



2017 ANNUAL REPORT

# Building the Future, Together.



# About FAR

Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building a promising future for the people of Armenia, the Republic of Artsakh and Javakhk.

Founded by the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) in response to the devastating 1988 earthquake, FAR was reorganized into a not-for-profit charitable voluntary organization and received its 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit by the IRS in March 1993.

Since then, FAR has implemented more than 290 relief, social, educational and cultural projects valued at over \$350 million.



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN

### *Dear Friends,*

With each passing year, our mission as an organization is strengthened.

Through our dedicated team we continue to carry out FAR's programs. We help promising young Armenians to attend school. We give more doctors the opportunity to improve their practice. We provide refuge and support to vulnerable children. Yet, what continues to become more and more notable is that the way in which we do this is, indeed, special.

Things are different from the darker, hardscrabble times after the Soviet Union's collapse, from which we pulled through and continued to rise with powerful purpose. We called for solidarity from the diaspora, for support to build our beloved Armenia, together. And you have answered us. You have done so by supporting our programs, not only financially but also through your unique involvement.

In 2017, we had more visitors than ever come to observe what we do. Not many organizations can say that the support they elicit comes from those who have seen their work firsthand—from those who have actually shared a meal with the people who visit our soup kitchens every week, or from those who have played catch or drawn pictures alongside the little ones at our Children's Center, or who have spoken

one-on-one with the doctors who say their chance for professional development has made a difference in how they practice medicine. You have actually seen the plight of those in need and how, together, we can create positive change. As a result, you not only support our vision, you become a part of our story.

As an organization, we are privileged. We are thrilled that many of you who support FAR also want to know how we work and see how things happen. For our supporters to want to stand alongside our beneficiaries is powerful and makes our work more purposeful. We are astounded that more of you did so in 2017 than ever before. You inspire us with your solidarity. Because of you, more than ever, we can truly see a brighter future for Armenia.

### *Thank you.*

*Abp. K. Barsamian*

**Archbishop Khajag Barsamian**, President

*Randy Sapah-Gulian*

**Randy Sapah-Gulian**, Chairman

## PARTNERS IN CHANGE

Ajemian Foundation	Enterprise Incubator Foundation	Nishan & Margrit Atinizian Family Foundation
AmeriCares	Ernst & Young, Armenia	Positive Planet Foundation
Antranig Berberian Educational Fund	EU Delegation, Armenia	Renaissance of Children, USA
Ararat & Sonya Hacet Family Foundation	FAR Fellowship Alumni Association (FAR FAA)	Repat Armenia
Armenia Artsakh Fund (AAF)	Focus on Children Now	Rebirth Armenia
Armenia Tree Project	Friends of FAR Children's Center, USA & Armenia	Rutgers University, School of Engineering
Armenian American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham)	Friends of Gavar Special School, NY	Sapah-Gulian Foundation
Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO)	Galoust Galo Educational Fund	SJS Charitable Trust
Armenian Association of Social Workers	Garabed & Armine Zambak Memorial Fund	Strategic Development Agency, Armenia
Armenian Astronomical Society	Gazprom, Armenia	Sunday Schools of the Eastern Diocese
Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA)	Hamparian Family Foundation	Sunday School of the St. Mary Church of Costa Mesa, CA
Armenian Educational Foundation	Harold & Josephine Gulamerian Foundation	TF Educational Foundation
Armenian Engineers & Scientists of America (AESA)	Harry & Suzanne Toufayan Family Foundation	Teach for Armenia
Armenian EyeCare Project	Himsmoon Foundation, Norway	TOMS Shoes
Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA)	HSBC, Armenia	UNDP
Armenian National Science and Education Fund (ANSEF)	Impact Hub Yerevan	UNHCR
Armenian Volunteer Corps	Institute of Human Nutrition, Columbia University	UNICEF
Arpine & Arda Hovnanian Fund	James & Marta Batmasian Family Foundation	USAID/ Small & Medium Enterprise Development National Center
Arsen Sayan Foundation	Jerair Nishanian Foundation	US Embassy, Armenia
Article 3 Human Right Club	John Kazanjian Family Foundation	United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)
Avanessians Family Foundation	Kevork & Sirvart Karamanuk Foundation	Virginia Commonwealth University
Avedis & Arsho Baghsarian Foundation	Knights & Daughters of Vartan	Women's Guild Central Council
Birtheright Armenia	KPMG, Armenia	Women's Guild Central Council-CASP
Byblos Bank	Levon & Selma Margosian Fund	World Food Program
Byurakan Observatory	Mardigian Foundation	World Vision
Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA)	Margaret Ajemian Ahnert Educational Fund	YerazArt
Central bank of Armenia	Marriott Armenia	Yerevan State University
Constantinople Armenian Relief Society (C.A.R.S.)	Mathevosian Foundation	Yerevan State Pedagogical University
Cronimet Charity Foundation, Armenia	Megerian Rugs	Young Scientists Youth Foundation, Armenia
Dadourian Foundation	Microsoft Innovation Center, Armenia	
DoubleTree by Hilton	Ministries, local governments, universities, health establishments in Armenia	
Dr. Aram V. Chobanian Family Foundation	Mirak-Weissbach Foundation, Germany	
Dr. Edgar M. Housepian Medical Education Fund	Nazarian Family Foundation	

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# Child Protection

The **FAR Children's Center's** competent team of professionals continued to transform the lives of children and youth during 2017 by performing crisis intervention and critical short-term rehabilitation

to those who are victims of some of the most horrible predicaments, including abuse, abandonment and neglect, and behavioral, emotional and psychological problems. The Center has helped more than 11,000 children since it opened, handling 1,091 children's cases and assisting 841 adults during 2017 alone.

A full-service facility, the Center offers access to shelter, medical care, counseling and legal assistance to the most vulnerable. In addition, it offers children many sources of educational and psychosocial support, reintegration when needed, and provides guidance and mentoring to family members to promote safe reunification with continued monitoring of a child's family situation for months after they leave the Center. The Center also works with children who cannot be reunited with family by teaching them to live independently through mentoring and life skills training.

