



ARMENIAN CARITAS

ANNUAL REPORT

2007

SERVE

FOR SOLIDARITY

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Caritas
A U S T R I A

 **Cáritas**
Española



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SERVE FOR SOLIDARITY

As the President of Armenian Caritas, I am happy to introduce the results of one year's effort, and to confirm, that Armenian Caritas served for happy childhood, for a dignified old age, for healthy families and for powerful communities. In one word, one more year Armenian Caritas served for solidarity.

The Annual Report is one of the most important documents for Armenian Caritas, as it sums up all the efforts of a whole year. However, as always, it is impossible to introduce the entire scope of the activities in its complete colors and in every detail with this publication.

The information in this Annual Report is in a new format. This time we have prioritized the explanation of the current situation in Armenia, particularly the problems Armenian Caritas strives to address. For Armenian Caritas it is equally important to work in the direction of solving the problems and to as well as raise the issues that face Armenia. We work closely with our partner organizations and the communities surrounding them, and they, in their turn help with their good will and financial donations, in order that more people in Armenia may regain their self esteem and not feel lonely and helpless.

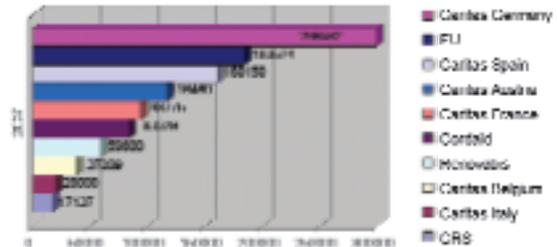


I remain with God's Blessings,

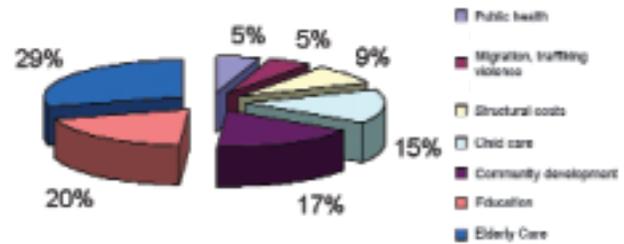
Fr. Neshan Archb. Karakehayan
President of Armenian Caritas

GENERAL ANALYSIS

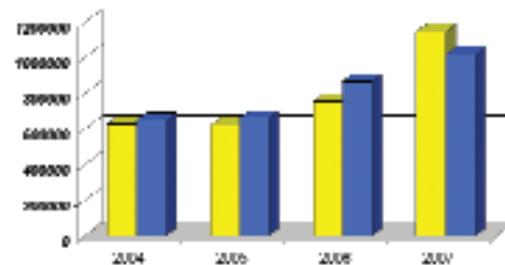
1. Financial Contributions of Donor Organizations



2. Financial Allocations as per Programmatic Areas.



3. Financial Contributions to Armenian Caritas; Comparison of the Last Four Years.



FIVE NEW MEMBERS IN ARMENIAN CARITAS EXECUTIVE BOARD

Currently the Armenian Caritas BNGO Executive Board consists of seven members. The proportional specifics of the Executive Board are the following: from the religious perspective - two clergies and five laics; from gender perspective - two women and five men; from church perspective - three Apostolics and four Catholics.

Here are the current members of Armenian Caritas Executive Board:

Archbishop Neshan Karakehyan - Ordinary of Armenian Catholic Church in Armenia, Georgia and Eastern Europe - President,

Don Grigor Mkrtchyan - Diocesan Priest of Armenian Catholics in Ashotsk,

Alexan Ter-Minassyan - President of Rotary Club in Armenia,

Aida Khachatryan - President of Gyumri Development Center,

Grisha Hoveyan - Owner of Jewelry Making Company,

Stepan Gyozyalyan - Construction Projects Manager of Ordinariate of Armenian Catholic Church in Armenia - Secretary,

Marine Ghazaryan - Teacher.

SERVE FOR A HAPPY CHILDHOOD



SERVE FOR A HAPPY CHILDHOOD

Armenian Caritas has been implementing long term projects for improving the living and educational conditions of children living in special institutions, for socially vulnerable children, as well as for children living in remote and poor rural communities. The welfare and creation of normal educational environment for children has been the main goal of a number of children and youth projects Armenian Caritas implemented so far.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs states, that families in Armenian are in a very difficult situation. According to the statistical data 45,3% of the population are not poor, 27% are poor, and 27,7% are extremely poor. The most socially vulnerable families are those, where the head of the family is a woman. There are about 55.000 families sustained by mothers in Armenia and there are more than 63.700 children under their care. 23,800 (37,4%) from them are children of single mothers, 11,100 (17,4%) are children of divorced parents, 28,800 (45,2%) are children from the families which lost their breadwinner. The statistics show that the overwhelming majority of children who are under the custody of an orphanage are children from incomplete families.¹

Economic need forces many teenagers to leave school before completing the upper grades. Poor families are not able to pay for textbooks, clothing, and shoes which are necessary for children to attend the school. Some parents even force their children to earn money through begging or stealing.

