, IDeA Foundation, Shen NGO, Armenia Tree Project, American University of Armenia and British Council.
- A Book Draw was organized by Yerevan Mall for the rural libraries of COAF-supported communities. As part of the campaign, 159 books were collected for the school and community libraries of Karakert, Dsegh and Tumanyan.
- Collaboration with Eli.am within the framework of 'Be Santa' Initiative to raise money for NY presents for 131 children from socially vulnerable families.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year of partnership with Oriflame Cosmetics, aimed at providing funding for education at TUMO Center for the children from Armavir and Aragatsotn Marzes.
- Establishment and enhancement of relationships with corporate partners - Gourmet Dourmé, Alfa Firma, Avangard Motors, Toyota Yerevan, WEF Global Shapers, Impact Hub, Green Bean, UCOM, SAS Group and others.
- Collaboration with DUFREY shops and generation of AMD 3,050,833 through donation boxes.
- Donation of 14 laptops by Ernst & Young to rural educational institutions.
- Donation of 335 trees and shrubs by Armenia Tree Project.

An abundant number of public events were held, thus increasing COAF visibility, networking among partner organizations (including various networks and alliances), and ensuring representation among various stakeholders. The variety of these events also featured the multi-pronged aspects of all COAF programmatic components, including Health, Education, Child & Family Support Services and Economic projects.

The highlights of 2016 events are presented below:

- Hatsik School Grand Opening was held at the beginning of the year, and was attended by numerous NGO representatives, Ambassadors, Government officials, the Minister of Diaspora, as well as other partners COAF has been partnering since the day of its establishment. Extensive PR coverage was provided by media representatives, highlighting the essential project COAF had implemented in Hatsik.
- The schoolchildren in COAF-supported community of Getashen marked three important occasions in 2015: a) Grand Opening of Getashen School, which was renovated through generous donation of late Haig Boyadjian and named in his loving memory; b) Opening of Getashen Creativity Lab with the financial support of VivaCell-MTS; c) Establishment of Getashen Agro College with major support of Beeline Armenia.
- Tours to COAF-supported communities for existing and new potential donors
- COAF SMART CENTER Groundbreaking and Blessing Ceremony was held in July 2015, and was attended by local partners from corporate and NGO sectors, as well as Governmental officials, the Governor of Lori Marz and was blessed by Archbishop Sepuh Chuljyan, Primate of the Gugark Diocese. Long-standing supporters of COAF from the US and Lebanon (famous art dealer and curator Tony Shafrazi, COAF donor Ara Aslanian with his children, renowned architect Paul Kaloustian) were among the esteemed guests.
- Opening ceremonies of Vanand School Gym and Arteni School Gym, renovated through generous donation by Ara and Sonya Hacet, as well as USAID-funded Clean Energy and Water Program (CEWP) and Nairi e.V.-Für Die Kinder Armeniens.

- The opening ceremony of the Vanand School Gym was marked by the friendly basketball game between U.S. Embassy Yerevan and COAF teams.
- The opening ceremony of the Arteni School Gym was marked by the intercommunity Sportlandia / Games Competition, in close collaboration with the Department of Mass Sports and Physical Education of the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs.
- COAF's first ever Summer Music Festival was held in August 2015, with the participation of famous rock bands such as Dogma, Nemra, Lelocity, Vordan Karmir and folk-jazz band Miqayel Voskanyan and his friends. The Boghossian Gardens at the heart of Yerevan hosted the event and was full of people of all ages, who gathered in support of Healthy Lifestyle promotion in rural communities of Armenia.
- 'Christmas Miracle' event was initiated by COAF-Armenia Team at the end of December 2015, as part of the staff members' social responsibility. The event intended to bring smiles to the children with disabilities from COAF-supported communities and spread the joy of the Holiday Season to them and their families. Holiday Bundles, comprised of sweets and special development games for the target children, were delivered to the village children by COAF staff members who dressed as Santa Clauses and presented moments of happiness to these underprivileged groups.