The Center is also a key player in the government's quest to strengthen its child protection services through preventative intervention, capacity building initiatives, and the development of the national foster care system, which has enabled more than 65 children to be in the care of loving foster families since 2006. As Armenia is planning to close down and reorganize several child care institutions during 2018, the Children's Center remained focused in identifying children and potential foster families as a way to avoid further institutionalization and an increased number of children on the streets. The Center continues to lobby for expansion of the system so that more children in need will receive placements, which it does through multi-faceted

education and awareness-raising campaigns to push for greater reform, while engaging relevant members of government and civil service in the process. In 2017, the Center held a series of trainings as part of *Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Children*, which helped to prepare foster parent candidates for guardianship.

The **Child Poverty Reduction Program** helped 50 families in the Ararat Region through the provision of support packages, which included family counseling, mentoring and parental skills training, aimed to move them out of extreme poverty and onto the path toward self-sufficiency.

**Children of Armenia Sponsorship Program (CASP)** provides supplemental financial support to orphans and the children of single-mothers in low-income households until they turn 18. CASP financial stipends enable families to afford the things that improve their quality of life, including food, fuel and clothing. Distributions to 500 children in the regions of Shirak, Tavush, Syunik and Javakhk, Georgia were carried out during 2017.

The annual **FAR Summer Camp** held in Kotayq Province gave 138 orphaned kids and children from low-income, single-parent households and Syrian-Armenian refugees, each of whom already benefit from a FAR project, the opportunity to enjoy nearly three weeks of activities, including music, dancing, sports and hiking. The experience provided an opportunity for children to immerse themselves in a new environment, to connect with learning opportunities, and forge new friendships.

## BENEFICIARY STORY

Karen, 7, and his two sisters, Elen, 4, and Liana, 3, found shelter at the FAR Children's Center after a center social worker found them barely existing in deplorable living conditions in a one-room apartment. The three were hardly noticeable in the room filled with smoke and soot. They spent most of their days alone with no bathroom, no access to basic sanitary materials like soap, and very little mental or social stimulation, while their disabled grandfather begged in a Yerevan train station and their grandmother pushed him around in a wheelchair. Their mother was absent for weeks at a time.

The three children arrived at the Center not even knowing how to do basic things like wash their hands or use a spoon. Yet, by working with specialists they learned proper hygiene, and received support through art therapy and psychological counseling. At first, Elen and Liana wouldn't talk so they began working regularly with a speech therapist. Karen started to attend school and gradually improved his learning skills. Through something called Construction Game Therapy, the three kids started playing and working with others, thus also developing teambuilding skills. Elen and Liana have now started to speak and Karen has become more outgoing. They have forged bonds with other children as well as with Center staff, who are pursuing placement with a foster family. Overall, the three have become much happier, more outgoing children with a chance at a better future.











## Patron Voice: Knarik

In September of 2017, I had the opportunity to visit the FAR Children's Center. The Center, run by dedicated staff, is a place where children are well-cared-for, nurtured, educated and valued. It is a place they call 'home'—where they can be children, where they can laugh and play and dream.”

—KNARIK MENESHIAN, FAR supporter and visitor

## CHILD PROTECTION BY THE NUMBERS

	11,901	referral cases handled by the FAR Children's Center (Children's Center)*
	662	children received therapy (Children's Center)
	64	truant children returned to school (Children's Center)
	213	child care specialists trained (Children's Center)
	54	families trained to become foster parents (Children's Center)
	54	families united (Children's Center)
	50	families improved their economic situations (Child Poverty Reduction Program)
	500	children received financial support (CASP)

\* Since the Center opened in 2000

## TO OUR GENEROUS AND LOYAL DONORS, WE THANK YOU:

*Ajemian Foundation*

*Arpine & Arda Hovnanian Fund*

*Mr. Arsen Tashjian*

*Dadourian Foundation*

*Mr. & Mrs. Edward & Jayne Pompeian*

*Friends of FAR Children's Center, USA & Armenia*

*Friends of Gavar Special School, NY*

*Mr. & Mrs. Greg & Meline Toufayan*

*Hamparian Family Foundation*

*Harold & Josephine*

*Gulamerian Foundation*

*Mr. & Mrs. Jack & Eva Medzorian*

*Knights & Daughters of Vartan*

*Mr. & Mrs. Joseph & Kristine Toufayan Casali*

*Levon & Claudia Nazarian Family Foundation*

*Ms. Lisa Chobanian*

*Mardigian Foundation*

*Mr. & Dr. Peter David & Myrna Saraffian Onanian*

*Sapah-Gulian Foundation*

*SJS Charitable Trust*

*Mr. & Mrs. Steven & Arda Haratunian*

*Mr. & Mrs. Vabe & Hasmik Dombalagian*

*Women's Guild Central Council-CASP*



# Social Services

**FAR's soup kitchens** meet the critical needs of the most destitute by providing nutritious daily meals and an outlet for social connection and care for 800 individuals in Yerevan, Nor Hajn, Berd, Gyumri and Byureghavan, some of Armenia's towns that have been hardest hit by economic decay.

Many of those who come to the soup kitchens rely on them year after year. Often elderly, they have had to cope with the dissolution of work opportunities or their pensions following the fall of the Soviet Union, from which they have never been able to rebound. Others have had to cope with the onset of health problems or disabilities that have prevented them from working or caring for their families, as many beneficiaries are also children in need. These setbacks often plunge them deeper into the debilitating hardships of poverty. For them, FAR's soup kitchens are often a lifeline.

In addition to offering what is for the majority their healthiest and most balanced meal of the day, the kitchens also offer a sense of community where visitors can find solace in the presence of others. During 2017, in-kind donations of non-food items like hygiene kits, clothing and winter TOMS shoes were distributed throughout the year. Families with children also received backpacks filled with school supplies. In addition, in partnership with Ayo!, all soup kitchen beneficiaries were offered free eye exams as part

of the *I Care for Eye Care* project. Those in need of glasses received new pairs through Ayo!.

