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Press Release

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COAF Opens New Child and Family Services Center in Rural Armenia

YEREVAN — **Children of Armenia Fund (COAF)** secures rural access to social welfare with the opening of its cutting-edge Child and Family Services Center (CFSC) in Hatisk village (Armavir region) on September 10.

Armenia's rural communities are burdened by poor socio-economic conditions in a variety of ways, which are worsened by the absence of social services. To confront local issues--including mental health problems, challenging social contexts, speech disorders, and a lack of preschool education--COAF extends community-based support to rural areas through its Child and Family Services, offering psychological services, speech therapy, social work, and child development programs.

More than 80 guests attended the momentous occasion, including the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs **Narek Mkrтчhyan**, the Governor of Armavir **Hambardzum Matevosyan**, the Mayor of Hatsik **Artur Yeghiazaryan**, and the COAF team, to gain a first impression of the new Center's strengths.

COAF's work in Hatsik, a village of over 2,400 people, began in 2014 and encompassed numerous initiatives to steer the community toward better education, health, and socio-economic conditions.

The opening of the new CFSC in Hatsik builds on the organization's previous accomplishments in the villages of Karakert and Myasnikyan in Armavir, where COAF had established Child Development Centers. Seeking to expand its impact beyond early childhood education to enhance family well-being and parenting capacity, the organization relocated its facility. CFSC was established in loving memory of Angela Asatryan, Ara Tavitian, Aram Bagamian, Armenouhi Oughourlian, Berge Nazarian, Dr. John H. Chaglassian, Rozi Berberian, Sahak Safakian, and with the generosity of Newman's Own Foundation.

With over 1,367 square feet of workspace and five rooms available, the new venue accommodates separate areas for COAF's psychosocial services, tending to the



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privacy needs of community members from the age of six onwards while creating necessary conditions for higher efficiency. Children aged 3-6 will benefit from a dedicated educational area equipped with developmental toys and didactic material, including LEGO, sensory toys, climbing and writing walls, to foster and elevate children's physical, social, and cognitive skills. All CFSC staff members are highly qualified specialists trained by COAF!

“The main motivation to open the CFSC in Hatsik was to bridge rural and urban disparities. By changing the perception of social and mental health care and increasing rural access to social services, we aim to produce favorable social outcomes in our beneficiary communities. Additionally, the CFSC gives high priority to early childhood education to prevent structural inequalities. This is particularly critical for Hatsik, where 3-6-year-old children don't have access to preschool education due to the lack of a kindergarten,” states COAF Managing Director **Korioun Khatchadourian**.

About COAF

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 64 villages in Armavir, Aragatsotn, Lori, Gegharkunik, Shirak, and Tavush regions, impacting more than 107,000 beneficiaries.

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