



“Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR-Armenia) Charitable Foundation”



“Community Development & Social Support”  
BNGO

## REPORT

### MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH PROJECT

#### SECOND STAGE

February-April 2024

**Every child has the right to  
the standard of living necessary for his physical,  
mental and spiritual development...**  
*(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child  
Article 27)*

The protection of mother and child is one of the important targets established by various international conventions and is in the focus of attention of states, decision-makers, and various public and civil actors.

Children, including those born in refugee families, are completely dependent on the attitude of their parents and those around them, because they cannot express their pain, fears, and various problems in words.

Children born with any type of disability are most vulnerable when their parents and those around them do not have sufficient knowledge to respond to their needs and protect their rights.

The education and awareness of pregnant mothers is extremely important both in terms of their own health and parenting knowledge, as well as in future child care, health, proper nutrition, vaccinations and other aspects.

Every parent should provide the child with opportunities to grow up loved, heard and without violence in the family.

Pregnant women in RA have state protection, but especially in regions and remote communities, they are generally deprived of the opportunity to receive the necessary education and awareness.

## The aim of the project:

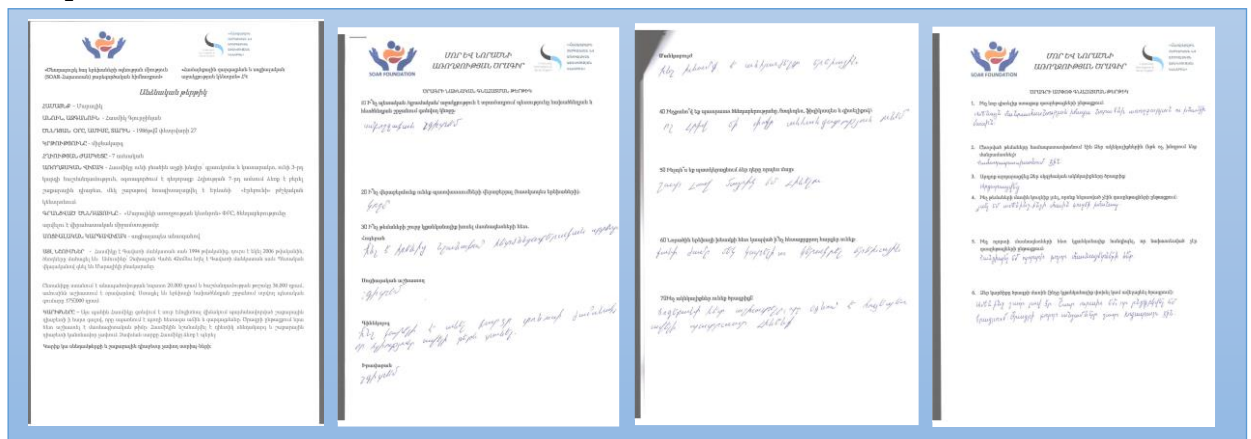
- Contribute to pregnant mothers' acquisition of health, socio-psychological, legal knowledge and to increase the level of their awareness.
- Contribute to the protection of the needs, rights, and interests of children by educating and informing their parents.

## PROJECT ACTIONS AND STEPS

### Steps performed during the project:

- the results of the first phase of the program (pilot program: August-September 2023) were discussed and a positive response was received from the Department of Health and Social Affairs of the Shirak Regional Council and the regional center of the USS of MoLSA and other community partners.
- taking into account the proposal of state institutions and doctors in the first phase, pregnant mothers with one or more children displaced from Artsakh, who face environmental, socio-psychological, economic and other problems after being displaced, were included in the second phase of the program.
- as a result of the cooperation of SOAR CHF, CDSS BNGO, Shirak Regional Council, out of the 47 pregnant mothers 14 were included in the project, although the positive reaction of the program and the number of those who wanted to participate in the program were quite big.
- Regularly together with the specialists included in the program and SOAR CHF the following actions were done:
  - during the implementation phase of the project, professional discussions and consultations took place, particularly regarding the issues of displaced women from Artsakh and their children involved in the project,
  - the course of action, topics of courses, selection of trainers were discussed,

Forms for data collection, initial and final evaluation of the course were developed and completed.



- The group included in the project was inclusive:
  - 5 forcibly displaced women from Artsakh, 1 woman from Georgia, 1 woman from Russia
  - 6 women waiting for their 1<sup>st</sup> child,
  - 8 women expecting their second and next child,

- The included women had different problems due to social, family and other situations created during pregnancy:
  - Those in the stage of deep traumatic stress as a result of the 9-month blockade in Artsakh and being forced displaced,
  - Those with prenatal depression and psychological problems,
  - Pregnant women from rural communities with awareness issues (legal, social, other...),
  - A pregnant woman with health problems,
- During the project, in addition to the courses, it became necessary to work with women who had prenatal emotional instability, prenatal depression, fears, and health problems.
- A woman displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh (A...), who, as a new refugee, had intra-family problems, a stressful situation. Her 3 and 6-year-old children had integration problems with their peers, related to speaking the Artsakh dialect, refused to attend kindergarten and were isolated at home. A was provided with psychological support, as a result, a positive change was recorded, the problem was overcome.