Unfortunately, the educational system of Armenia and its former achievements are also seriously threatened at this current phase of social - economic transition. During the last 5 years, Armenia, with its 1500-year-old history of education, faced severe problems developing a relevant national curriculum and system of education which would meet the current needs of the society.

¹ Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, www.mss.am, 2008



German "Friendship" project, 2003 - present
Funded by Kardinal Frings Gymnasium in Bonn

The goal of the project is to improve the educational conditions of children in the remote village schools of Shirak and Gegharkunick regions, which also implied building of community capacity by encouraging community's participation in all the stages of project implementation. Until 2007 16 schools have received assistance.



Social Work with Youth in Vanadzor, 2006-2008
Funded by Caritas Germany

The goal of the project is to promote a decrease in juvenile delinquency, change public opinion towards children at risk and improve the life style of their families in Vanadzor City. The core program is implemented by "Khachvogh Ughiner" (Crossing Roads) NGO based in Vanadzor. Since 2006, 210 teenagers have been involved in the program.



Healthy Lifestyle - Addition to Social Work with Youth in Vanadzor project, 2007-2008
Funded by Caritas Germany

The goal of the project is to ensure a healthy childhood for the 200 beneficiaries of the "Children's Social Rehabilitation Community Center". A gym hall is now operating in the center and the children attend workshops on healthy life style.

**Capacity Building of Eight Family Centers in Shirak and Lori Regions, 2006-2009
Funded by Caritas Germany**



The goal of this project is to gradually work in the direction of the de-institutionalization of the children and their re-integration into the family and community. During the first half of 2007 8, and then 7 institutions and 1500-1000 children benefited from the project.

**"Narek" Educational Center in Mets Sepasar, 2007 - 2008
Funded by Renovabis**



The goal of the project is to contribute to the cultural/aesthetic and spiritual education of the people living in the community of Mets Sepasar (Shirak region) by reopening the kindergarten for 20 children. The core project is implemented by the Armenian Catholic Church.



SERVE FOR A DIGNIFIED OLD AGE



SERVE FOR A DIGNIFIED OLD AGE

In 2007 September- December Armenian Caritas initiated a sociological survey with the title "Dignified and Well Sustained Life for the Elderly" in three regions of Armenia; Shirak, Lori and Gegharkunik, and studied the problems of the elderly living in those three regions. The research, as well as a number of international and local organizations state that the social - economical current situation of the old people living in Armenia is assessed as not sufficient. There are 101.030 elderly (60 and up) living in these three regions, from which 5.094 (65 and up) live alone, and 16.679 (65 and up) have disability status.²

According to the research the monthly income of the elderly is considerably lower than the rate which can ensure a more or less normal lifestyle. For most of them the main source of income is their monthly pension; for a few cases, the income of the family members and the results of the agricultural activities supplements the pension amount. The income, even when supplemented, at best only partially covers the expenses of the most urgent needs; food and household costs.

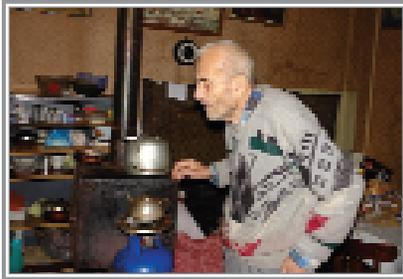
The research also states that the health care services are to some extent not accessible for the elderly. Only a very small portion of the elderly get access to free of charge health care service, except those who have special privileges. In rural parts of Armenia, health services are not accessible for the elderly due to the absence of health care facilities and drug stores as well as lack of access to transportation.

The elderly are not involved in civil life and community activities, have no participation in the activities and events organized by the political structures, benevolent and non-governmental organizations, health care organizations, trade unions, cultural and educational organizations.

Armenian Caritas is well aware about the problems of the elderly and tries to decrease the social tension which exists in Lori, Shirak and Gegharkunik regions through several effective projects.

In 2007, 500 elderly who needed companionate care and basic means of survival received assistance from the 5 projects operating for their favor. Armenian Caritas provides relief and assistance, and at the same time puts considerable efforts to raise the awareness and the sensitivity of the society and the government about the problems of the elderly. Consequently, it is of vital importance for Armenian Caritas to attempt to ensure the topics affecting the vulnerable elderly rate a high position in the national agenda, which is carried out through different public awareness raising activities. The following examples illustrate our efforts on behalf of the elderly.