### ***Advocacy of COAF Programs***

Advocacy of COAF programs and its positive image and reputation were ensured through active participation in a number of programs, discussions, conferences, TV appearances, partnerships with big international and local organizations and companies, as well as social media. Both websites ([www.coafkids.org](http://www.coafkids.org) and [am.coafkids.org](http://am.coafkids.org)) were extensively used to spread the word on current and upcoming programs and to feature program accomplishments and highlights.

In an effort to inform larger publics on the development approach adopted by COAF and share the uniqueness of our holistic model, as well as to demonstrate the results of the work that COAF does, a variety of promotional materials were produced. SMART Initiative promo materials complemented the package of COAF representation resources.

### ***Documentation of COAF Impact (Human Stories and Highlights of Success)***

In late 2015, COAF-piloted 'Documentary Project' was launched, aimed at documenting and showcasing COAF impact, ensuring the exposure of human/success stories to wider publics and other interested groups. The materials produced as part of 'Documentary Project' are available for different types of audiences, such as donors/supporters, partners, potential partners, corporations, key stakeholders, beneficiaries, mass media representatives and other relevant parties.

The primary goal of the initiative was to find and feature beneficiaries in COAF-assisted communities (children, students, teachers, parents, nurses, social workers, psychologists, etc.), by producing human and impact stories. Another target was to create a record of the people impacted by COAF activities through writing and photography, for later possible usage in booklets, brochures, books, calendars, website, Facebook, speeches, other promotional and informational materials.

The stories featured by COAF Documentarian covered a number of issues related to the COAF impact on beneficiaries. Some of them featured the culture of giving back, such as the stories on Liparit Minasyan (a volunteer as a sports coach at a COAF camp, a blood donor and a garbage collection project participant), Anahit Hovsepyan (a fundraiser at her community school), or Lilit Hakobyan (an organizer of a “Fancy Ball of Professions” that has helped the local kids to learn about a variety of jobs.)

Others highlighted the importance of regaining confidence or overcoming psychological issues, such as the stories on interactive theater (engaging rural children in interactive productions to help them overcome shyness, poor self-esteem and other problems) or Anahit Vardanyan (a transformation of a kid with a low esteem to a confident FLEX graduate and a Linguistic University student.)

There were also some stories that touched upon the importance of providing the kids “with a fishing rod” or the COAF “magic wand”, such as those on Anna Mkrtchyan (a participant of an organic agricultural project in Lincolnville) or Sasun Tonapetyan (a participant of a business management course that resulted in an organic farm for the community).

# COAF Expansion in 2015

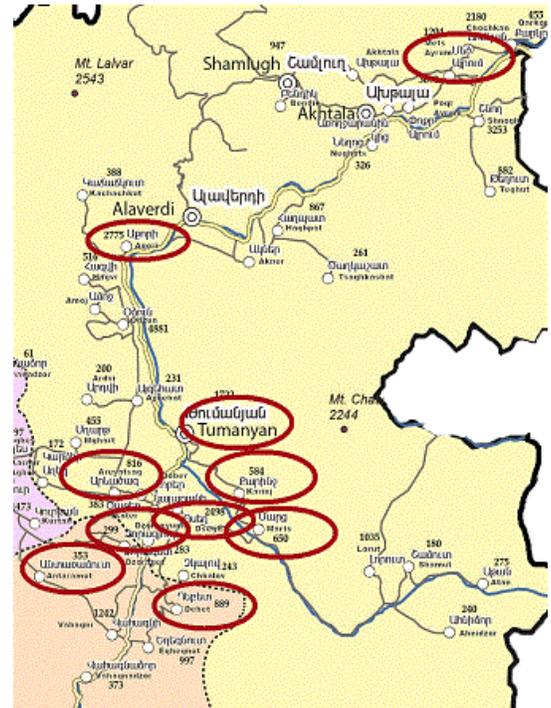
## Background

Although COAF expansion relates to actual rollout of its programs in new geographic locations, as a part of program operations, still, it has been viewed as a generalized process falling beyond any single program area. Therefore, an expansion strategy was defined and developed for implementation, by the end of 2014. Standardized operating procedures were developed for expansion process including assessment process and selection of new communities, database created, team model created, first expansion process was piloted to target villages in Lori marz (province). Assessment of villages in Toumanyane area of Lori marz was conducted, as a result of which Tumanyan, Dsegh, Martz and Karinj villages were identified as the first cluster for COAF assistance. Meantime, as per the expansion strategy, the average target for the number of communities for each marz was set 10-12.