*I am calmer and more patient with the children...*

*I look at life more positively, I got motivation and energy from specialists.*

*From the words of A*

- She was an active social activity and a specialist in organizing entertainment events with children in Artsakh. After the nine-month blockade and displacement, she suffered from prenatal depression. She was quickly included in the general group, became friends with other displaced women from Artsakh and found her cheerfulness, smile again in the inclusive group... She expressed her satisfaction with the program.

*I received a lot of psychological support, new knowledge related to the care and education of my child. I will rate the acquired knowledge 10/10...*

*Everything was wonderful...*

*From the words of A*

- E was displaced from Artsakh with her large family of 10 people in refugee status, including two grandmothers, for whom the displacement was very difficult and in a state of deep stress, E wanted to help them as well. The family crisis together with her pregnancy effected E's psycho-emotional situation. E was provided with socio-psychological counseling, which somehow alleviated the state of prenatal depression.

*After the displacement, I was alone, I had no friends outside the house...*

*I learned how to organize the care of a baby, the right diet and other knowledge.*

*I value the program a lot, I'm very happy that I participated, I got out of isolation, I made wonderful friends. 😊*

*From the words of E*

- L is a young woman displaced from Artsakh, expecting her first child. She lives in a village near Gyumri, in a temporary hut, in very difficult and poor conditions. She loved coming to the courses, made new friends, and somewhat overcame isolation.

*I got a lot of knowledge, I regret that the courses ended...*

*I learned a lot from the psychologist, gynecologist, family doctor... my mood has changed, I am happier waiting for the birth of my baby 😊*

*From the words of L*

- T was forcibly displaced from Artsakh after a 9-month heavy blockade, she was pregnant and in a stressful situation on the way, fearing to lose her child. She was expecting her third child, she was worried that the child might be born with problems. The reason was the malnourished state during the blockade and the stress and fears of forced displacement. During the project, the professional support changed T's emotional state, made her optimistic, helped her overcome the crisis caused by her refugee status. The end of the project coincided with the birth of T's son. Her new friends shared her joy and welcomed the mother and the baby when being discharged from the hospital.

***An inclusive group of pregnant mothers was held***

*I received legal consultation related to refugee status, information about prenatal and postnatal state benefits.*

*I am expecting my third baby and I got completely new knowledge about my health and the health of the baby.*

*Thank you for the pleasant atmosphere and meetings...*

*From the words of T*

- D and A moved to Gyumri from Georgia and Russia. They had documentation problems, for which they received sufficient information from the relevant legal course of the program. Both of them were expecting their first baby, and according to the initial assessment, they did not have the minimum knowledge related to pregnancy and child care.

*We got a lot of new and interesting knowledge during the courses, as well as positive vibes mentally and physically 😊*

*From the words of D & A*

- S was expecting the fourth boy, had psychological problems, because her husband has been working in the Russian Federation for all these years and stays with the family for 1 to 2 months a year. During her pregnancy, she had severe pneumonia twice, she was taking sedative pills without a doctor's prescription. Counseling was given by specialists, she was referred to the doctor managing her pregnancy. At the last stage of the project, a child was born prematurely, by caesarean section, with pulmonary problems and is still breathing with the help of an artificial device, both the mother and child are in the hospital. The project has ended, but the professional team continues to provide social-psychological support to S due to postpartum depression and problems. A visit was made to the hospital, we are in touch with the doctors.

*Although I am expecting my fourth child, I regret that I did not attend such courses during my previous pregnancies and I did not receive important knowledge. 😊*

*From the words of S*

- A, M, H, S, A and M were young mothers from Gyumri. The specialists of the project discussed and set the task of applying such a toolkit that would ensure inclusiveness with refugee women from Artsakh, the creation of positive psycho-emotional connections and the provision of united, motivated teamwork during the courses.

The vision of the project was achieved in this respect.

Participants and the professional team reported positive changes and exceptional effectiveness.