² Zara Aghanyan, "Dignified and Well Sustained Life for Elderly", Armenian Caritas, 2007, Gyumri, Annex 1



Home Care for the Elderly, 2002-2009
Funded by Caritas Germany, CORDAID

The project offers comfort to 240 elderly living in Gyumri and Vanadzor, and improves their living conditions through regular home visits and provision of healthcare, help with personal hygiene, support with housework and essential services.

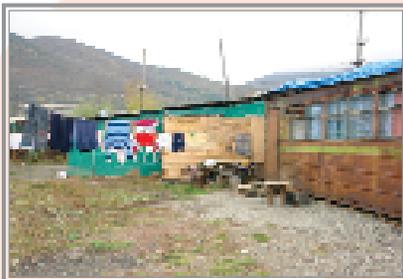
Warm Winter for the Elderly, 2007
Funded by Caritas Austria

The goal was to ensure a warm environment during three winter months for 440 elderly living in Gyumri and Vanadzor.



Day Care Center, 2006-2009
Funded by Italian Bishops' Conference

The program improves the living and health conditions of 200 needy elderly living in Gyumri. The beneficiaries attend the Day Care Center, enjoy a hot meal, spend their time at leisure activities and participate in different events organized by the Day Care Center staff. They have the opportunity to get primary health care services.



Support to the Elderly in Vanadzor, 2006-2009
Funded by Caritas Spain

The goal is to provide material support to 100 elderly living alone in Vanadzor. Two Vanadzor based NGOs; "Arajentats" (Progress) and "Khachvogh Ughiner" (Crossing Roads) voluntarily implement the project.

**Day Care Center for Disabled Elderly in Tashir, 2007-2009
Funded by European Union, Caritas Austria**

The goal of the project is to enable 60 disabled and mentally frail elderly in Tashir city of Lori region to integrate into the society and be equally treated by providing a range of supportive services, as well as legal and social assistance.



**Park for Elderly and Children of Tashir City, 2007
Funded by Armenian Catholic Church**

The goal was to establish a park in Tashir, Lori region, where the elderly and young population of Tashir town can spend their free time and interact with each other.



**Research Study - Dignified and Well Sustained Life for the
Elderly, 2007
Funded by Caritas Austria, Caritas Spain**

The goal of this research project was to identify the problems of the elderly living in three regions in Armenia; Shirak, Lori and Gegharkunik, for the purpose of using the findings in the advocacy activities of Armenian Caritas.



SERVE FOR A HEALTHY FAMILY



SERVE FOR A HEALTHY FAMILY

There is no doubt that the strength of the community and the country is based on the healthiness, strength and wholeness of the family. The current social-economic conditions, the discrepancy of the values developed in pre-soviet and post soviet periods, and other problems characteristic of a country in transition hinder the formation of the family in Armenia as a solid and self-sustained unit. To say a healthy family, Caritas means healthy physically, healthy in its structure and capacity to overcome difficulties.

Several projects in Armenian Caritas separately strive to address the current problems faced by vulnerable families, which mainly concern primary health care, prevention of trafficking, domestic violence, reintegration of returning migrants and strengthening of economic conditions of the family through delivery of special education to women.

Lack of access to healthcare is one of the most difficult problems of vulnerable groups. The problems of lack of access to services and drugs are highlighted in particular. Regardless of the efforts of the state to introduce improvements in the health care system, people still face difficulties of having full access to the health care services due to the imperfections in the same system. Frequent demands for additional informal payments, unavailability of the needed medicines, the lack of health facilities in the rural areas of Armenia and the absence of a health insurance system all contribute to inaccessibility of health care services.

Since 2001 Armenian Caritas has operated the Primary Health Care Center for vulnerable people and their families. The program is very complex and includes prevention and educational activities.

Another aspect Armenian Caritas is addressing is the capacity building of women and prevention of domestic violence. Thus, Armenian Caritas strives for the establishment of a strong and stable family.

Women and children subjected to violence at home are totally unprotected and vulnerable. For a number of reasons, they do not assert their right to live free from domestic violence. These reasons include economic dependency of one or more members of the family, unemployment, poverty, helplessness, uncertainty about the future, lack of legal literacy and imperfections in legal system, inadequate competence of law-enforcement agencies and their indifferent attitude to victims of violence; and an almost total lack of relevant state policies and well-targeted programs.

Three other programs target the problems of illegal migration, threats of trafficking and the problems of reintegration of returning migrants.