FAR also provides **supplemental support to those who seek help at the Atinizian Senior Center** through the Gyumri soup kitchen, and by providing access to public baths for those who do not have the means for keeping up with their hygiene.

The **Vanadzor Old Age Home (VOAH)** provides a loving home to 55 low-income elderly Armenians, access to support for all of their physical and psychological needs, and medical care. Through the provision of a nurturing and loving environment, residents can easily find their niche in this community and make it their own.

In response to the protracted crisis in Syria, FAR continued to provide **humanitarian support to 250 Syrian-Armenian families** who received aid packages of clothing, shoes and hygiene kits, as well as bedding and food packages for those living in temporary dorms. The aid is often a gift of hope for the many Syrian-Armenians who left everything behind and struggle to make ends meet today in Armenia.

## BENEFICIARY STORY

Varduhi Khachatryan, 36, remembers the time she first came to FAR's soup kitchen in Nor Nork. "It was a winter day, bone-chilling cold, and times were hard. My sister told me about FAR. She has long attended the soup kitchen and brought me here, too. FAR extended a welcoming and supportive hand to me, as I couldn't afford meals for myself, my sick mom, and my 9-year-old daughter," she says.

Varduhi is also a passionate artist. She used to work in different art academies, thrilled to teach children traditional Armenian handicrafts, including carpet making, drawing and embroidery. But she had to stop working as soon as she started struggling with back issues. Now, she suffers from knee issues as well. She still tries to find a creative outlet at home by teaching things like embroidery and weaving to her young daughter, Mariam.

Varduhi has been a single-mother since Mariam was a baby, after her husband went to prison and they divorced. As part of her state subsidy, Varduhi receives about \$51 a month. There's also the \$32 from her mother's pension, which hardly covers medication.

"I stick firmly to the belief that I must be bold even if life's a struggle. My mom and my daughter are my inspirations, and I'm sure that there will be light at the end of the tunnel. I saw that light once, when I first came to the soup kitchen," says Varduhi.



## Patron Voice: Silva

I have visited Vanadzor Old Age Home. I was happy to see such a well-cared for institution, with a professional staff and a happy community. FAR is doing a great job in taking care of our vulnerable elderly. I am pleased to see that our contributions are being used efficiently."

—SILVA MIGIRDEYAN, FAR supporter and visitor

## SOCIAL SERVICES BY THE NUMBERS

 **800**  
provided with **hot and nutritious meals\*** (Soup Kitchens)

 **55**  
senior citizens led a **comfortable, healthy life** (VOAH)

 **170**  
senior citizens provided with **vouchers to use public bathing facilities** (Atinizian Senior Center)

 **250**  
Syrian-Armenian refugee families received **clothing and hygiene items** (humanitarian assistance)

\* Five days a week, year-round at FAR's five soup kitchens

TO OUR GENEROUS  
AND LOYAL DONORS,  
WE THANK YOU:

*AmeriCares*

*Ararat & Sonya Hacet Foundation*

*Armenia Artsakh Fund (AAF)*

*Dadourian Foundation*

*Kevork & Sirvart Karamanuk  
Foundation*

*Levon & Selma Margosian Fund*

*Mardigian Foundation*

*Michael & Sonya Obanian*

*Nazarian Family Foundation*

*Nishan & Margarit Atinizian  
Family Foundation*

*SJS Charitable Trust*

*TOMS Shoes*

*Women's Guild Central Council*



# Healthcare

**The Continuing Medical Education Program (CME) provides Armenian doctors with professional development to hone their skills, update their practices, and tap into a network of healthcare providers.**

CME was developed to fill gaps in healthcare leftover from the Soviet Union, which still remain today, particularly in Armenia's rural areas where many doctors have poor access to resources and use outdated methods. Since it started in 2005, CME has enabled 878 medical professionals to receive training through mentorships in Yerevan. In 2017, 113 professionals participated in CME, including 30 from Artsakh—a great accomplishment for a region whose healthcare resources are in dire need of improvement.

CME received accreditation from the National Institute of Health in 2017, meaning participation now also provides doctors with free continuing education credits needed to maintain their licenses. CME was also highlighted during the 12th Armenian Medical World Congress held in Buenos Aires in May.

FAR also continued to organize CME activities in different regions with conferences and trainings on topics, including children's physical and intellectual development, immunization and modern methods of diagnosis for childhood diseases. Several Training of Trainers courses in pediatric care and trauma were held. Steps were taken for a new program aimed to help young medical researchers publish their work, and ultimately bring greater attention to Armenia's healthcare system. In addition, equipment and medication were donated to facilities in need, particularly in Artsakh and Tavush Province.

**FAR's healthcare programs department also provided special support to the Familial Mediterranean Fever Center** in Yerevan by covering a funding gap for the drug Colchicine. More than 3,000 children typically receive lifesaving treatment from the drug for the disease, which can lead to kidney failure, lung and intestinal damage, and death.

FAR also supports the **National Medical Library (NML)** in Yerevan, which offers medical professionals

access to the latest publications and technologies in the field, including CME participants.

Through family stabilization, the **Child Poverty Reduction Program also helps with better access to healthcare.** The project, which started in 2015 in Ararat Province, expanded to other regions during 2017, including Aragatsotn Province. The project assisted 21 children from Aragatsotn with pressing untreated medical conditions to access proper diagnosis and treatment.

FAR's **Breaking the Cycle of Poverty Program (BCPP) also impacts public health in Tavush Province through its child health and malnutrition component.** In 2017, FAR saw the impact of its emergency nutrition program after documenting a decrease in anemia levels for the 557 children who have benefitted from free and nutritious meals at 15 kindergartens in the region. Kitchens in many schools have also been renovated, refurbished and their staff trained to ensure better conditions. All of this helped to build the trust of communities and encouraged more families to send their children to school.

