

Press Release

19 September 2023

## Concept by COAF & COAF Fest Bolster Lori's Appeal and Foster New Educational Opportunities

DEBET, Armenia — On September 16, the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) celebrated the grand opening of Concept by COAF, Armenia's largest social enterprise, in Debet village, Lori Province. Concept by COAF is a multi-faceted establishment encompassing a state-of-the-art conference center, a modern restaurant, and a minimalistically elegant hotel, all nestled within COAF SMART Campus. As a social enterprise, Concept by COAF supports the continuity and expansion of COAF's educational programs in the Lori region by directing all profits back into the organization's educational initiatives.

Among the distinguished guests gracing the occasion were the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, high-ranking government officials, esteemed ambassadors accredited to Armenia, and distinguished representatives from a plethora of partner organizations.

In his opening address, Garo Armen, Founder and Chairman of COAF, emphasized, "For twenty years, COAF has been planting seeds of opportunity in the fertile ground of our rural communities. Today, with the unveiling of the Concept by COAF Social Enterprise, we are not just cultivating dreams, but harvesting futures. This center stands as a bold testament to the boundless potential nested in every individual, ready to be awakened through unity, innovation, and the magic of possibility. It is more than a building; it is a beacon of hope, a symbol of our shared dreams, and a gateway to a future unbounded."

"This is a hotel that will be available to everyone in this beautiful nature, and on the other hand, the income it brings will be reinvested in further development projects. During our previous visit to Lori Province, we saw the health center created by COAF in Dsegh, which made a great impression. It is very important that we have a new architectural handwriting, a new approach, and new formulas for organizing work. COAF does this work very well, and it is my pleasure to be here today on such a wonderful occasion," said the Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, thanking the Fund for implementing such projects. On the same day, COAF and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) hosted the COAF Fest: Arts, Crafts, Music, aimed at

revitalizing Lori's economic and tourism appeal. The festival, which took place on the COAF SMART Campus in Lori, was a pivotal component of the broader "Lori, Your Next

Destination" initiative, supported by the EU4Business "Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia (ITTD)" project and implemented by GIZ. The event attracted around 5,000 visitors and cast a spotlight on Armenia's rich musical talent, more than thirty region-based entrepreneurs, and the dedicated producers hailing from the Lori region. The festival also featured electrifying live performances by "Hayat Project," "Lav Eli," "Miqayel Voskanyan & Friends," "Vahagn Hayrapetyan Quartet," "Bambir," and DJ Alen Hertz.

Guests also witnessed the unveiling of Ardēan's captivating "Luminous Lori" art installations, which drew inspiration from Armenia's ancient monasteries and local cultural heritage. These installations, designed by Vasken Brudian, Founder and Director of Ardēan, now grace the SMART Campus permanently, enhancing the landscape with their illuminating presence.

Ms. Letizia Carnevali, Portfolio Manager of GIZ Armenia, shared her enthusiasm, stating, "Memorable art installations always leave a lasting impression on visitors, making them more likely to remember and revisit the destination in the future. And such grand festivals can play a decisive role in the marketing and branding of a destination, presenting Lori as a vibrant, cultural and innovative center. I would like to thank our donors, the European Union and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, for believing in such projects and sharing our enthusiasm for their implementation."

On this momentous occasion, COAF is embarking on a new phase in its two-decade journey. The organization plans to broaden the reach of SMART Centers and construct new facilities, thereby ensuring the continuity of the organization's life-changing programs and extending quality education to an even larger number of children and youth across rural Armenia.

Liana Ghaltaghchyan, the Managing Director of COAF, announced, "Over the next three years, we will be opening four additional SMART Centers in the Armavir region, as well as in the cities of Goris, Kapan, and Gyumri. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all our partners, including the EU, other international institutions, benefactors who have consistently supported us, and the government for their unwavering commitment and belief in our mission."



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## **About the Children of Armenia Fund (COAF)**

*The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) aims at improving the quality of life in rural Armenia, with a particular focus on the projects and needs of children and youth. COAF's target development areas are education, healthcare, as well as social and economic development. COAF launched its programs in 2004, starting in one village and expanding to more than 82 communities in Armenia and Artsakh with an investment of more than \$70 million, impacting well over 100,000 people across rural Armenia.*

## **About the EU4Business “Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia (ITTD)” project**

*The EU4Business “Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia (ITTD)” project is co-funded by the European Union (EU) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by German Development Cooperation (GIZ). It has an overall objective to ensure shared and balanced inclusive growth in tourism and innovative industries. This will be achieved through innovative tourism ventures in the Northern regions of Armenia, support to high-tech and innovative entrepreneurs, international knowledge exchange for high-tech researchers as well as networks to enable entrepreneurship culture for students and the general population.*

*Within the framework of the project, more than 100 ventures have already been supported, assistance has been provided in sustaining and/or creating 400 jobs, and more than 800 people have undergone various trainings.*

## **Senior Communications Manager at COAF**

Nana Mardoyan

E-mail: [nana.mardoyan@coaf.org](mailto:nana.mardoyan@coaf.org)

Phone: +374 55 003 723