During recent years the migration from Armenia reached epidemic scales. The phenomenon greatly affected the strength of families. According to the available data, as of 2001, 800.000 to 1 million people left Armenia.³ As per 2002-2006 data, 46.900 people left Armenia, 80 % of which went to CIS countries, and 20 % to other countries.⁴ One of the basic causes of migration is the difficult social-economical situation. Many people leave Armenia, striving for a decent life, as they are unable to overcome the daily economical hardships and do not have adequate employment. Due to labor migration many families departed, leaving elderly parents to care for themselves.

The above-mentioned problems are undoubtedly general, but they have a more negative impact on vulnerable groups. Those groups include the disabled, elderly, pregnant women, children, single or head-of-household mothers, and victims of domestic violence, trafficking and migration. With the help of its projects Armenian Caritas strives to keep the people away from the risks and help them to find ways of keeping themselves and their families healthy and self-reliant.

³ *"Irregular Migration and Smuggling of Migrants from Armenia", IOM, 2002*

⁴ *National Statistical Service, "Armenian Statistics Yearbook", 2007, page 44*

Primary Health Care Centre, 2002-2009
Funded by Caritas Sweden, Secours Catholique,
Caritas Italy, CNEWA, Caritas Spain

The goal is to provide, in a compassionate and competent manner, primary ambulatory care for needy patients in Gyumri and those coming from surrounding areas. In 2007 4.427 patients were served.

Handicraft Workshop for Women, 2007-2010
Funded by Renovabis

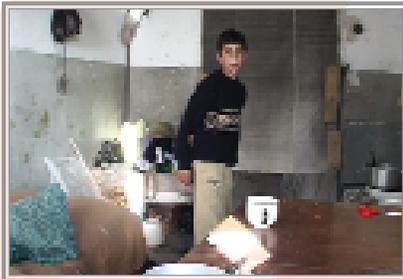
The project aims at improving the living condition of 50 families in Gyumri by delivering sewing classes to girls and women.





**Prevention of Illegal Migration and Trafficking, 2003-2007
Funded by Italian Embassy in Armenia, Caritas Italy**

The goal of the project was to promote the prevention of trafficking by means of raising public awareness and educating people on the topic of human trafficking. In 2007 50 teachers from 50 schools based in Yerevan and Vanadzor, and 11081 schoolchildren participated to the special trainings.



**Sustainable Reintegration after Voluntary Return, 2006-2007
Funded by Belgian Ministry of Social Integration through
FEDASIL & Caritas International in Belgium**

The goal was to increase the chances of successful reintegration of returned migrants to Armenia after their stay in Belgium. Since the beginning of the project 29 families/54 people were assisted.



Country of Return Information, 2006- 2007
Funded by Caritas Belgium



The goal of the project was to give concrete and specific information required for the Armenian migrants in Europe in order they decide on a possible final return to their country. The information is placed on www.ecoi.net web-site.

"Against Domestic Violence" Public Awareness Campaign,
2007- 2008
Funded by Caritas France, Cordaid, CRS/South Caucasus
Sub-Region



The goal of the project is to protect human rights in the families of Shirak region, particularly in Gyumri. It is designed to raise the awareness of general public on the issue of domestic violence and how to protect and respect equal rights in the family.



SERVE FOR POWERFUL COMMUNITIES



SERVE FOR POWERFUL COMMUNITIES

In this chapter we will try to describe the situation in three regions of Armenia; Shirak, Lori and Gegharkunik, where Armenian Caritas has responded to a number of multifaceted problems via different methods and programmatic directions.

Shirak and Gegharkunik regions are among the poorest regions of Armenia. As of 2001, Gegharkunik region had 62.2 %, and Shirak region 57.8 % of its citizens living below the poverty level.⁵ That is why Armenian Caritas has been actively engaged in empowering the local communities in those two regions, putting the main accent on the development of the rural communities.

To ensure the harmonious development of the community, it is vital to develop community infrastructures, civil society and businesses.

Nowadays the centralization of the resources and capacities in the capital and big cities poses a substantial obstacle for the development of the rural communities. According to the Armenian Caritas assessment, the development of the rural communities has been insignificant during the last 20 years. In many communities, especially in the poor northern part of Armenia, people are limited in enjoying their fundamental rights, like right to an adequate standard of living, right to development or right to education. The situation has deteriorated over the years due to the fact that the communities are not prepared to identify and respond to the needs of their communities in a structured and organized way.

Shirak and Gegharkunik regions are also areas where refugees from Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh settled. A research initiated by Armenian Caritas in 2007 indicated that the refugee communities have numerous problems similar to those of other vulnerable groups living in the same regions. Nevertheless, they attach great importance to the problems of housing, creation of normal conditions for work, education and development. It is important to note that the refugees perceive themselves as vulnerable.

