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Press Release

11 November 2021

US Embassy, RA MoESCS, and COAF to Elevate Formal English Education in Armenia's Lori Region

YEREVAN — On 13 November, at the graduation ceremony of COAF's English Access program, **Children of Armenia Fund (COAF), the US Embassy in Armenia, and the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports** will sign a 3-year Memorandum of Understanding, enforcing the pilot initiative **"English-Speaking Rural Schools."** This new effort aims to drive forward the promotion and dissemination of the English language at formal education level across 24 schools in 22 rural communities of Armenia's Lori region. By running parallel to COAF's ongoing, extracurricular English Access programs, the new deal will extend the present efforts of COAF and the US Embassy on English education beyond the scope of after-school programs.

Building English language proficiency in Armenia is critical to strengthening competitiveness and employment opportunities in local and international markets. To help develop skills and competencies in the world's language of business and bring cultural diversity to Armenia's most overlooked communities, COAF and the US Embassy have collaborated closely for the past 10 years and taken necessary steps to promote English proficiency: what started with 100 students has grown to reach 1,465 rural youth.

The new partnership with the Ministry of Education will expand the geographical coverage of this initiative to help over 2,400 students attain an advanced level of English proficiency (C1). Simultaneously, to enhance the teachers' qualifications, English language, and professional skills substantially and sustainably, 24 local teachers will participate in the Certification to Teach English as a Foreign Language (CTEFL) Program offered by the highly acclaimed American University of Armenia. Alongside nurturing modern methods of teaching, this certification will provide teachers a 5-year accreditation required by the Ministry of Education, which ultimately will result in around a 40% salary raise remunerated by the Ministry.



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As a fitting tribute to this joyous initiative, over 300 attendees of COAF's extracurricular English Access Program will graduate on the day of the signing, paving the way for the next generation of participants to join our ongoing Access programs in 7 rural communities in January 2022.

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.