

# ANNUAL REPORT

## Caritas Aregak Foundation

Title: **Caritas Aregak Foundation**  
Start and end date: **10.01.2023 - 25.12.2023**  
Project location: **Gyumri, Armenia**  
Date, author: **18/04/24, Administrative Team**



## Implementing Organisation

Organisation name: <b>Caritas Aregak Foundation</b>
Legal form, founding year: <b>Armenian Charity Foundation, 2020</b>
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Project number:
Project title: <b>Emili Aregak Centre</b>
Country / Diocese / Province / Project area: Armenia/Shirak/Gyumri

## Reporting Period

From	10.01.2023	to	25.12.2022	Sent on	18.04.2024
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## **Summary of the Project Progress**

With the support of its 37 staff members, including therapists, group leaders, and admin staff, Emili Aregak Centre (EAC) continued its mission to improve the life quality of young people with disabilities in Gyumri.

From January to December 2023, 200 beneficiaries aged 1–18 utilized the services of the EAC. Of these 200, 121 are male and 69 are female.

An additional 50 youth aged 18+ participated in programming. Of these, 17 have multiple disabilities and participate in group work and activities. The remaining 33 young people were involved in the Nine Steps to the Labour Market program. 25 of these young people are male and six are female. Five young people pursued vocational school and twelve found work or continued to hold jobs at Aregak Bakery/EAC kitchen.

On average, 43-48 beneficiaries enter the centre every day. Of these, 27-30 children stay in the centre for 3-4 hours for therapies, group activities and lunch. 15-18 of these young people attend the centre solely for individual therapy sessions. On average, the centre's car transports 15 beneficiaries every day.

Aregak's volunteers, including three from Caritas Austria, made significant contributions. They supported kitchen activities, provided nutrition training, introduced new products to Aregak Bakery, consulted on fundraising and aided in the construction of essential facilities.

In response to Azerbaijan's attack of Artsakh on September 19, and the subsequent displacement and humanitarian crisis that resulted, Emili Aregak

played a vital role in supporting displaced children and youth with disabilities by prioritizing their admission.

The "Barrier-free Safety" project, funded by the German Federal Foreign Ministry through the InKultur programme and implemented by CAF, aimed to provide psychological support and additional humanitarian services for those affected by war, including soldiers with combat injuries and disabilities and displaced families with disabled members. Despite the fact it was initiated before the September attack, the project became crucial post-displacement. 35 families with disabled members have benefited or continue to benefit.

Major construction projects included the building of an inclusive playground and an accessible passive solar greenhouse. The playground, constructed with support from three charitable foundations, will provide a space for children with and without disabilities to enjoy together in the warmer months of 2024.

When it is completely furnished, the 920 sq metre greenhouse, funded jointly by the Austrian Development Agency and Caritas Austria, will provide opportunities for young adults with disabilities and parents of children with special needs to learn the basics of green agriculture and eco-friendly greenhouse gardening. It was built within the frames of the 2.5-year project "Social and economic inclusion of PwD through green agriculture," with the goals of preparing more young people with disabilities to enter the agricultural labour market, find work and spread awareness of the importance of green agriculture. In summer 2023, the first pool of training took place. Fifteen young people participated. By 2025, at least 30 more people will be trained and five trainees will be hired to grow and process

tomatoes in the fully established “Green Aregak” greenhouse. This team of employees will run Caritas Aregak Foundation’s second ground-breaking social enterprise (after Aregak Bakery) to challenge stereotypes and generate profit for Emili Aregak.

The "Nine Steps to the Labour Market" initiative continued, with a renewed focus on tech and agriculture. The US-embassy funded “Armenia Through My Eyes” project equipped nearly 20 young adults with disabilities with computer and photography skills. Training sessions and excursions to different parts of Armenia allowed young adults to apply their skills. Their shared framed photos and impressions with the community during the closing event of the project in December.

Emili Aregak also hosted training for kindergarten staff in Gyumri, equipping teachers with the knowledge necessary to better welcome children with special needs into the school environment.

Strategic workshops, funded by USAID, covered branding, mission, vision, and gender mainstreaming to help Emili Aregak plan for its future. In the summer, six young adult staff participated in a youth exchange in Austria, focusing on UN sustainable development goals. Seven young adult members of “Nine Steps to the Labour Market" attended a workshop in Brussels on environmental topics. Notably, five group leaders graduated with their bachelor’s degrees, further specializing in special education, education for the deaf, and speech therapy, which will enable them to more professionally serve children.

Aregak Bakery's leadership graduated from the Axcel social enterprise accelerator program, receiving an award for the best pitch. The bakery earned

a \$30,000 combination grant-loan from Armenia's new EU-funded "Via Fund," an investment fund particularly for social enterprises. This will fund various renovations on the bakery's terrace that will make the space more inviting for customers. Eight young people with disabilities worked at the bakery this year, and one more mother of a young person with special needs was hired to join the other four.

The closure of the two-year programme "INKuLtur" marked another achievement, empowering cultural institution representatives with knowledge about inclusion in order to make Armenia's museums, theatres, libraries and other cultural venues more welcoming for all people, no matter their abilities. 15 fellows participated in the training and each submitted proposals for a small grant competition organized within the frames of the programme. The small grant was awarded to the National Gallery of Art to create tangible art for blind patrons to experience.

Innovative collaborations with QaylTech and a visiting church group resulted in donations of physiotherapy devices and an adaptive tricycle, enriching the set of available equipment Emili Aregak has to serve children with disabilities. Many other visiting groups, as well as dignitaries, including the Ambassador of Japan, visited Aregak.

Despite the challenges of Azerbaijan's attack in September and continuing inflation, EAC and Aregak Bakery continued to thrive thanks to loyal donor support, bringing joy, support, and inclusivity to the community of Gyumri.

<b><i>In 2023, we started the year with</i></b>	135 children
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<b><i>During 2023, we accepted</i></b>	<i>65 children</i>
<b><i>Number of children aged 0-18 who used the services of EAC in 2023</i></b>	200
<b><i>Number of children who finished a course of therapy</i></b>	12
<b><i>Number of children who left for another reason</i></b>	12
<b><i>In 2024, we started the year with</i></b>	<i>176 children</i>

Over the course of the year, Caritas Aregak Foundation also ran multiple short-term projects. Some were focused specifically on EAC and Aregak Bakery & Café beneficiaries, while others were broader, using Caritas Aregak’s human and physical resources to meet needs of the Gyumri community. These projects are listed in the table below:

