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the People of Japan**

Press Release

01 March 2022

COAF & Embassy of Japan to Transform Public Transportation in Armenia's Lori Region

YEREVAN — Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) and the Embassy of Japan in Armenia signed the Grant Agreement for the “Project for Provision of Public Bus in Lori Province” on March 01, providing grant aid of \$90,000+ to promote more sustainable transportation in Armenia's Lori region through a new, disabled-friendly bus, an expanded network of transport routes, and the renovation of poor transportation infrastructure.

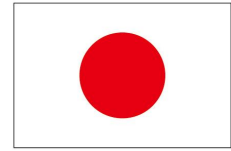
Hosted by the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, the signing ceremony was launched with a series of welcome remarks by the Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Gnel Sanosyan, the Ambassador of Japan to Armenia H.E. Mr. Masanori Fukushima, and COAF Managing Director Korioun Khatchadourian.

The public transportation system in Armenia's northern Lori region is rudimentary and insecure, offering residents access to one dilapidated bus that connects Dsegh and the region's capital, Vanadzor, only once a day without passing through the villages along the route. The self-initiative of the local bus driver, who has replaced the old bus with a new one, coupled with the new, state-of-the-art bus provided in the scope of this initiative, allows for the establishment of an efficient transport route that runs at hourly intervals, connecting seven communities along the Dsegh-Vanadzor path, with integrated stops at the COAF SMART Center in Debet village and the forthcoming SMART Health Center in Dsegh.

The advantages of upgrading the transportation system in Lori reach far beyond ensuring mobility: the provision of a new bus extends the accessibility of public transportation to people with disabilities; improves rural residents' access to new markets, stimulating competition across the region; and facilitates the shift from



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private vehicle to public transport, ensuring eco-friendly, safe, and economical travels. Moreover, to ensure that local interests and concerns are adequately taken into account, COAF, the consolidated community of Pambak, and the community-based non-profit organization (CNO) have concentrated their efforts on furthering the community's interests through the interactive exchange of expertise.

The offer of a developed transport system goes hand in hand with the offer of sound, modern transportation infrastructure, including all related equipment such as at-stop signages displaying real-time information. In 2021, COAF took the first successful step in this direction by building a new, well-equipped bus stop in the organization's flagship SMART Village, Debet. Going forward, the bus stations of four additional communities will be renovated with potential for further geographic expansion.

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.