



NARRATIVE PROJECT REPORT

Art Therapy for Vulnerable Children

Implementing partner: SOS Children's Villages Armenian Charity Foundation

Project site: SOS Children's Village in Kotayk, Kotayk Province

Implementation period: October, 2022 – October, 2023

Reporting period: April 10, 2023 – June 10, 2023

Yerevan 2023



Introduction

“Art therapy for vulnerable children in Kotayk” project has been running for three quarters. The main objectives of the program were to promote children's self-expression and self-discovery via art, to provide a socially acceptable outlet for anger, aggression and other unpleasant impulses, to express feelings and emotions, to seek new methods of interacting with the world, and to enhance adaptability. The mentioned period shows positive changes in the children who are beneficiaries of the program, which is expressed by the improvement of behavioral, communication and teamwork abilities, as well as positive changes in the emotional state.

57 children were beneficiaries of the program during the three quarters, with 32 children of SOS and 25 children living in the community.

Puppetry workshop

Puppetry workshop classes are carried out twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays, and last 2.5 hours. The interest and involvement in the group has also expanded by the residents of the community, so now 9 of the 18 students attending the group are the children from the nearby community.

The children have put in a lot of effort over the last few months. First, they finished making puppets for the presentation, created lovely clothes and jewels for them. Then they assigned the characters in the play, learnt their phrases, and rehearsed intensively. Now the performance is completely ready, in a few days it will be shown in the local culture house and many children will have the opportunity to watch it.

The next interesting thing they learned is how to make Balkan charm dolls. It is believed that charm dolls have magical properties. Most often they were used to protect homes and children, as well as to ensure the health and well-being of the entire family. To make dolls, children use a variety of colored fabrics. Each doll is created with a white or plain face which represents the owners' purity of thinking.



The children had a memorable day, when Aghasi Melkonyan, a puppeteer and author of many children's performances, visited them. He told the children about his path as a puppeteer, the recent plays he presented, and the festivals he participated in, then showed them how to construct a toy frog that can be used in a play and transformed into many other animals by adding a few

features. At the end, the children presented their play to him and Agassi offered suggestions and made comments.

Pottery workshop

The pottery workshop classes take place on Mondays and Thursdays and last 2 hours. Now there are 16 students in the class. 6 of them are coming from the community, and 9 are from the SOS village. A child with a hearing impairment recently began attending the group. Because he is unable to communicate with others, he comes with his mother. The other youngsters in the group take great care of him and are very supportive. The child is about to have surgery, and the doctor recommended clay work since it improves motor skills and can help in speech development once he begins to listen.

In the pottery class, there are no specific assignments. Everyone prepares something exciting and personal to them. For example, two friends, interested in the life of animals, created a "Planet of Animals," in which numerous representatives from the animal world have been assembled. Another created a clay tile that may be hung like a picture on the wall.



A new thing that has recently been learned is the ability to combine two pieces of plaster casts, resulting in more complicated shapes.



Sand Therapy



Sand therapy classes take place on Mondays and Saturdays and last 2 hours. 12 children from SOS village and 7 from the community attend the class. We bought new toys for the group and brought new sand to make the sessions more exciting. Conversations and discussions on child-related subjects are organized here, and children can raise various questions and discover answers with the help of other members of the group and the therapist. This enables kids to express their emotions, overcome anxieties and conflicts, make new friends, and follow group rules.

From the end of July to the end of August the children will spend their summer vacation in the camp, so the hobby group classes will restart in September. Now, after the school year, they need rest and in autumn will come back with new energy, enthusiasm and creative ideas.