<b>Project name</b>	<b>Project objective</b>	<b>Donor(s)</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Dates</b>
InKultur	Training in Inclusion for Representatives of Cultural Institutions in Armenia	German Federal Foreign Office; Civil Society Cooperation	60,000 EUR	October 2021 – December 2023
Armenia through my eyes	Digital skills and communications training program for young adults with disabilities	US Embassy in Yerevan	15,000 USD	October 2022 – September 2023
“Green Aregak”	Development of an accessible greenhouse and inclusive gardening program for young adults with disabilities	Austrian Development Agency; Caritas Austria	380,000 EUR	January 2023 – August 2025
Via Fund	Renovation of Aregak Bakery’s patio	Impact Hub Yerevan; European Union; EVPA	20,000 EUR grant + 10,000 EUR loan	March 2023 – December 2025
Barrier-free Safety	Psychosocial support for those with disabilities	German Federal Foreign Office;	60,000 EUR	July 2023 – September 2024



	affected by war and displacement	Civil Society Cooperation		
Play for all	Development of Emili Aregak's inclusive playground space	Stirling Foundation; LDS Charities; Hovnanian Foundation	50,000 USD	July 2023 – April 2024

2. Target Groups & Final Beneficiaries

**Target group Numbers:**

PLANNED TOTAL (for period 2020-2023)						
<b>Target groups<sup>[1]</sup></b> (number and description)	Children with disabilities Youth with disabilities Family members of children and youth with disabilities					
Total number of individuals and households (of target groups)	300 children with disabilities	Female	80	Male	220	

	90 youth with disabilities	Female	50	Male	40	
	450 families				This is a combination of the families of children and youth.	
<b>REACHED (for period Jan-Dec 2023)</b>						
<b>Target groups</b> (number and description)	Children with disabilities Youth with disabilities Family members of children and youth with disabilities					
Total number of individuals and households (of target groups)	200 children with disabilities	Female	69	Male	121	
	33 youth with disabilities	Female	13	Male	20	This number includes both youth who attend EAC for long-term group therapy and those involved in “Nine Steps to the Labour Market” trainings.
	170 families					

**Target group selection & involvement**

1. *Were there any changes in your target group selection, and if so, why?*

There is a continuing and renewed focus on the Nine Steps to the Labour Market young adult programs. Following computer skills and photography training sessions and meetings with communications professionals, the young adults took excursions to different parts of Armenia to apply their newfound skills, photograph their surroundings and speak with the people they saw. In December, they organized a community event based on their learnings. They also took a deeper dive into agriculture this past year through the “Green Aregak” training program.

2. *How were the target groups involved in the implementation process?*

Following an initial consultation between EAC’s interdisciplinary team, parents and the child being evaluated, children begin receiving specialized individual and/or group therapies according to a child development plan created by EAC specialists. This plan outlines the conditions of the child, the types of therapies needed and the number of sessions required. This allows for clear communication and organization between the service providers and the beneficiaries. Parents are also given these schedules.

The service manager who oversees the therapists had a mandatory meeting with each child’s parents during the course of the year, where the goals, successes, and difficulties of the implemented therapies were presented. Home assignments were given to parents to help them focus on the directions crucial for their child’s development at this stage.

0. *Describe how your project reached marginalized / disadvantaged groups (e.g. elderly, people with disabilities, women, children, etc.)*

The project reached the target groups – children and youth with disabilities and their families – through therapy, socialization, training and employment initiatives.

### **Accountability towards target groups, final beneficiaries**

1. *What mechanisms have been put in place to be accountable towards the target groups and final beneficiaries? (e.g. feedback mechanism, complaints mechanisms & handling, information, participation)*

EAC involves family members of beneficiaries as much as possible by giving them direct access to centre staff. Group leaders, therapists and the EAC social worker speak regularly with parents/caregivers about the progress of their children.

The youth trainings coordinator maintained a direct line of contact with the families of young adults involved in activities, training and vocational school. She also maintained a direct line of contact with organizational partners.

Accountability mechanisms include feedback channels such as parent meetings, phone calls, online chat groups and informational events.

#### 3. Description of the progress

1. *Please describe any (foreseen) visible impact, changes and effects on the lives of the target groups.*

Over the course of 2023, the beneficiaries received professional support services in psychology, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, art therapy, music therapy, special education, gardening, pottery and cooking.

Children acquired the abilities to prepare food and use utensils independently, to water, weed and design the garden, to express their thoughts and emotions through pottery, wool work and other art-therapeutic techniques, to stimulate their imagination and creative thinking, to develop fine and gross motor skills, to gain strength, mobility and flexibility, to develop life skills like showering, shaving, biking, dressing and using public transport independently and to become more confident.

Over the course of the reporting period, young adults achieved greater independence, a sense of responsibility, and a desire to solve their own problems. Many of the young adults are able to read fluently. Through Nine Steps to the Labour Market, young adults explored gardening and photography skills, learned about their rights, and participated in community events.

Young people were able to make progress in overcoming their feelings of anxiety, fear and pain through art therapy and psychological support. Six young adults pursued vocational school and 12 (including staff at Aregak Bakery) continued to work and/or earned jobs.

*b. Please describe any unforeseen effects / added value for the target groups, the implementing organisation and or the project.*

Due to the Caritas Aregak Foundation's new initiative "Barrier-free Safety" which provides psychosocial support for people with disabilities and their families affected by war and displacement, more than 150 families from Artsakh received material or psychosocial support from EAC. Seven children and three youth with disabilities began attending the centre for therapies.

As we've emphasized before, continuous professional development is crucial for the staff at the center.

In April 2023, a training course was held for doctors assessing personal functionality and specialists providing paramedical services. One of our specialists, who is both an ergotherapist and a speech therapist, attended.

From May 17th to 19th, 2023, the center's coordinator, service manager, and social worker participated in a two-day training on the rights of persons with disabilities and service provision specifics. In June 2023, a training course for doctors and paramedical service specialists focused on personal functionality assessment was attended by Kerton specialists, including an ergotherapist, a speech therapist, and two special educators.

On December 7th and 8th, 2023, our center's head, service manager, and social worker joined a UNDP-organized course on applying the International Classification of Functions. This was supported by various UN bodies and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

Other training topics for center employees included gender sensitivity, facilitating children with developmental characteristics in group activities, and behavioral analysis with intervention techniques.

*c. Please provide information on the progress towards your Logframe: please do so by filling in the column 'Current value' of indicators in your submitted Logframe; add it to the report as annex 2).*

See Annex 2.

*d. Please list the activity titles as in your Logframe in this paragraph; below them please describe what has been realized in the reporting period. For each activity please specify: Who has implemented it? When has it been implemented? Who has*

*benefited from it? What is the purpose of the activity? What are the effects? (Max. ½ page per activity)*

### Activity 1.1. – Physiotherapy

Physiotherapists Lusine Karapetyan, Gohar Petrosyan, and Haykaz Hambaryan have made significant impacts on the lives of numerous children, addressing various physical challenges and promoting mobility and independence. They have transformed lives through tailored interventions, enabling children to achieve milestones like sitting, walking, and even riding bicycles independently.

**Lusine Karapetyan's** dedication post-maternity leave saw her working extensively with 15 children, providing a range of therapies to improve their motor skills and prevent complications. She also initiated a parents' physiotherapy group specifically for mothers, enhancing their physical wellness through yoga and sport. Notable successes include the cases of Nare, Norik, and Vahan, who experienced improvements in muscle strength, balance, and mobility.

