

Press Release

19 March 2023

COAF & THE EMBASSY OF CANADA EMPOWER RURAL WOMEN IN ARMENIA'S HOSPITALITY SECTOR

YEREVAN — COAF and the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives celebrated the successful completion of their pioneering project, “Empowering vulnerable women through job-oriented skills development and employment services in the hospitality sector in Lori region of Armenia” on March 19, marking a major milestone in their commitment to promoting gender equality and empowering women in the workforce.

The project was designed to foster career development and promote diversity and inclusion in the hospitality industry. It supported 30 participants, 29 of whom are women, who underwent an intensive 5-month-long training in culinary arts, waitstaff, hotel, and restaurant management, as well as language proficiency courses, in partnership with the Yeremyan Academy for Culinary Arts and the French-Armenian Vocational Education Center, CEPFA. In addition to technical skills, the program also provided participants with gender equity and social inclusion training to equip them with the necessary skills to overcome the unique challenges faced by women in the workforce. This aspect of the program was led by a representative from UN Women.

After completing the program, 24 participants received job offers from various businesses in Lori, while others are exploring new opportunities that align with their newly-acquired skills. COAF collaborated with seven women-owned partner institutions in Lori, including Debed Life, Chamich, Madin Hotel, Kaghni, Tezh Ler, Tumanyan Development Foundation, and both the COAF Concept Hotel and Conference Center, to secure suitable placements for program graduates. The Marriott Armenia Hotel, The Concept Hotel by COAF, and the COAF SMART Conference Center also committed to hosting post-training internships.

To celebrate the achievements of these women, a panel discussion was held, moderated by the RA Minister of Economy, Vahan Kerobyan. The panel featured

pioneering women, including the Ambassador of Canada to Armenia, H.E. Alison LeClaire; the Chairperson of the Tourism Committee in Armenia, Sisian Boghossian; COAF Managing Director Liana Ghaltaghchyan; Executive Director of the Iris Business Incubator Narine Terzyan; and local hospitality business owner Marine Davtyan. These women shared their stories and experiences, inspiring others to pursue successful and rewarding careers in the hospitality industry.

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 66 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.

About CFLI

The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) provides modest funding for small-scale, high-impact projects in more than 120 countries eligible for official development assistance (ODA). The CFLI has an annual programming budget of \$26.8 million, with projects averaging \$31,000 each. Projects are planned and implemented mainly by local organizations, and are selected and approved by the relevant Canadian Embassy or High Commission.