*• I received basic and practical knowledge from the best specialists.  
• I really liked the program, I would like it to be continued.  
• I gained a lot of knowledge and made good friends.*

*From the words of the participants*

## MAIN TOPICS OF THE COURSES INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT





- ✚ *Intra-family ties for the purpose of ensuring positive socialization, rights and responsibilities of mother and child*
- ✚ *Coping with intra-family crises due to the birth of children*
- ✚ *The negative impact of modern technologies in terms of social connections, isolation and health problems of children aged 0 to 5 years.*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Social Expert: G. Gyunashyan

- ✚ *Birth*
- ✚ *Correct birthing techniques*
- ✚ *Postpartum stages*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Doctor, gynecologist, national expert: L. Gevorgyan



#### 4<sup>th</sup> meeting

March 12<sup>th</sup> 2024

- ✚ *Pregnancy*
- ✚ *Motherhood*
- ✚ *Interactive exercise "When I was a child..."*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Psychologist: N. Sargsyan

- ✚ *Mandatory medical examinations during pregnancy*
- ✚ *The importance of vaccinations*
- ✚ *Temperature, prevention, first aid to the child*
- ✚ *Toxic diarrhea, vomiting, diagnosis, prevention, medical intervention*
- ✚ *Allergies, prevention, treatment*
- ✚ *Proper use of diapers and baby care products*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Family doctor, GP: P. Gevorgyan



#### 5<sup>th</sup> meeting

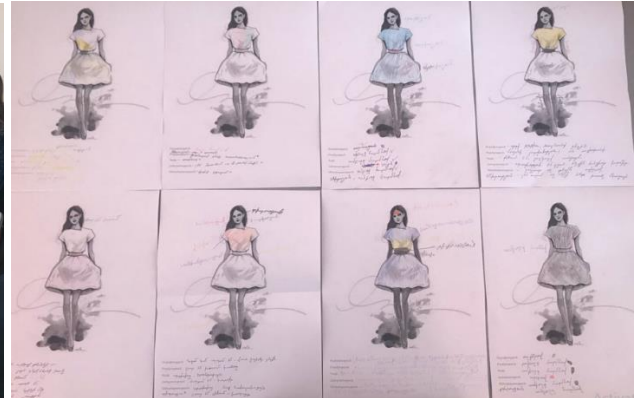
March 14<sup>th</sup> 2024

- ✚ *Protection of rights of mothers with refugee status, types of state support provided*
- ✚ *Prenatal and postnatal, maternity benefits*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Gyumri Unified Social Service reception desk specialist: S. Karapetyan

- ✚ *What psychological stages does a child go through during intrauterine development*
- ✚ *Interactive exercise "One hope, one worry about the child"*
- ✚ *Silhouette of feelings*
- ✚ *Nomophobia, negative impact on the child's psycho-emotional development*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Psychologist: N. Sargsyan



## 6<sup>th</sup> meeting

March 16<sup>th</sup> 2024

- ✚ *Newborn care*
- ✚ *Breast feeding, complementary food*
- ✚ *Sleep schedule*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Family doctor, GP: P. Gevorgyan

- ✚ *Healthy food Healthy lifestyle*
- ✚ *Avoiding extra pounds*
- ✚ *Allergic foods*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Family doctor, GP: P. Gevorgyan



## 7<sup>th</sup> meeting

March 19<sup>th</sup> 2024

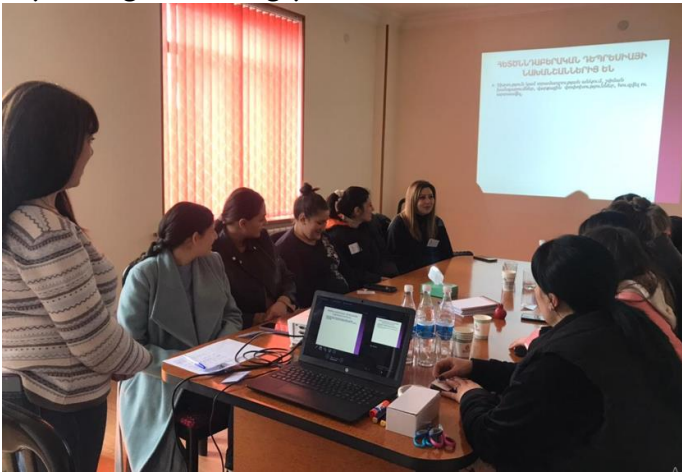


- ✚ *Conflicts, prevention, positive socialization*
- ✚ *Interactive exercise "Coupling in the context of socialization and family ties of newly formed and established families - family, dreams, expectations, reality"*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Social Expert: G. Gyunashyan

- ✚ *Postpartum stress and coping*
- ✚ *Towards a Healthy Childbirth*
- ✚ *Hello Little One "Who is the child for me?"*
- ✚ *Interactive exercise "I would like one of my child's memories of me to be..."*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Psychologist: N. Sargsyan



**Breaks**



The breaks were spent with interesting and interactive interactions. New ties were formed between the people of Artsakh and the locals. They shared the lifestyle, everyday life, distinctive dishes typical of Artsakh. They agreed to get together one day and bake together the famous Baklava cake of Artsakh.