Malnutrition is one of the most prevalent healthcare problems in Armenia today, and to reach children outside of the education system, 64 trainings were held at designated "maternal classrooms" to increase caregivers' awareness about nutrition, hygiene, safety and food resources. Since BCPP's start in 2013, 2,200 people have participated in the trainings. In addition, young children were screened for cognitive impairment as part of a new stage of BCPP that will focus on children's development in Tavush.

BCPP continues to push to improve healthcare in the region. Local providers received trainings on topics such as children's health and wellbeing, and disaster medicine. Several healthcare facilities also received much-needed medical equipment, and one healthcare facility in Chorotan was renovated.

## BENEFICIARY STORY

After 22 years in Qamishli, Syria, Hayk Khacho, 49, decided to move to Artsakh in the beginning of 2016. Today, he is the only family doctor in Ishkhanadzor who accepts more than five patients a day from four nearby communities.

Born in Syria, he graduated from Yerevan State Medical University in 1994 and returned to Qamishli, where for more than 20 years he was the only family doctor in the district. However, the war changed everything.

"When the war broke out in Syria, I could hardly work with patients," recalls Hayk. "Qamishli is 30 kilometers away from the conflict zone, and the clinic was located in ISIS territory. I was twice kidnapped by terrorists. They told me to convert into Islam, otherwise I would be beheaded. It was a miracle that I was able to flee to a hiding place. I have three daughters and I didn't want them to see the violence anymore, so we packed our things and came to Armenia."

Ishkhanadzor was a new challenge for Hayk, however. Often, he must ask his patients to repeat themselves so he can understand their local dialect. He also had trouble reading pharmaceutical information in Armenian at first. "I haven't read in Armenian for 25 years. Besides, every country has its typical diseases. To have up-to-date knowledge and become familiarized with Armenian medical standards—and to bring credibility to our clinic—I applied to FAR's Continuing Medical Education Program (CME)."

Hayk completed CME in March at the Surb Grigor Lusavorish Medical Center in Yerevan. He was able to immerse himself in hands-on experience and workshops at the Center and enhance his professional glossary. He also developed computer skills at the National Medical Library.

"Through CME, I have advanced my knowledge and skills in the field of general therapy, gastroenterology, cardiology, pediatrics and neurology," he says.



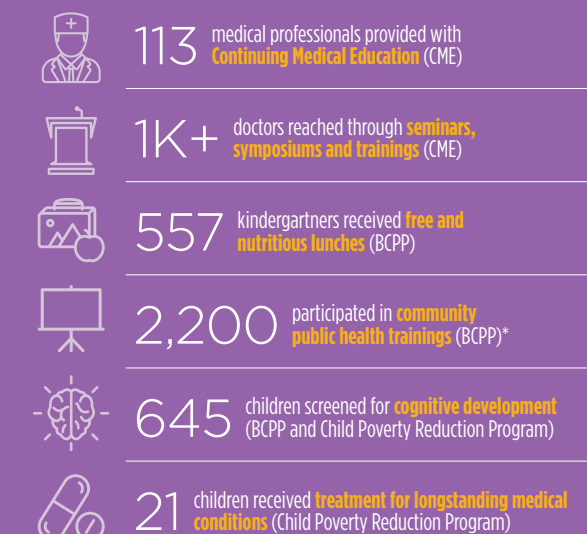
## Patron Voice: David

FAR is among the finest of charities. It is clear to see that it has overcome the challenges that many other organizations face, and that its vision has grown to become the backbone of Armenia's future. FAR is efficient, well organized and well equipped for the causes it shoulders.

Your impact is far reaching. Seeing the love and connection FAR staff shared with their clients was heartwarming; they exemplified competence and dignity. I returned home feeling a deeper compassion for the people of Armenia and enthusiasm for FAR's cause.

—DAVID DERKS, FAR supporter and visitor

## HEALTHCARE BY THE NUMBERS



\* Since 2013

**TO OUR GENEROUS AND LOYAL DONORS, WE THANK YOU:**

*Armenian American*

*Health Professionals (AAHPO)*

*Dadourian Foundation*

*Dr. & Mrs. Raffy & Vicki Hovanesian*

*Dr. Aram Cazazian*

*Dr. John Bilezikian,*

*Columbia Presbyterian*

*Dr. John Ohannes Nercessian,*

*Columbia Presbyterian*

*Dr. Richard Deckelbaum,*

*Columbia Presbyterian*

*Mardigian Foundation*

*Nazarian Family Foundation*

*SJS Charitable Trust*



# Education

In November, FAR celebrated 20 years of supporting Armenia through its diverse and inclusive education and science programs, which have helped more than 3,000 students to receive scholarships,

dozens of schools to receive renovations and improvements, and 434 scientific groups (made up of 1,645 scientists) to receive support for their research through the ANSEF program.

FAR's **scholarship programs** and the **Gulamerian Vocational Training Program** give young Armenians the potential to contribute greatly to the growth and development of their country through opportunities made possible by education. For many from poorer families, the dream of a degree or a certain career path are simply out of reach. Yet when given the chance, these young people can excel, and also improve their own quality of life. In the 2017-2018 academic year, FAR's 13 scholarship programs supported a total of 500 students who attended university or pursued vocational training in journalism, political science, biology, chemistry, mathematics, social work, culinary arts, carpentry, and electrical engineering, among other fields. Graduates of FAR's scholarship programs during 2017 had an 85 percent employment rate. Seventy percent of those who embarked on vocational training programs with FAR's help also found work.

FAR used education as a way to respond to the impacts of the protracted Syrian crisis through its **Syrian-Armenian Assistance Program**, which gave an additional 32 new scholarships to such Syrian students to study at Armenian universities. The program also enabled FAR to operate tutoring groups in math, natural science and physics for 70 Syrian-Armenian students.