## Implementation

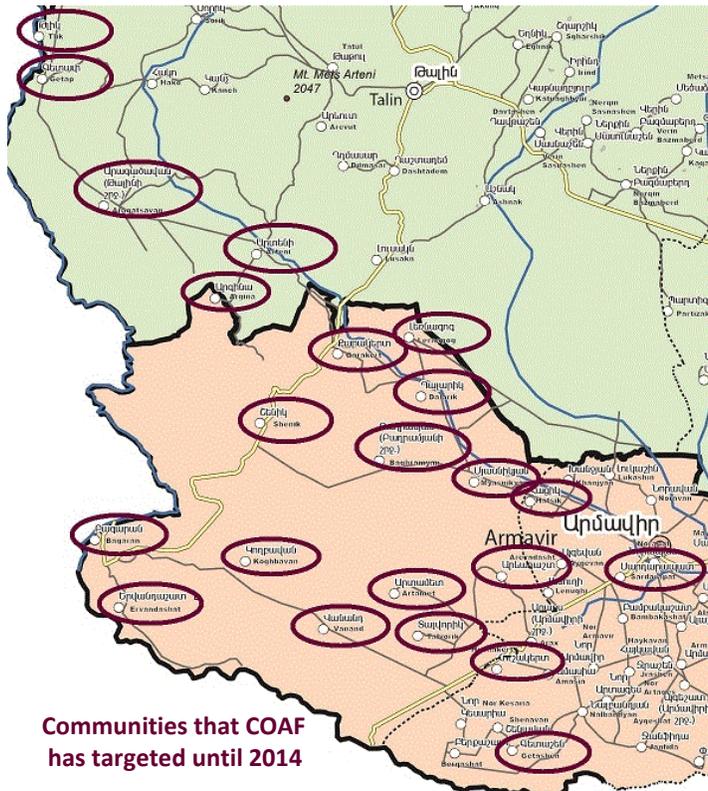
Education and Health Programs were selected as the first batch of COAF interventions, considering that both are building upon local school resources which are already in place, albeit need improvements. Compared to that, local resources for Child and Family Support Program are often not available locally, so require longer preparatory time for identification, recruitment (and potentially development) and contracting of local human resources such as social workers, psychologists and speech therapists.

While introducing Education and Health Program activities in Tumanyan, Dsegh, Martz and Karinj, the expansion team conducted a number of assessment visits to communities located within 30 min. driving distance from Tumanyan (as “center of the current cluster”). As a result of the program readiness and feasibility assessment, communities of Debet, Akori, Mets Ayrum, Arevatsag, Dzoragyugh were selected for full-scale COAF interventions, community of Antaramut was selected as satellite for Health program together with Dzoragyugh village, as both are served by the same family physician. Communities of Vahagni, Haghpate, Akhtala and Shamlugh were considered as non-relevant for COAF interventions at this stage, however, they will be invited to utilize opportunities provided by the SMART Center, as it becomes operational.



**Communities where COAF programs launched in 2015:**

1. Tumanyan
2. Dsegh
3. Martz
4. Karinj
5. Debet
6. Akori
7. Mets Ayrum
8. Arevatsag
9. Dzoragyugh
10. Antaramut (health program satellite)



Certain lessons learned from Armavir marz experience were taken into consideration leading to making tactical refinements of introducing the COAF programs to newly selected target communities, to avoid misleading expectation of villages that COAF is a source of material support to all long run or short term needs they will be raising.

Starting from all initial assessment meetings as well as following discussions, a key message for the new communities was that community development is their own agenda and COAF is there to help them in such an effort. In this meaning, they should acknowledge COAF interventions as part of their development agenda and demonstrate ownership for those interventions indicated by increased investment of their local resources (human and material): i.e. investing cafeteria staff during summer

schools, staff for organizing sports competitions or other local events, investing labor to improve their infrastructure through materials provided by COAF, as well as contributing their own material support if a project needs exceed limits of COAF support, etc.