

## **President Armen Sarkissian was the guest of COAF SMART**

YEREVAN, 04.12.2018 - On December 4, President of Armenia **Armen Sarkissian** and the President's wife, children's writer **Nouneh Sarkissian** left for the Lori region to visit the **SMART Center** of the Children of Armenia Foundation (COAF).

The President and Mrs. Sarkissian toured the center that operates for half a year now, getting acquainted with the courses offered to rural children and adults: Music, Dance, Painting, Active Citizenship, Languages, Programming, Robotics.

Encouraging the students of Robotics, the President noticed, "You are not just building LEGO, you are building your future. You may be the ones to create tractors in the future so that we will use them in Armenia instead of importing from abroad."

President Armen Sarkissian was impressed with the center. He assured that he had never seen such a center in another country. He urged the students of the center to be proud and realize that they are proud citizens of Armenia.

About two hundred children attending the center met the Armenian leader in the Performing Arts classroom of the COAF SMART Center named after Andrea Martin.

"Millions of children in New York would dream of having such a center. I like this center so much that I will start visiting here often because my house is not only Yerevan, but also Vanadzor, Debet, and Dsegh... I will also bring my grandchildren here during the summer holidays," President Armen Sarkissian expressed his impressions.

During the intimate Q&A session, the students attending the Center's Media Literacy Club had the opportunity to ask unique questions to President Sarkissian. For instance, "Who is the best SMART citizen in Armenia?" to which the President replied, "It's you!"

At the end of the meeting, President Armen Sarkissian and Mrs. Nune Sarkissian gifted books to the students of the COAF SMART Center. In turn, the children handed over their handicrafts as souvenirs to the head of state.

"Today's visit once again underscores the results of COAF's years-long operation, and the COAF SMART Center speaks for itself. Considering the need for innovative technologies for the development of Armenia, which President Armen Sarkissian emphasized in his opening speech at the Francophonie Economic Forum, equal opportunity for education for rural children becomes key for us. The peculiarity of the COAF SMART Center is that it offers not only technological but especially multidisciplinary education, opening wide and comprehensive perspectives for children and youth in villages," mentioned **Irina Igitkhanyan**, the Events and Partnerships Manager at COAF.

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*The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that employs community-led approaches aimed at improving the quality of life in rural Armenia, with a particular focus on children and youth. COAF's target development areas are education, healthcare, social and economic development. COAF launched its programs in 2004, starting in one village and expanding to 44 villages in Armavir, Aragatsotn, Lori, Gegharkunik, Shirak and Tavush regions, impacting over 75,000 people.*

*Since 2015 COAF has developed and started implementing a new vision – SMART Initiative. SMART is designed to advance a generation across the rural world through education that will benefit individuals, societies and the environment. SMART will become an exemplary model of development and will be replicated in other regions and communities throughout Armenia. The first COAF SMART Center was opened on May 27, 2018, at the village of Debet, Lori region.*