**Gohar Petrosyan's** work with 39 children involved advising parents on home care and facilitating mobility aids. During the year, she supported the intake of ten new beneficiaries, and began training three. She advised parents on how to position their children at home during daily activities. She selected stands and walkers, which were adapted for children and explained how to use the stand or step. Ms. Petrosyan helped specialists to position children during their trainings and also fed specific children during lunchtime in need of support.

Thanks to Ms. Petrosyan's work, there are many success stories. For example, after 25 therapies, 23-year-old Eduard's mobility drastically improved. He now sits up from lying down, turns sides, lies on his stomach, and stretches forward independently. Using a roller, he can rise to his knees, walk forward

and backward, and sit with legs folded. His balance, posture, and leg support have notably enhanced, enabling him to walk short distances unaided and ride a bicycle.

Ares, age 2, initially struggled with weak upper and lower limb muscles, affecting sitting and balance. After 20 therapies, significant progress: he sits unaided, transitions from sitting to squatting with minimal assistance, holds a crawling position for 5 seconds, and stands independently for 10 minutes. Walking still requires support.

**Haykaz Hambaryan**, like his physiotherapist counterparts, worked with 37 children, ensuring such significant milestones as, for example, improving Garegin's ability to roll over and hold his head up. After a series of sessions, Vardan – who was not able to roll over, sit, or engage in active movements – can now roll over, sit, be physically active and ride a bicycle by himself. These are just two of many success stories!

#### Activity 1.2. – Occupational therapy

Throughout the year, the occupational therapist/service manager **Varduhi Pilosyan** served 33 children, organizing excursions and coordinating discharge and referral processes with parents and specialists.

Monthly beneficiary reviews ensured updated program participation lists. 97 planned primary admissions occurred, with additional advisory admissions. Collaboration between specialists, notably with psychologists, enhanced treatment effectiveness. Parent involvement in therapy improved understanding of children's needs and facilitated smoother transitions.

Collaborating with group leaders and behavioral specialists, the occupational therapist addressed challenging behaviors, focusing on understanding the function of behavior and developing tailored intervention plans. This approach fostered trust and yielded more successful outcomes for children with complex needs.



Tigran, diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder at three years old, showed significant progress at the centre. Collaborating with the psychologist, the occupational therapist helped him to improve in focus and language skills, learning Armenian words and riding a bicycle. Notably, he successfully mastered toilet training, a major milestone.

Similarly, Astghik, who faced behavioral issues, demonstrated improvement in engagement, following instructions, and self-care tasks, including bathroom use and grooming.

Rita, whose early development was affected by family stress, now responds to her name and instructions, interacts with peers, and attends kindergarten. Occupational therapy and psychological support contributed to these advancements, with positive effects observed in family dynamics.

### Activity 1.3. - Psychological services

During the reporting period, a total of 35 children participated in various therapeutic activities with psychologist **Ani Mkrtchyan**, including individual and group sessions.

Over 538 meetings with 42 beneficiaries and 241 sessions involving 38 parents were conducted. Psychological interventions aimed at identifying and enhancing abilities, managing psychosocial behaviors, and fostering parent-child bonds.

Fairy-tale therapy proved effective in promoting emotional release and fine motor skills development through activities like sand therapy and painting. Psychomotor games contributed to body awareness and sensory development in a fun manner.

Successful cases included that of Rafael, who showed significant progress in focus, behavior, and speech comprehension through various therapies. Other children, such as Anushavan, Hmayak, Areg, and Shahane, also completed

their therapy with positive outcomes, with some transitioning to school or kindergarten.

Plans for the future include expanding storytelling sessions, reintroducing peer group work for adolescents, and resuming self-help groups for mothers to further support children's mental development.

Psychologist **Mara Harutyunyan** worked with 18 children and 10 youth during the reporting period. Her individual therapeutic sessions were focused on resolving emotional struggles, behavioral problems, communication difficulties and fear/anxiety.

The work was mainly completed through cognitive-behavioral therapy, gestalt therapy, body orientation therapy, art therapy techniques and eclectic therapy.

Ms. Harutyunyan worked with the children who attend **Tigran Vardanyan** and **Marieta Grigoryan's** group twice a week for one hour. She used play therapy, art therapy and clay therapy to implement the works. A total of 56 meetings were held with ten children. Ms. Harutyunyan worked to regulate emotional and behavioral problems in children, particularly focusing on aggressiveness, ability to follow instructions, involvement in group activities, and adequate behavioral and emotional responses.

Ms. Harutyunyan held three group meetings with the youth of the "9 steps to the labor market" program on "Confrontation with SELF," "Building emotional intelligence," and "Mandala Therapy."

Naira, a 3-year-old with delayed psycho-speech development, faced challenges including pacifier addiction, separation anxiety, stubbornness, aggression, and jealousy towards her newborn sister. Over the course of seven months and 46 sessions, intensive therapy focused on addressing these issues. Initially, joint sessions with a speech therapist transitioned into

individual sessions split between a psychologist and speech therapist. Play therapy and art therapy techniques were utilized. As a result, Naira now comfortably stays in rooms without her mother, has stopped using a pacifier, and exhibits reduced wayward behavior. She imitates adults, speaks words, follows instructions, refrains from hitting adults, and even assists in caring for her sister, mitigating jealousy. Achieving set goals, therapy with Naira concluded successfully, marking significant progress in her emotional and behavioral development.

#### Activity 1.4. - Art therapy

Art therapist **Mariam Vardanyan** worked closely with parents and children, assigned art projects and led discussions. She worked in tandem with the centre psychologists and music therapist to ensure children's creative employment, self-discovery and self-knowledge. She was also involved at points in the team-wide admission and assessment of children.

Ms. Vardanyan meets with children and youth in individual and group settings, utilizing portrait painting, free drawing, fairy tales, story cards, and sand therapy. These activities have a very positive effect on hyperactive kids and those experiencing neurodiversity. Ms. Vardanyan played a role in FMD assessments and admissions, participating in primary admissions of children and youth enrolled in "Nine Steps to the Labor Market."

During the Side-by-Side music and art festival in December 1-3, eight children and young people from the centre participated through the contribution of drawings painted under the art therapist's guidance. This year, all eight youth were able to attend the festival, which excited them greatly.

Ms. Vardanyan also transferred her knowledge to others in the community. For example, three practical meetings were held for the students of different

departments of the National Academy of Arts and Sciences on role of art therapy in working with children with disabilities.

Vladimir, a 7-year-old diagnosed with autistic symptoms, faced difficulties in school due to hypersensitivity, hyperactivity, and lack of concentration. Through targeted therapy, utilizing his love for trains, Vladimir gradually improved fine motor skills, enabling him to hold a pen and brush. Despite persistent hypersensitivity, therapies positively impacted his school performance.

Varduhi's therapy journey began early, engaging in various handicraft groups. Despite initial struggles, she excelled in making pure stone bracelets. While initially challenged by the Shurame technique, she eventually mastered it, even with limited hand mobility.