FAR's support for **school rehabilitation** focuses greatly on providing enhanced resources to diverse learning environments. FAR has been a major partner in the rehabilitation of the Octet Music School, which supports musical education in the culturally and artistically rich city of Gyumri. In addition, the Gavar Special School, which is sponsored by a group of dedicated people from the Friends of Gavar School, New York, and serves children with mental and physical disabilities in the Gegharqunik Region, also had its second floor renovated during 2017. This was the final in a long list of renovations made to the school over the past nine years, which have dramatically improved life for its students. Also, the Daniel Varuzhan School in Yerevan, which has been supported by FAR for more than a decade, officially opened its renovated Armen Bedikian Concert Hall in 2017. Through FAR's Breaking the Cycle of Poverty Program (BCPP), 10 schools received renovations and updates, including the addition of a wing on Tavush Kindergarten, which will make it possible for an additional 30 children to attend.

The **Armenian National Science and Education Fund (ANSEF)** enables scientists and researchers to pursue their innovative research at home in Armenia, ultimately helping them to promote social and economic growth by further contributing to the knowledge-based economy. In 2017, FAR awarded ANSEF grants to 30 scientific research groups made up of a total of 100 scientists. The program continued its effort to diversify the scientists it supports; sixteen of the principle investigators were under age 35 and 17 of them women.

## BENEFICIARY STORY

Nelly Zakarian has always loved working with numbers. Research, analysis and evaluation have been her passion since she was a child growing up in the village of Yeghegnadzor. But in 2012, when she was accepted into the Armenian State University of Economics, Nelly also knew her family couldn't afford the tuition. At the time, they had been struggling to pay their rent.

Then Nelly heard about FAR's Mathevosian Scholarship Program, which enabled her to move to Yerevan for school. While pursuing a degree in finance, Nelly also branched out, involving herself in various projects to serve the community, for which she also found a passion. She volunteered for NGOs that focused on youth and development. She participated in international peacebuilding camps, focusing on leadership and conflict transformation. Nelly also taught folk dance at FAR's Summer Camp. All of it made her contemplate the possibility of choosing a career in the public sector as well.

Now, at 23, Nelly is a public relations specialist for the Central Bank of Armenia and is also working on her master's in economics and finance. With determination and support, she has excelled. "I don't know if I'd even be a communications specialist today if I hadn't applied for the scholarship," she says. And she has big plans for the future.

"My bachelor studies intrigued me," she claims, "and I loved the pursuit of numbers and quotations. The other half of my education came from the public sector. The idea of giving back fascinated me, and I loved to help others. I'll pursue my dream job in finance, and also follow my passion. I will establish an NGO in Yeghegnadzor that will focus on youth and community development. Through the NGO, I will also be able to truly put my knowledge and expertise into practice."









## Patron Voice: Krikor

For over 10 years, the NY Friends of Gavar Special School has been working to renovate this school and improve the lives of its children. Today, it's a model school. All of our accomplishments have been achieved due to our strong cooperation with and professional guidance from FAR as we reached out with loving assistance to Gavar's children and faculty. They are the light that guides our ship, and we are very lucky to have their insight and direction. We extend our gratitude and thanks to FAR and its staff."

—KRIKOR KRIKORIAN, FAR supporter

## EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS

-  **500** **scholarships** given to disadvantaged youth during the 2017-2018 academic year (scholarships)
-  **32** **scholarships** given to Syrian-Armenian students from disadvantaged families (scholarships)
-  **85%** **employment rate** for FAR scholarship program graduates (scholarships)\*
-  **70%** **employment rate** for those who completed vocational training programs (scholarships)
-  **3,853** children and teachers benefitted from **school rehabilitations** (school rehabilitation)
-  **30** scientific groups received **support for their research** from ANSEF grants (ANSEF)

\*Those who studied at university

TO OUR GENEROUS AND LOYAL DONORS, WE THANK YOU:

*Antranig Berberian Educational Fund*

*Mr. & Mrs. Ara & Pontish Yeramyan*

*Avanessians Family Foundation*

*Avedis & Arsho Baghsarian Fund*

*Constantinople Armenian Relief Society (C.A.R.S.)*

*Dadourian Foundation*

*Dr. Aram V. Chobanian Family Foundation*

*Harold & Josephine Gulamerian Foundation*

*Harry & Suzanne Toufayan Foundation*

*Jerair Nishanian Foudation*

*Mardigian Foundation*

*Mathevosian Foundation*

*Mirak-Weissbach Foundation*

*Noretta Andreasian-Thomas, Ph.D.*

*SJS Charitable Trust*

*TF Educational Foundation*



# Economic Development

**Gyumri Information Technology Center (GTech)** celebrated its tenth graduating class in 2017. The fifteen programmers who completed the program join the more than 845 who have finished GTech's various IT certification and two-year training programs in the 12 years since it opened.

GTech continues to be a force for change in the Shirak Region, and for Armenia's IT industry as a whole by giving Armenians the opportunity to gain valuable IT skills. GTech was started when Internet providers barely existed in Gyumri. Today, there are about 450 IT companies in Armenia, with a significant portion of them operating out of Shirak due to institutions like GTech. More than 30 tech companies alone have opened in the region over the past four years, creating 300 jobs.

GTech's new programs during 2017, included the commencement of *Boosting Technological Developments in Shirak Marz*, which will give a total of 180 unemployed youth (ages 17-35) the opportunity to train in IT programming, ultimately narrowing the gap in the need for a more qualified IT workforce. A first round of 44 people completed training before being designated to the school's new Incubation Lab where they worked on projects with local IT companies that will offer them eventual employment.

GTech also continued to expand upon its programs targeting more vulnerable populations, including by offering computer programming courses for 22 children (ages 11-17) who grew up in Gyumri's makeshift *domik* shelters; another for 14 military veterans who served in the Four Days War of April 2016; as well as a course for young Gyumri boarding school students interested in obtaining hands-on IT training. In addition, GTech's for-profit LLC GTech Solutions, continued to develop websites and mobile applications for businesses and NGOs.

**Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: Developing Thriving Communities (BCPP)**, FAR's multi-faceted and comprehensive project entered its fifth year in 2017. The

program aims to reduce the effects of poverty in Tavush Province by addressing its roots and breaking the cycle that has become endemic in parts of Armenia. Through individually-tailored plans, families in Berd City and 16 surrounding communities are able to mitigate poverty's crippling effects and become more self-sufficient in the long-run through improved access to education, housing, better nutrition and healthcare, job and income generation activities, and other significant resources. Sixty new families were selected to receive social assistance packages in 2017, in addition to the 59 who still receive assistance. Humanitarian assistance was also given to 450 families.

In addition, BCPP aims to help strengthen overall economic activity, infrastructure, healthcare and education in the Berd Region. Engaging and bolstering the capacity and cooperation of the local community in the transformation of their region is essential to the project. Support for alternative agriculture, land and infrastructure rehabilitation and cultivation, community engagement, health and education all contribute to the program's vision.

BCPP fosters development through the provision of agricultural machinery to local farmers and local cooperatives. Cooperatives in Berd, Navur, Chinchin and Tavush all received support through provision of agro machinery during 2017, which have helped them revitalize additional land and increase crop production. A high-value crop cultivation project with the aim of effectively using community land to improve social and economic conditions, helped six families increase their harvest profits. Others received support to set up their own small vineyards. Farming cooperatives were formed and several local agro-

## BENEFICIARY STORY

Life in remote Berd has not always been easy for Arev Nersisyan and her husband Viktor. Over the years, the couple has tried to grow their own food to make ends meet for them and their three sons, but too frequently the region's harsh climate often destroyed what they'd planted before it was time to harvest.

Arev grew up in Berd and has always been active in her community as an organizer. Today, she is deputy principal of the local school. Arev became one of the first Berd residents selected to receive a cost-effective greenhouse through a grant and an interest-free loan as part of FAR's Breaking the Cycle of Poverty Program. Arev had the hope that the greenhouse would help her family to produce their own food year-round. Later, she discovered a genuine desire to pursue organic food cultivation. The greenhouse has since brought hope and organic food to her family. Arev is even the first person in Berd to harvest tomatoes, cucumber, and sweet and hot peppers. "The greenhouse is my retirement plan," she jokes. Her own harvest enables her to provide healthy food to her three sons and extended family members. She also sells a portion of it for supplemental income. And as someone who likes to give back, Arev also donates half of it to other community members in need. "I feel good about giving. It's inside me, and I inject this charitable behavior into my students and my own children," she says.

businesses received zero-interest loans to help them to expand and train in business development methods.

Construction commenced on a 4,100-meter long drinking water system in Vargavan, which will eventually allow 750 residents to access potable water in their homes. In addition, BCPP completed reconstruction of drinking water systems in five other communities, giving potable water access to 2,000 residents.

More than 160 children received rehabilitation services at the Mardigian Child Protection Center. And 15 hobby

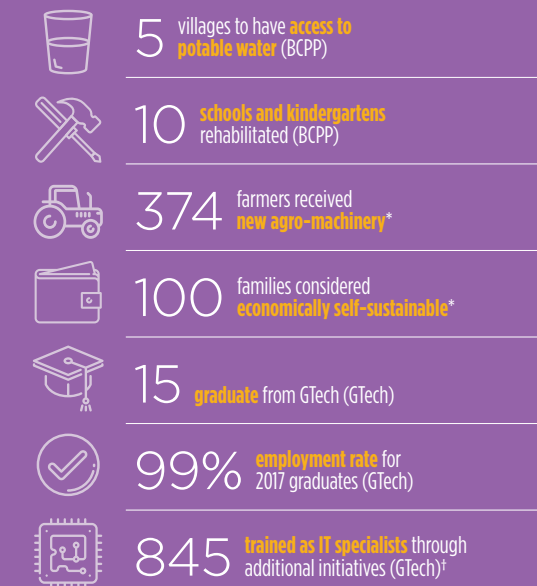


## Patron Voice: Sam

To witness FAR's programs firsthand was heartwarming and heart wrenching due to greater need. I personally was overwhelmed by the compassion, competency and the commitment of all program staff with whom we met. They are truly a staff of dedicated professionals who were transparent, efficient and effective. FAR is truly one of the pathways to the future and successful growth of Armenia."

—SAM MIKAELIAN, FAR supporter and visitor

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BY THE NUMBERS



\* Since the start of BCPP in 2012 † Since GTech opened in 2005

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# Ayo!

FAR's crowdfunding platform **Ayo!** emphasizes the power and agency of the Armenian people and their ability to make positive changes in their society by providing a vehicle to raise money for local development projects. **Ayo!** was designed to engage and empower young people who wish to take change into their own hands and give agency to those who seek to contribute.

Ayo!'s projects have spanned a number of sectors, and campaigns have focused on making a difference in issues as varied and integrated as public health, education, art and local business development through awareness-raising, mobilization, partnership and provision of resources. Each project has been initiated and introduced by young Armenians in Armenia. Once funds are raised, FAR works with its local partners to execute projects transparently and to the highest standards. Since it began in 2013, Ayo! has raised a total of \$180,000, including \$63,000 during 2017 alone.

All funds raised through crowdfunding initiatives, both globally and on the ground in Armenia, continue to be allocated 100% to local projects, thanks to coverage of operational costs by James and Marta Batmasian.

Ayo! conducted several successful fundraising campaigns during 2017, and also implemented many more projects whose funds were raised during 2016.

A joint effort with FAR and the Armenian Eye Care Project (AECF) as part of the *I Care for Eye Care* project offered free eye exams to each of the 800 beneficiaries of FAR's five soup kitchens in Yerevan, Gyumri, Nor Hajn, Byureghavan and Berd. More than 250 took the opportunity to do so, and 171 received new pairs of glasses.

