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Press Release

14 April 2022

## COAF & Lithuanian Embassy Launch Women-Led Business in Rural Armenia

YEREVAN — Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) and the Embassy of Lithuania in Armenia celebrated the launch of the women-led business “D Salon” in Lori’s Debet village on April 14th. In the context of the “Empowered Women as Agents for Change and Rural Development” program, COAF renovated part of the Debet Municipality to create space for the new beauty salon while engaging rural women in vigorous training in modern beauty practices and entrepreneurship, promoting the entrepreneurial potential of women and their role as players in driving economic and social development across rural Armenia.

The opening ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of Lithuania to Armenia, Inga Stanytė-Toločkienė, COAF Managing Director Korioun Khatchadourian, and the Head of the consolidated community of Pambak Suren Kostandyan.

In a joint effort with the Lithuanian Embassy in Armenia within the Lithuanian Development Cooperation Programme, and Dufry, COAF started this business development initiative by upgrading the professional expertise of 24 women from Armenia and Artsakh in modern hairdressing and nail care techniques as well as business management. The three candidates developed the necessary technical competence to run a competitive business qualified to independently and responsibly operate the beauty salon. Ongoing consultation and support from COAF business experts will ensure the smooth functioning of the new business.

The beauty salon is located inside the Debet Municipality, where COAF has previously carried out large-scale renovations, equipping the building’s second floor with modern working areas and a multi-purpose community library. The subsequent establishment of “D Salon” on the first floor marks the first of two initiatives directed at supporting modernization and growth in the community’s service sector; the second concerns the forthcoming launch of the postal service HayPost.

Improving the financial and social position of Armenia’s rural women by offering them new career choices is part of COAF’s five-year target of turning Debet into Armenia’s first SMART Village through a string of efforts in infrastructure, business,



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and professional capacity development. To this effect, the organization plans to upgrade existing businesses and launch new ones in hospitality, gastronomy, and agricultural services in the near future. Currently, COAF is taking business ideas from Debet residents and actively promoting locals' involvement in spurring economic activity in their community.

### **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.*