#### Activity 1.5. - Music therapy

Music therapist **Gohar Shakhulyan** engaged with 74 children, incorporating both individual and group sessions, and also worked with 13 parents through a mothers' choir. In the "Star" group, five boys with developmental disabilities showed improved attention and concentration through musical game exercises and song, while 11 young people in the "Space" group enhanced their musical ear and rhythm sense. The "Space" group also demonstrated interest in playing various musical instruments as an orchestra. Six teens in the young adult group explored different instruments, particularly benefiting from drum and maraca sounds. Additionally, eight teens collaborated with the art therapist, expressing emotions through classical melodies.

Despite challenges such as behavioral issues exhibited by 11-year-old Tigran and unpredictable behavior from teenager Anahit, the therapeutic approach remained steadfast. Notably, Nazani, Anahit, Hasmik, Lelya, and the parents' choir showcased successful outcomes. For instance, Nazani improved speech

and concentration, Anahit developed musical talent and behavior management skills, Hasmik demonstrated improved regulation and imitation skills, Lelya gained proficiency in various instruments, and the parents' choir fostered community, promoted stress-relief and provided performance opportunities.

These successes underscore the efficacy of music therapy in enhancing sensory perception, emotional regulation, and social interaction for children and parents alike. The therapeutic interventions facilitated developmental progress and improved quality of life, emphasizing the importance of continued collaboration and support in therapeutic endeavors.

#### Activity 1.6. - Speech therapy

Speech therapist **Margarita Sedrakyan** worked with 43 children, of which 23 were newly admitted. Ms. Sedrakyan completed individual therapeutic activities with children, worked jointly with other therapists, consulted parents, participated in primary admissions, and discussed problematic cases with supervisors. This year, she also cooperated with kindergarten caregivers and teachers, as well as other specialists from Yerevan who were invited to the centre for close cooperation.

As a result of speech therapy massage, five beneficiaries developed the ability to swallow and the ability to open and close the mouth independently. Two developed hand contact, attention, speech perception and execution of simple instructions. Two are now able to make a small story from plot pictures with prompting questions. Thanks to the cooperation between the specialist and the parent, two children have developed the ability to speak and communicate.

Two children were sent to an external speech specialist and a mechanical problem was diagnosed, which prevented the child from pronouncing correctly.

**Specific successful cases include:**

- As a result of speech therapy massages, Suzy and Avetik have developed the act of swallowing, the ability to open and close their mouths independently.
- Mariam has developed right-hand contact, attention, speech perception and following simple instructions.
- Naira's right-hand contact has developed, her vocabulary has significantly improved and the child has started to communicate.
- Aram's vocabulary is enriched, he can make a sentence with 2 words.

Activity 1.7. - Gardening therapy

Gardener **Valerya Melkonyan** lead the youth from “Nine Steps to the Labour Market” in gardening activities, including planning, preparation of soil, planting, weeding, watering, pruning and harvesting.

In 2023, the garden produced apricots, apples, cherries, watermelon, currants, raspberries, blackberries, squash, tomato, cucumber, peppers, beans, eggplant, kohlrabi, cabbage and a variety of herbs.

The children gathered together to harvest apricots and apples from the centre’s trees—a fun and therapeutic activity. The fruits were dried, turned into “lavash” or fruit leather, processed into jam and eaten fresh!

Through the program “Green Aregak,” 15 young adults, including those with disabilities and those from vulnerable backgrounds, participated in a comprehensive theoretical and practical series of seminars and workshops to prepare them to enter the labour market.

Working in the small “training” greenhouse funded by the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Yerevan, the young adults grew tomatoes and peppers which were displayed and sold at the annual harvest festival in Dzoraghbyur. Local and international visitors purchased produce and gave good feedback about the taste, quality and price. You can view a video about the event [here](#).

By the end of 2023, the 920 sq metre accessible greenhouse and solar panel field funded through the “Green Aregak” project was completed. In 2024, the greenhouse will begin operation.

#### Activity 1.8.- Sport therapy

Over the reporting period, children engaged in sport activities including biking, sledding, ball games, walks, dancing, hammocking and jumping on the trampoline. Children continued to enjoy swimming in the inflatable pool during the summer months. It has had almost miraculous therapeutic effects for some of the children, like Mkhitar, who have autism.

In June, EAC hosted children and youth from disability rights organizations and therapy centres all over Armenia for an event entitled “a chance to compete.” The event was educational and informative in nature, with the purpose of promoting inclusion processes through adaptive sports. Various sports competitions were organized, including bocce, running, table tennis, and blind football. Adaptations were provided so that all participants had the chance to compete equally. People with disabilities, volunteers, and students took the initiative together to challenge stereotypes and showcase their abilities by participating in various sports competitions.

By the end of 2023, the construction of the inclusive playground was nearly complete. It boasts not only routine playground equipment like a slide, but also pieces that promote fitness for people with mobility difficulties, like wheelchair accessible workout bars and a basketball hoop.

### Activity 1.9. - Nutrition

Between 27 and 30 children per day eat lunch at EAC. Depending on the day of the week, between 5 and 7 youth eat lunch. The U.S.-based King's Ransom Foundation continues to cover a portion of the costs each month for these young people.

EAC works to involve as many children as possible in the nutrition program. Mealtime is not only a means of satisfying hunger; it also has important therapeutic value for developing independence. There are children who still eat lunch only with their parents' attendance and the support of a group leader. During lunch, specialists and parents make observations together to understand children's needs and difficulties, so that later children can eat independently, without the presence of parents. Nearly all employees participate in the organization of the lunch process. Children and employees are equally distributed at all tables; some employees feed children and others teach them to eat independently.

During summer 2023, Austrian volunteer Sabine assessed the menus of the kitchen to suggest healthy improvements and led nutrition training for the staff.

### Activity 1.10. - Medical care

Social worker Arpine Sargsyan made 50 referrals for beneficiaries to visit regional clinics to get a correct diagnosis or other necessary certificate in order to access rehabilitation services, certificate of no other health problems, etc. Ms. Sargsyan also accompanied two parents and their children to visit the polyclinic because the families were need of support in speaking with the doctors.

### Activity 1.11. - Hygiene services



EAC provides safe, accessible and hygienic facilities and the opportunity for children to learn self-support and self-care. The centre's multiple accessible toilets and shower facilities are available for children as needed, as many families struggle to meet their children's hygienic needs at home.

Few homes in Gyumri are accessible for children with mobility issues, and some families – especially those who are socioeconomically insecure or who live in villages – still have outhouses. Due to the activities of the EAC development officer and social worker, there is an effort to engage donors in subsidizing the home bathroom renovations of young people with special needs. A focus is placed on bathrooms in a particularly bad state or those of young people with particularly severe physical disabilities. In 2023, four bathrooms were renovated.

#### Activity 1.12. – Group work

Groups are divided based on age and level of ability. Children developed relational and life skills related to teamwork, communication, self-care and compromise.

At the beginning of 2023, after team discussions and evaluation of the beneficiaries' needs, the existing groups were reorganized and new groups were formed. Reorganization was determined by their age, development level, mobility level, staff resources and the possibilities of transportation and access to meals. All young adult groups were reorganized in June.