*A Gift of Warmth* made it possible to replace the 30 windows, 14 doors and—thanks to an unexpected surplus of funds—roof of the day care in the small village of Mets Masrik. The day care is host to 250 children, and despite the fact that

the center is heated, the windows and doors were too old to keep out the bitter winter cold, forcing it to close for half the year. Work on the day care center will finish in early 2018.

*Backpacks for Berd*, which was launched on International Children's Day, touched the lives of the 333 first graders in the rural Berd Region who received new, durable backpacks filled with school supplies.

The *Planting Roots* project campaigned to build a greenhouse for the Vanadzor Children's Support Center, which helps 100 underprivileged children in the Lori Region. The greenhouse will aim to promote self-sustainability, proper nutrition, and skills development by helping children to learn how to grow their own vegetables, at the same time teaching kids about responsibility and ownership. Eventually, the Center will be able to supply fresh veggies for lunch every day, giving children and staff an accessible and healthy food source.

Ayo! also advocated for better public health through the *Breathe Freely* project, which was launched in 2016 and sought to raise awareness about second-hand smoke. During 2017, a selection of local artists painted murals about the dangers of second-hand smoke in conspicuous locations around Yerevan. The Ayo! team also participated in World No Tobacco Day on May 31 by sending volunteers to downtown Yerevan to distribute educational pamphlets on the dangers of smoking and inviting smokers to give up their cigarettes in exchange for a treat.

With the gift of a special carriage, Ayo! completed its *Hippotherapy* project at Kharberd Orphanage—a home to



around 300 children with different mental and physical disabilities, including autism, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome. Launched in 2016, the project raised funds to build the carriage to support hippotherapy classes. While hippotherapy has been practiced at Kharberd since 2012, the therapists had only been able to assist one child at a time based on the available equipment. Now, with the special carriage attached to the horse, the hippotherapy team conducts therapy sessions with several children simultaneously, ultimately impacting more lives.

*Hope for Hrazdan* was an emergency project launched in February, which filled a funding gap for the Hrazdan Day Care Center for Children with Disabilities, and allowed it to remain open for the rest of 2017, serving 150 families in need.

Finally, Ayo!'s *Chocolate Bank* project brought gifts of sweets, and winter coats and boots, to needy children and families in the Lori Region over the 2017 holiday season.

Ayo! continues to forge new and innovative partnerships to ultimately spread the message and mobilize action for concrete change in Armenia. During 2017, FAR launched the FAR-Parishes Initiative to encourage parishioners to support FAR. Through this project, Ayo! has become a great vehicle for young parishioners, specifically members of the ACYOA chapters, to get involved and support change in Armenia.

## BENEFICIARY STORY

When Irina Gasparyan, 35, realized that she wanted her tiny village of Mets Masrik to change for the better, she decided to do something about it. When her community's day care center was in desperate need of help, she approached Ayo! with an idea for a new campaign. This idea eventually became Ayo!'s *A Gift of Warmth* project, which raised money to replace the building's windows and doors so the center could keep out the bitter winter cold and remain open year-round. The mother of two, who's also working on re-opening an old bakery, says her dream is to help to revitalize her village, which will ultimately boost its sustainability and economy.

*A Gift of Warmth* has made a difference for people like Nelli Asatryan, an unemployed and widowed mother of three who moved in with her parents in Mets Masrik after her husband died one year ago. Once Nelli moved back, she immediately put her children—five-year-old Sona and four-year-old Misha—in the local day care. Mariam, 2, is still at home with her. Because the day care center will now be open year-round, she will be able to send all three children there, which will allow her to work during the day.

"The daycare was an immense help to me at different points," said Nelli. "Not only would the kids be able to receive meals three times a day and full care all day long, they were also able to make many friends with whom they would play games and have fun with during the day. This really helped them to overcome the difficult family situation and the loss of their father," said Nelli.

The daycare is free thanks to the head of Mets Masrik Village, who subsidizes fees for all kids in the town—a unique situation that enabled Nelli to send her children there. Through its *A Gift of Warmth* project, Ayo! has already renovated the doors and the windows of the day care. Renovation of the roof is in process. This autumn be the first in nearly 30 years that the daycare will be able to stay open.



## Potential supporters

can find all practical information and make an informed decision about how to donate through Ayo!'s website, **weareayo.org**

## AYO! BY THE NUMBERS

 **\$63,000**  
raised for **7 projects** across Armenia

 **3,000**  
**lives improved** through Ayo!'s projects

 **333**  
first-graders in 20 border villages attended school with **new backpacks and school supplies**

 **800**  
elderly received **eye care support**

 **250**  
children to **attend daycare** in winter in a safe and warm facility

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AND LOYAL DONOR,  
WE THANK YOU:

*James & Marta Batmasian  
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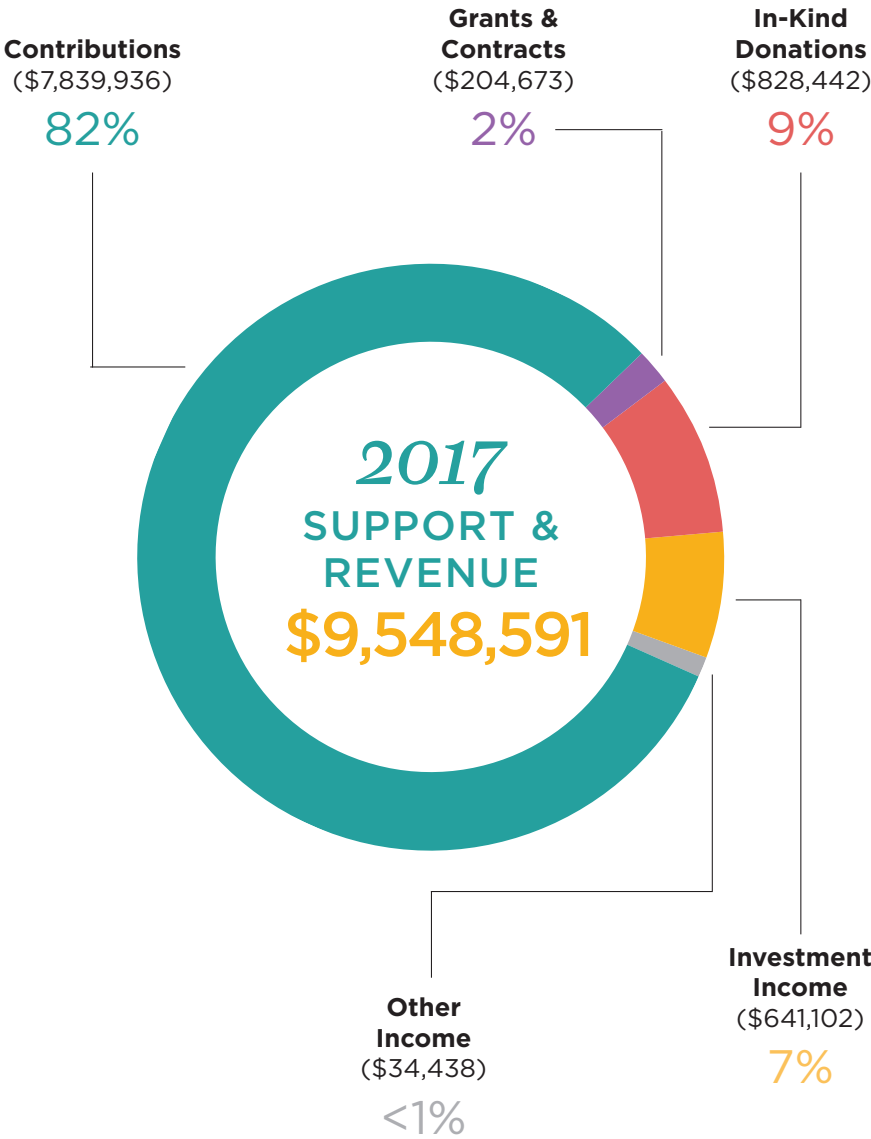
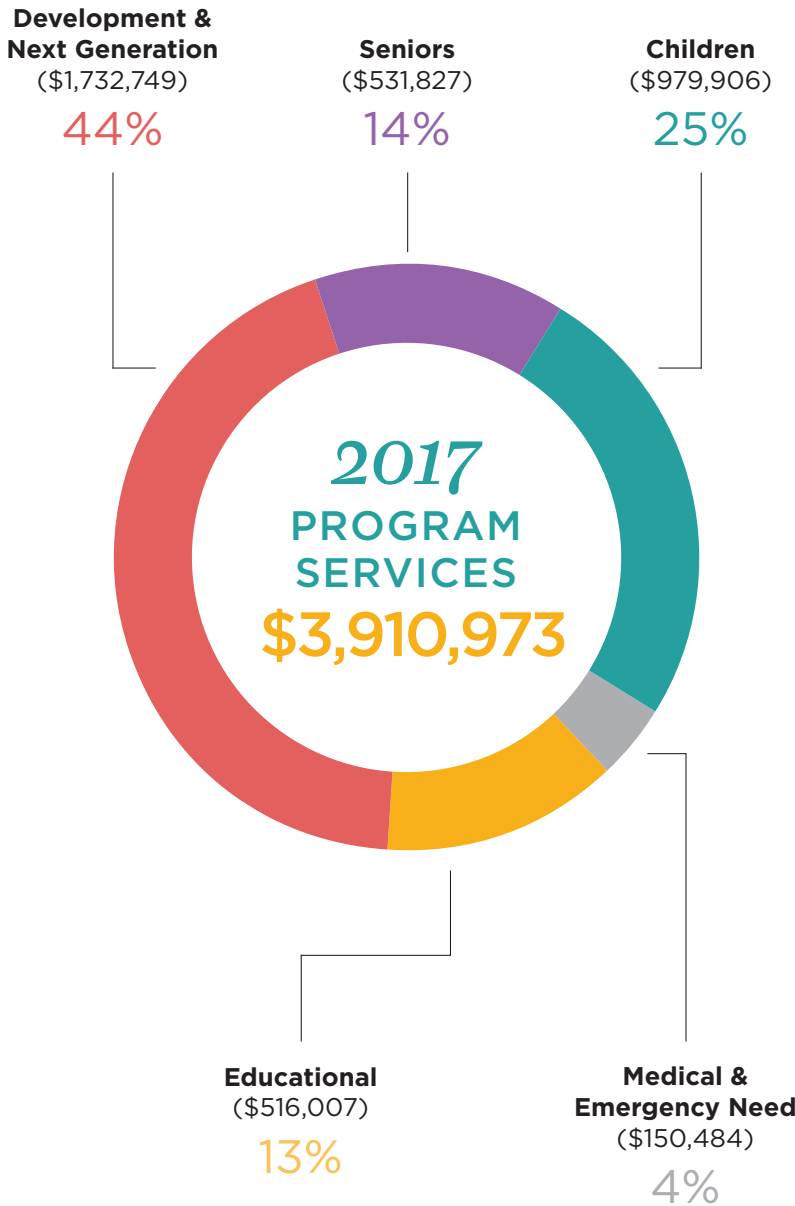
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FAR

## 2017 Asset Base

The financial Statements of the Fund for Armenian Relief, Inc. for the year ending December 31, 2017, have been audited by the accounting firm of WithumSmith+Brown. The independent auditors issued an “unqualified opinion” that FAR statements conform to accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and that “the financial statement...present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Fund for Armenian Relief, Inc.” as of the given date. The audit report is available upon request.

Cash and cash equivalents	\$3,287,656
Investments	\$2,897,336
Contributions and pledges receivable	\$6,262,137
Prepaid expenses	\$1,511
Inventory of supplies and donated goods	\$359,348
Property and equipment, net	\$1,330,350
Beneficial Interest in funds held by others	\$1,787,457
Pooled investments held by ACEF	\$3,392,518
Total Assets:	\$19,318,313







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