⁵ PRSP, Yerevan, 2003, page 30

The infrastructure in rural communities is already decrepit and there are no real investments to maintain existing community properties. Intra-village roads and the roads that connect villages are rarely repaired. Drinking and irrigation water issues are still big in Armenia. For most of the cases the facilities are exhausted. Though the majority of villages are connected with the main waterway, just about 45% of villagers receive drinking water and only 59% of the lands in the state are irrigated.⁶ The same situation can be observed in other institutions; schools, cultural clubs and in other places. The considerable part of the above listed institutions requires serious repair and maintenance.

The described poor infrastructures are also real obstacles for development of businesses in rural communities. The other obstacle for developing businesses in rural communities in the northern part of Armenia is the high interest rates for small loans (24-26%), short loan terms and reluctance on the part of financial institutions to invest in agricultural activities, making it impossible for a farmer to begin or expand a commercial agricultural operation.

As far as the activities of the public organizations in Shirak and Gegharkunik region are concerned, they exist and are active only in the urban areas, mainly in the cities of Gyumri and Gavar.

As of February, 2008, there are 2.809 NGOs registered at the Ministry of Justice in Armenia.⁷ However, experts confirm that only 1/3 of the registered NGOs are active. Moreover, 85-90% of the active NGOs are situated in Yerevan and 3-4 main big cities of Armenia.

One of the major problems Armenian Caritas came across while implementing its charity projects in the remote, rural areas, was the extreme unawareness of the people about the civil society concept and the absence of any non-governmental institutions. Now as well, the understanding and acknowledgement of a community's inner resources, the need for a common effort to improve social life, personal or group volunteer involvement in village life, preparedness to change something for the better, are partially or completely non-existent. Those concepts are mainly unperceived and unacceptable to the rural communities.

No matter the difficulties, Armenian Caritas has been able to seed the basic concepts of civil society in those communities and strengthen them step by step.

⁶ PRSP, Yerevan, 2003, page 90

⁷ National Statistical Service, "Social -Economic Conditions of Armenia in January, 2008" page 42

Aramazd, 2006-2009
Funded by Caritas Spain, Caritas Austria, Caritas France

The goal of the program is to stimulate and develop community resources through the capacity building and development of the already registered NGOs of the three Community Centers which were founded to serve the communities of 38 villages in Amasia (Shirak region), Chambarak and Vardenis sub-regions (Gegharkounick region). In 2007 with the help of the community centers 6 community development small grant projects were implemented; 2 in each sub-region.



Strengthening of School Parent Councils, 2004-2007
Funded by European Union, Caritas France

The goal of the program was to further strengthen the 40 Parent Councils in Shirak, Lori and Gegharkunik regions and to support them in identifying, recognizing, evaluating and making use of their own potential and resources.



Involvement of School Parents NGOs into the Reform of Armenian Education, 2007-2008
Funded by Caritas France

The program is the logical continuation of the "Strengthening of School Parent Councils" program. It will assist the parent councils to increase the scope of their participation in the educational reform implementation process, thus becoming the real initiators of the implementation of the educational policy in Armenia. Twenty-nine parent councils from three regions of Armenia; Shirak, Gegharkunik and Yerevan take part in this project. There are 319 parents involved in this project.





**Parish Social Ministry and Volunteerism in the South
Caucasus, 2006-present
Funded by CRS/South Caucasus Sub-Region**

Armenian Caritas, Caritas Georgia and the Roman Catholic Community of Baku (RCCB) work in solidarity to fulfill their roles of promoting social justice and the values of Christian inspired volunteerism. Six villages in Armenia are participating in this program; Mets Sepasar, Saragyugh, Ghazanchi, Bavra, Hovtun and Arpeni. The project in Armenia is implemented in close cooperation with the Ordinariate of Armenian Catholic Church.



**Alternative Development of Rural Communities - Addition to
Parish Social Ministry and Volunteerism in the South
Caucasus Project, 2007
Funded by Caritas Belgium**

The goal was to give an opportunity to the communities of 6 poor villages in Shirak region to learn how to start a small business and benefit from it.

**Water and Sanitation, 2003-2007
Funded by Renovabis, Caritas Italy**

We aimed to improve the sanitary-hygienic and social conditions of the population living in both rural and urban areas, simultaneously building the local capacity to manage the water resources. In 2007 Armenian Caritas implemented 1 irrigation project, 6 drinking water projects and repaired the sewerage systems of 5 streets in Gyumri.