#### **Group 1: Tigran Vardanyan and Marieta Grigoryan**

During 2023, 36 children received services, including 3 new admissions. Collaboration with 34 parents was emphasized, beginning with parent

meetings in the first semester to set goals. Individual therapy with psychologist Mara Harutyunyan targeted unwanted behavior, notably with Stella. Summer activities included pool sessions and a visit to the Youth House. Successful cases included Natalie's independent attendance and Martin, Daniel, and Arthur's participation in the Paralympic Games.

In the Star group, cooperation with Siranush Hakobyan led to Samvel's improved focus with medication. New member Noah overcame running away behavior, while Aram and Ashot made significant progress in the Moon group. In the 2nd semester, Hovhannes began eating regularly, Tigran's group achieved a positive atmosphere, and Alen expanded his vocabulary. These successes underscored the effectiveness of collaborative efforts between leaders, parents, and specialists in supporting children's development and integration.

## **Group 2: Venera Vardanyan and Vardan Ghazaryan**

During the reporting period, 33 children received services, including 4 new admissions. Despite staff absences due to university commitments, operations continued with restrictions, focusing on care, self-care support, promoting independence, physical activities, and collaboration with specialists. Unexpected actions included home visits, coordination with various specialists, and individual work within groups, yielding faster results and improved communication.

Notable successes included Yuri's improved behavior, Narek's increased motivation and cycling progress, Mary's positive dynamics, and Siranush's weight loss and increased activity. Challenges included wheelchair and device complexities and complications with non-eating children. Future plans involve creating a parent support group, organizing stable meetings, providing carpet-making lessons, adjusting wheelchairs, and enhancing

physical activities and nutrition. Additionally, efforts aim to enhance cooperation with specialists and address individual goals for beneficiaries like Gor, Stella, Davit, and Astghik.

Successful cases highlighted Yuri's significant progress in behavior and Anna's resolution of sexualized behavior through collaboration with specialists. These achievements underscore the effectiveness of interdisciplinary approaches and individualized interventions in addressing complex behavioral challenges and fostering positive outcomes for children with diverse needs. Ongoing efforts prioritize enhancing communication, cooperation, and support for both children and their families to ensure continued progress and well-being.

### **Group 3: Anahit Zenobyan and Armenuhi Stepanyan**

During the reporting period from January to December 2023, 28 children received services, including 8 new admissions. Ms. Zenobyan and Ms. Stepanyan implemented various actions and steps to support the children's development and address their individual needs.

In the Penguinashen group (ages 4-7), efforts focused on developing mental processes, self-care, and communication skills. Achievements included Hasmik's improved table behavior and vocabulary, Sargis's active participation, and Nare's progress in self-care.

The Mehvik group (ages 5-11) aimed to foster teamwork and behavior management. Notable successes included improvements in communication and behavior for several beneficiaries.

The Easter group (ages 14-17) focused on cooking skills and physical activity. Beneficiaries like Yuliana, Manvel, Armen, Miasnik, and Tsovinar made progress in physical activities and self-care, including cooking.

The Khatutik group (ages 7-10) aimed to promote communication and teamwork. Progress was seen in beneficiaries like Narek, Hovhannes, and Armen Apikyan, who overcame initial challenges and actively participated in group activities.

Various events were organized throughout the year, including visits to the skating rink, a hairdressing event, a football event with a professional player, excursions, swimming pool visits, and trips to the puppet theater and cinema.

Difficulties arose with beneficiaries like Trdat and Maria, whose unwanted behavior and frequent absences posed challenges to group dynamics and progress. Strategies were planned to address these issues, including transferring Trdat to another group and addressing Maria's attendance.

New developmental games were created with children's participation to enhance their mental processes, and parent meetings were held to discuss children's progress and future plans, fostering a supportive environment for collaboration between parents and staff.

#### Activity 2.1. - Social consultations

Social consultations ensure that the relationship and information pathway between families of beneficiaries and EAC staff remains strong and open.

During the reporting period from September to December 2023 (following her return from maternity leave), social worker **Arpine Sargsyan** provided services to 157 children and 18 young people. Of these, 68 were engaged in group activities while 99 received individual therapy, spanning various age

groups, including those over 18 with multiple disabilities. Ms. Sargsyan facilitated primary admissions for 97 children, preparing personal files and coordinating with a multidisciplinary team for each case. Additionally, she managed administrative tasks such as creating folders, updating databases, and compiling social stories.

Ms. Sargsyan conducted nine home visits and maintained regular communication with parents through phone calls and meetings, addressing various needs such as therapy, living skills development, and conflict resolution. Social support initiatives included assisting families with utility bills, providing transportation support for medical examinations, distributing clothing and toys, and organizing treats for the New Year. The social worker also collaborated with schools, employment centres, and clinics, facilitating referrals and advocating for the inclusion of children in educational and social settings.

Apart from direct service provision, Ms. Sargsyan participated in professional development activities, including courses on international classifications of functionality and workshops on accessibility and communication with people with disabilities. She engaged in strategic meetings at the centre, facilitated internships for university students, and responded to health needs by guiding children through retirement steps, providing information on free medicine access, and facilitating medication provision from benefactors.

Between January and December 2023, social worker **Piruz Harutyunyan** oversaw primary admission of 79 children. Of these, 18 received counseling and guidance, 56 now attend the centre, and five are waiting for their turn.

During the first semester, Ms. Harutyunyan made 68 home visits, and conducted about 1000 phone calls with parents of beneficiary children. She also facilitated support from partner organizations, including healthy food

packages for 150 children courtesy of Armenian Caritas, and boxes of diapers for 45 children from Apaga NGO.

Between January and February, 60 beneficiary families received gas and electricity utility payments in the amount of AMD 15,000 per month. Children in specific need received financial support for transportation to medical or evaluations or to obtain specific medical support devices.

The social worker also maintained cooperations with other local NGOs and companies. For example, cooperation was established with the physiotherapy company "QaylTech," which presented the list of state-certified devices they manufacture for families of children with mobility difficulties.

Students of the Gyumri State Pedagogical College and the Social Work Department of the State University of Ukraine conducted their passive and active educational practices at the centre within the framework of the cooperation.

Ms. Harutyunyan participated in several trainings as well, including "Women, security and peace: conflict-sensitive and gender-sensitive approach" and "Accessibility, Communication and Communication with Disabled Persons."

### Activity 2.2. - Psychological services for families

During the reporting period, psychologist **Karine Mirzoyan** organized various initiatives to support parents. Three self-support group sessions involving 29 parents focused on topics such as school preparation and parent-teacher relationships, fostering discussions and reminiscences among participants.

Individual counseling addressed family dynamics and parental anxieties, particularly for new entrants struggling to accept their child's condition. To mitigate separation trauma, parent-child sessions were introduced, along with educational courses on inclusive education challenges.

Siranush Hakobyan, a psychiatrist-psychoanalyst from the Armenian Psychoanalytical Association, also addressed parents, stressing the significance of nurturing a child's independence. At the request of the parents, meetings were held with local Catholic priest Fr. Hovsep to discuss topics such as: "Is the birth of a child with special needs in my family a punishment or curse?" and "Forgiveness."