**8<sup>th</sup> meeting  
March 28<sup>th</sup> 2024**

The final meeting of the program took place in the newly opened and colorful KumKuma cafe in Gyumri in a warm, humorous and interesting atmosphere of summarizing the impressions of the courses. It contributed to the desire for further connections, new friendships and closeness with families and children.

Teaching specialists of the project, representatives of SOAR CHF and CDSS BNGO were also present.



*The basis for the creation of a second group of mutual help and self-support of future mothers.*

*At the end of the project, the gift packages provided by SOAR Charitable Foundation were a nice surprise and attention for the young mothers, who gladly accepted and expressed their gratitude for both the knowledge and attention they received.*

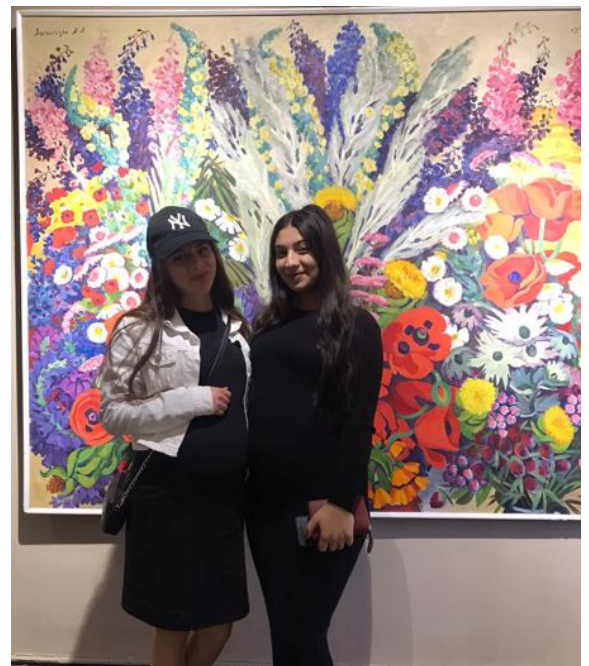




*At the end of the project, we had 3 babies born, one of which is premature, who has problems, needs long-term treatment and support.*



*Together with a partner organization, displaced women/program participants from Artsakh visited the museum, where the pregnant mothers of the MNH program were also involved in Art Therapy program.*



### **OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT**

- The project helped mothers to gain educational, health, social-psychological, legal knowledge during pregnancy, as well as to prevent prenatal and postnatal depression.
- The forcibly displaced refugee women included in the project were included and somewhat relieved of their stress. In a new environment, they received legal advice related to refugee status.

- Future mothers received sufficient knowledge about children's developmental stages, health, nutrition, social-psychological environment, vaccinations and other issues.
- The knowledge provided by experts, through the participants of the project, had an indirect effect on their family members.
- The material support packages provided by SOAR CHF were also important for the participants of the project, which included items and other means necessary for the care of both mothers and children.
- The second stage of the project was also positively evaluated by state and community structures and doctors.
- The project was discussed with the national expert of the Ministry of Health's motherhood and childhood protection program, who emphasized the importance of cooperation with the ministry in the future.

### **PROBLEMS ARISING DURING THE PROGRAM**

- The women included in the program are in different stages of pregnancy, naturally we also have births in the last stage of the program, as well as premature births.
- One of the mothers, with severe pneumonia spread during pregnancy, the boy was born prematurely, by cesarean section and was connected to artificial respiration for 1 month. Even after the end of the program, the psychologist works with mother to overcome postpartum depression continues.
- The mother had problems with state institutions:
  - related to obtaining a birth certificate for the child,
  - to receive state benefits,
  - stay in the hospital free of charge while taking care of the child.

The specialists of the project cooperated with the necessary structures in order to solve the mentioned problems and positive solutions were given to the issues.

### **PROPOSALS RELATED TO THE CONTINUATION OF THE PROJECT**

- The positive results of the second phase of the project once again confirmed the importance and continuity of educational and awareness activities related to maternal and child health.
- To provide socio-psychological assistance and minimum material support packages to a certain number of families in dire need who were forcibly displaced from Artsakh in Shirak region before the child turns one year.
- To implement an art therapy program with 0-5 year old children (also children with disabilities) and their parents of families displaced from Artsakh, taking into account the many stresses and problems they have in adapting to new conditions in the post-crisis situation.



- Conduct training for family doctors, gynecologists and nurses of community polyclinics working directly with pregnant women.
- Considering the positive feedback of the project from the government partners and the proposal to include a larger number of pregnant mothers, including refugees, if possible, include two groups in the project, each with 12 participants.
- Since the mothers included in the program are in different stages of pregnancy and give birth both during the program and after its completion, there is a need to continue professional work to solve the problems.
  - mothers' postpartum stress, psychological problems,
  - various problems with state institutions, related documents, registration and etc.
  - the need for counseling and referrals due to unexpected health problems of the child and the mother in the postpartum period.

President of CDSS BNGO

G. Gyunashyan