Recognizing heightened stress and even panic attacks among parents following the September 19 attack and displacement, informal meetings and occupational therapy activities were organized, including gardening and choir training, to alleviate anxiety.

Notably, Ms. Mirzoyan worked with physiotherapist Lusine to organize "Healthy Soul, Healthy Body" group workouts, promoting physical and mental well-being among mothers. Additionally, an information session on healthy eating led by nutritionist/volunteer Sabine from Austria further supported holistic family health.

#### Activity 2.3. - Professional consulting to parents

Parents continued to receive on-going coaching from EAC specialists regarding the continuous care of their child beginning from pre-admittance to EAC and extending even past the child's last day at the centre. Thus, in addition to the therapy sessions they held with children, specialists counselled parents on the optimal way in which to structure their children's home activities in order to achieve maximum positive results from therapy.

#### Activity 2.4. - Hotline service

The EAC hotline was active and continued to be available to parents and caregivers who need general disability-related information or specific information about EAC services. The social workers responded to these calls and directed inquiries to the correct specialist for consultation.

Social worker Piruza Harutyunyan made about 1000 phone calls with family members of beneficiaries during the reporting year of 2023. Social worker Arpine Sargsyan made about about 300 phone calls each month with the parents of beneficiary children.

### Activity 3.1. - Community events/excursions

In 2023, EAC organized a range of interesting events and excursions both within and outside of the centre.

The young adults of “Nine Steps to the Labour Market” organized a photographic and art exhibition on March 8, International Women’s Day, at the Aslamazyan Sisters Gallery next door to Aregak Bakery. The artworks of two young women with disabilities were displayed for the community to see. The media came to conduct a reportage.

Several important dignitaries visited the Caritas Aregak Foundation, including the ambassador of Japan to Armenia. In February, he made a visit to EAC to see the sakura cherry trees planted on our property. He also made a tour of the centre and listened to a concert prepared by the children. The Prime Minister of Armenia, Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, also made his first official visit to Aregak Bakery, shortly after its fifth anniversary in September.

There were many great and beautiful moments for the children, including the continuation of EAC’s special guest series “Q&A,” through which interviews are held with local inspiring and famous individuals. For example, in celebration of Children’s Day, famous Armenian football player Vahan Bichakhchyan came to visit. He played football with the kids and was a special guest within the frames of “Q&A.”

In celebration of family day on May 15, Emili Aregak invited the parents of the children for an event including family portraits, games and other special



moments. Excursions in small groups have been organized since June, in which children participate together with their parents, group leaders and volunteers. This is an opportunity for parents to spend a happy day with their children in nature. They have almost no chance to do this without the support of our staff. This has a positive effect on parent-child emotional relationships.

In early June, the band Black Alley came to Armenia from the Washington, D.C. area. They performed several times within the frames of a U.S. Embassy-organized project. The U.S. Embassy also identified Emili Aregak as the location of their special visit. They performed alongside the children to the delight of all.

June 29 was a day of arts at Emili Aregak! More than 200 participants from local children's centres and organizations serving people with disabilities had the opportunity to create, learn and communicate through art. Participants explored pottery, collage, gardening, story-building, theater, Armenian traditional dance, as well as carpet and tapestry weaving. A performance by the Aregak parents' choir added a musical touch to all of this. This event was organized in partnership with local NGO partner Agate Centre for the Protection of Rights of Women with Disabilities, on behalf of the Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms.

Aregak closed out its two-year program "INKuLtur" in partnership with the NGO Dialogue for Understanding and the German Federal Foreign Ministry. The mission of this program was to equip key representatives of cultural institutions in Armenia with new knowledge about inclusion and accessibility, so that they could transfer it to their teams and thus improve the status of their respective institutions. Following extensive training, discussion and study visits, the fellows created proposals for small projects that they could feasibly implement in their own institutions. About 15 fellows graduated from

the training program in July and a mini-grant was awarded to the best proposal. Some participants were able to successfully also apply their learnings and submit proposals for big funding.

### Activity 3.2. - Inclusive education

EAC continues to emphasize early intervention, responding as quickly as possible to parents' outreach with an initial multidisciplinary consultation. Early intervention enables children to develop on a more normal timeline, facilitating kindergarten and school attendance.

Within the framework of the "Together for Social Communities," project, EAC held trainings for kindergarten directors and other school staff. Forty people were involved as trainees. Thus, the participants were divided into two groups. Four kindergartens (and their five employees each) were represented in each group. Seminars were held with each group twice a month.

The training equipped participants with knowledge and skills needed for working with children with disabilities, as well as changing attitudes and approaches. Topics included: "What is autism," "What is Down's Syndrome," "What is cerebral palsy," and "Working with children with intellectual development problems." Participants gained a general understanding of these conditions and their symptoms, which paved the way for new work approaches and skill development. In order to make the courses more thorough, experienced specialists from different fields were invited.

On 28.04.2023, speech therapy specialist Anna Malkhasyan led a workshop on inclusion of children with communication problems. On 06.05.2023, ergotherapy specialist and university lecturer Tatev Ghazaryan led a seminar on "Involvement of children with developmental disabilities in group work and the creation of a suitable play environment."

### Activity 3.3. - Partnerships with organisations

EAC partnered with the following organisations: College No. 4, GTPC - Gyumri Regional State College, Family Children and Youth Art Centre, Shirvanyan Youth Centre, KAZA Foundation, Youth Palace, University College, Agate Centre for Women with Disabilities, Model Lilit Martirosyan, the Gyumri Rotary Club, Together 4 Armenia, Birthright Armenia, College No. 1, Digital Pomegranate and many more organizations!

#### Activity 4.1. - Labour market trainings

The “Nine Steps to the Labour Market” program continued with vigor in 2023. 33 young adults with disabilities participated in programming. Six young adults pursued vocational school and 12 (including Aregak Bakery staff) continued to work and/or earned jobs.

From October 2022 to December 2023, 16 young people participated in the U.S.-embassy funded program "Armenia Through My Eyes." The program gave them an opportunity to learn new and marketable skills, to socialize, to explore their country and to transmit the beauty of what they had seen through their new skills to the community through a final event. Through the courses, the young people gained basic computer literacy skills, photography skills, knowledge of how to communicate through different platforms and media, as well as the opportunity to travel to most of the different regions of Armenia and capture what they saw through the lens of their cameras, obtained through the project. Their photos are still on display for visitors to see upon entrance to EAC.

In May, 10 young people from Emili Aregak participated in the first round of the "Our Future is in Our Hands" program. During the four-day courses, the young people studied social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial activity, presentation skills and pitching and community consolidation and development. The courses gave young people the opportunity to gain

knowledge, develop their business ideas and later turn them into business plans.

In summer 2023, eight young adults with disabilities and seven vulnerable youths participated in the first pool of the “Green Aregak” inclusive green agricultural training program organized at EAC with support from Caritas Austria and the Austrian Development Agency.

From January to March, the work coach facilitated various activities to inform and recruit participants. This included meetings with horticulture specialists to match young people's abilities with suitable tasks, organizing visits to greenhouses, and conducting orientation meetings. Information about the program was disseminated through direct announcements, phone calls to parents and participants, and outreach to local NGOs.

In April, informational meetings were held in multiple centres to introduce the program to interested parties. These meetings were attended by 114 participants, with some selected for the program's first round. From May to August, training sessions covered topics such as greenhouse operations, crop cultivation, and pest management, tailored to the participants' needs and presented in an interactive format.

In September and October, participants visited various centres and greenhouses to gain practical experience. Additionally, horticultural work was carried out at EAC, with adjustments made to accommodate participants' abilities and circumstances. Individual and group meetings were held to address issues and ensure the inclusion and engagement of all participants.

A series of educational and informative seminars were held over the course of the year. These included, but were not limited to, the following topics:

- Types of communication, types of communication in a person's daily life and in the process of making
- Confrontation with SELF, self-knowledge
- Stress relief
- Emotions and dreams
- Transforming negative emotions into positive ones
- Mandala therapy
- Art therapeutic work "technique with tension"
- Art therapeutic work "frames" the transformation of negative emotions into positive ones
- Stress and emotion
- Creative collaboration
- 25 ways to find a job
- Getting to know the artists

#### Activity 4.2. - Coaching

*e. What has been done in order to build capacities (of target groups, development actors, local CSOs, authorities, etc.)? How is the gained knowledge shared and managed?*

In partnership with the organization Dialogue for Understanding and funded by the German Foreign Office, Caritas Aregak Foundation ran the “INKuLtur Fellowship” – a yearlong intensive program on inclusion for representatives of the cultural sphere. 15 fellows graduated from the program in July 2023.

Within the framework of the “Together for Social Communities” project financed by the European Union in Armenia and the Austrian Development Agency, Aregak hosted several trainings and meeting-discussions focused on equipping kindergarten staff and directors with the information they need to support families of children with disabilities who are kindergarten-age. This is within the frames of a grant provided by the Armenian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with the goal of providing social rehabilitation services to 25 beneficiaries 3-8 years old with autism and mental delays living in Gyumri.

In 2023, chief gardener Valerya Melkonyan, the facilities manager Sam Mehroyan and one of the “Green Aregak” program trainees Vera Aleksanyan, a young woman with a disability, participated in the “Cultivation and Management of Greenhouse Crops” training program of the Centre for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD). She prefers to speak than write, and told the job coach that the knowledge she has gained has been helpful. It is a lot, but little by little she is able to apply her learnings and be helpful in the greenhouse. She particularly liked visiting the rose greenhouse as a part of the course.

Greenhouse chief gardener Valerya Melkonyan shares that she had years of experience working in her own large vegetable garden, but never participated in a formal course to learn actual knowledge. Following the CARD course, she learned how to better organise a greenhouse in the proper way, how to choose the plants for the Shirak region climate and more.

Young adults with disabilities were coached by specialists in several different fields. Ten young adults participated in pottery coaching, two in gardening, 11 in drawing, 12 in theatre, eight in gardening, four in dance, and two in sport.

*0. What challenges or obstacles have been encountered in the project / program implementation? How did you react to those challenges (adaptations, changes)? Have there been any lessons learnt in the reporting period? If yes, please explain.*

On September 19, following a nearly 10-month blockade of the road connecting Armenia and Artsakh, Azerbaijan again attacked Artsakh, this time with catastrophic results. The government of Artsakh, in the face of severe casualties, capitulated quickly, giving up all of its land to Azerbaijan. This initiated a massive displacement of 100,000 people, including people

with disabilities, forced to leave their ancestral homelands or face potential persecution if they stayed. The Republic of Artsakh was dissolved as a legal entity on January 1, 2024. Its people are being reintegrated into various regions of Armenia. There are about 3,500 people who have resettled in the Shirak region, of which Gyumri is capital.

There were many demonstrations and protests following the war, but thankfully none were physically violent. The international community responded, but late in the game. France is providing military aid and training, as well as opening a consulate. This will be located in Armenia's southern region of Syunik, which is now much more exposed and vulnerable with the loss of Artsakh around it. On October 25, 2023, the Government of Canada inaugurated the Embassy of Canada to the Republic of Armenia in Yerevan.

The Armenian government is stressed due to the financial burden of providing monthly stipends for displaced families. Much of the support – including housing, furniture, humanitarian aid and therapeutic intervention – has been provided by the non-profit and non-governmental sector.

The Armenian Dram (AMD) continues to rate high against the EUR and USD, meaning that the funding Caritas Aregak Foundation used to receive in foreign currencies is now insufficient to meet its needs in AMD. The administrative team is actively searching for new donors and working to diversify its funding sources. For example, the small cabin on Aregak's campus – Michaela – hosted guests and tourists through the Airbnb platform, an innovative source of income for the foundation.

As mentioned above, all of the group leaders are simultaneously studying and working. Because many of them are approaching graduation, their workload and exam load is high. Because they had to be in Yerevan at many points for their studies, volunteers took the brunt of the work during their busiest times.

This was complicated, but also helped the volunteers grow and develop. In the end, having professionally trained group leaders and volunteers with more experience will be a huge boon to the centre.

Some young people face major difficulties with wheelchairs and devices. In the case of young people with severe musculoskeletal disorders, customizable, comfortable and appropriate devices almost impossible to find. A new approach and a new device are needed for positioning certain children.

Children's development is sometimes complicated by the financial and social psychological hardships that the families face. The development process becomes more difficult when parents have mental problems and is hindered by the frequent absences of the beneficiaries due to illness, especially in winter time. This leads to regression.

0. *Please describe coordination and cooperation measures taken concerning other stakeholders to the project (e.g. civil society organisations, local / regional / national authorities, etc.).*

Since 2017, EAC has been a member of the "Towards an Inclusive Armenia" coalition. The goal of the coalition is to promote the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in almost all spheres: social, educational, equality, etc. The leadership team of the Caritas Aregak Foundation participates in almost all the initiatives and processes implemented by the coalition.

*h. What measures were taken to ensure the sustainability of the project (e.g. self-sustainability of target groups, financial sustainability, environmental sustainability). Which internal and/or external factors could contribute to / could hamper the sustainability of the achieved results?*



#### *Environmental and nutritional sustainability –*

Over the project period, more trees and bushes were planted on the EAC property and a large 920 sq metre solar panel-powered greenhouse was built. The vegetable garden was cultivated and expanded by a team of youth volunteers from “Nine Steps to the Labour Market.” Vegetables from the garden and fruits from the trees are used in the kitchen, sold to the community and used at Aregak Bakery.

#### *Financial sustainability –*

Caritas Aregak Foundation successfully diversified its donor base over the course of the reporting period through continued cultivation of individual donors through email marketing, in-person meetings, outreach and use of the fundraising platform [DonorSee](#). New relationships were developed and/or cultivated with local and international businesses, churches and international aid organizations.

#### *Self-sustainability of target groups –*

Over the reporting period, “Nine Steps to the Labour Market” continued with vigor. The goal of this project is to equip young adults with special needs with the social and relational skills, basic professional knowledge and vocational skills necessary to integrate in the community, be more independent and provide for some of their own expenses through, for example, the selling of handicrafts, such as wool work, reusable bags, pottery and soap production. This year, the young adults participated in trainings in gardening, baking, Microsoft Office Suite, photography, and communications. In the coming years, they will delve even deeper into greenhouse gardening and hospitality skills.

#### 4. Cross cutting issues

*What progress has been made or what changes have been accomplished in terms of:*

#### *Environmental Protection –*

Emili Aregak Centre continues to be a model of environmental sustainability in Gyumri, running on both renewable solar and geothermal power. Over the course of 2023, EAC's gardening program expanded with the addition of trees and plants. The produce yield was the highest it has ever been, contributing to the health of the local environment as well as the centre's sustainability. A passive solar greenhouse was built on the campus, and will serve as an example to the community of renewable energy and eco-friendly farming.

#### *Gender equality –*

Two thirds of EAC's staff is female. The leadership team is completely female. Volunteer Valerya Melkonyan broke stereotypes by leading EAC's gardening program. In Armenia, farming is usually led by men. All of the leadership staff at Aregak Bakery is also female.

#### 5. Monitoring & Evaluation

*Please describe the realized monitoring & evaluation processes during the reporting period (who, when, what, how) and explain how the gathered information was used for managing the project.*

Supervision sessions are integral to our operations. In February 2023, speech therapist Anna Malkhasyan provided professional guidance after examining seven children. In May 2023, psychotherapist Siranush Hakobyan conducted professional and personal supervision, examining 12 children, 5 young people, and offering counseling to four staff members. The same month, professor and inclusion expert Marianna Harutyunyan led a workshop on "Pedagogical-psychological support services for the organization of education at the preschool level."

In October 2023, Karine Totolyan from the Octave Music Therapists Association of Armenia visited, observing five selected children and providing

valuable insights. In November 2023, child psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Siranush Hakobyan conducted routine examinations and provided instructions for 25 beneficiaries.

These sessions foster collaboration between supervisors, specialists, and parents, ensuring decisions are made in the best interest of the children and their families.

#### 6. Visibility, Communication & Fundraising

*What measures have been taken regarding visibility, communication and publications? What measures have been taken to diversify the donor base?*

Caritas Aregak Foundation development officer and social media manager continue to promote the centre's services actively through social media channels including [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) and through the sending of a monthly narrative newsletter. The database now has more than 350 subscribers. Aregak Bakery's Facebook page surpassed 8,000 followers and Emili Aregak's, 5,000 followers.

Over 2023, the team continued to use the [DonorSee](#) and GiveButter fundraising platforms to raise funds for specific needs of EAC, its staff and beneficiaries. Projects were related to education, emergency support, utilities, construction, acquisition of therapeutic equipment, medicine and more.

The administrative team worked to diversify Caritas Aregak Foundation's donor base through outreach and meetings with local and international businesses, foundations, individual donors and aid organizations.

Over the reporting period, project-based financial support for EAC was successfully obtained from the Stirling Foundation, LDS Charities and the

Hovnanian Foundation. Aregak Bakery received funding from the the European Union and EVPA through the Via Fund, Armenia's first investment fund specifically for social enterprises. Ongoing monthly support from the King's Ransom Foundation and biannual support from Gyumri Restored NGO continued.

Grant funding for the Green Aregak project was awarded from the Austrian Development Agency and Caritas Austria. Relationships were established with the Stirling Foundation and LDS Charities and grant funding was awarded in early 2023 as a result. CAF received government funding in the form of two grants from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Both Emili Aregak and Aregak Bakery received significant attention in media outlets this year—particularly through vlogs and TV interviews. Here are some some interesting PR pieces mentioning Aregak:

- About the March 8 exhibition at Aslamazyan Gallery:
  - <https://armenpress.am/arm/news/1105865.html>
  - <https://armtimes.com/hy/article/255058>
- About the Via Fund program:  
<https://collaborate4impact.am/hy/from-brussels-to-yerevan-exploring-the-future-of-impact-investing-in-armenia/?fbclid=IwAR2ndaw0JLD09LbrGIbWqldmWJ4rxhjcKN7TAFoovIYWw2jLwIRfXzgHvGc>
- About Emili Aregak: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIL2yYSlyDO>
- About the US-Embassy funded “Armenia through my Eyes” project:  
<https://www.aravot.am/2023/12/04/1386486/?fbclid=IwAR3rh7RsmVzqYGLLevXgsb0K54385uzPHAXHQHSE1VmotEUT1afsvoSR6jlk>
- About social enterprises in Armenia, spotlighting Aregak Bakery:  
<https://evnreport.com/podcasts/evn-disrupt/gevorg-poghosyan-exploring-the-world-of-social-enterprises/>

- About Aregak Bakery:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=sCOV-qUD7jM>
  - <https://shorturl.at/sJK28>
- Other videos:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHGJPZbRTV4>

More than 100 copies of the children’s book “The Sunny Cook” about Aregak Bakery waiter Hovhannes Margaryan were sold over the course of the year at the cafe; they are available in other bookstores and online as well. In 2023, the author of the book received a grant from the U.S. Embassy to write continue the series by writing two more books focused on men and women with different types of disabilities. In 2023, she published “Champion” and “I Speak through Dance” about a female weightlifter with prosthetic limbs and a dancer with hearing impairments (respectively). We are proud that our bakery inspired her books, which are changing stereotypes about young people with disabilities!

## 7. Budget

a. Please fill in the budget report form.

Total 2023 budget in €	€ <b>336,228</b> <b>(147,000,000 AMD)</b> <b>or 350,117</b> <b>(153,001,129 AMD)</b>	Total expenses in €	€ <b>298,373</b>
Remaining budget in €	€ <b>51,744.19</b>		
Total funds received in € from Medicor	€ <b>200,000</b>	next amount to be transferred in € (requested)	€ <b>100,000</b>

*b. To what extent has the programme been managed as planned regarding foreseen activities and available budget?*

Emili Aregak delivered all services within budget during the reporting period.

*c. Please state if there is any need for modification concerning the project budget.*

N/A

Place, date

.....  
Responsible  
(NAME, signature and seal)

## **Annexes**

Please provide us with the following annexes:

**Annex 1 – Request for payment** (*according to the signed agreement. Please note that the last amount depends on the total amount spent*)

**Annex 2 – Logframe report** (*use the submitted Logframe – column ‘Current value’ of indicators*)

**Annex 3 – Updated time schedule** (*as per submitted Time Schedule*)

**Annex 4 – Financial report**

**Annex 5 – Photo documentation** (*comparing the situation before project start, during implementation and at the end of the project*)

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<sup>[1]</sup> Target groups are the groups/individuals/institutions etc. who will be directly affected by the project (e.g. through the activities and on the outputs/outcomes level).