



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



“Community Development & Social Support”
NGO

REPORT

MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH PROJECT

THIRD PHASE

May-July 2024

The third phase aimed at protecting motherhood and childhood has once again confirmed that knowledge and information provided to mothers through awareness and education guarantee the chances of the future child to grow up in a healthy, happy and safe environment.

The knowledge provided by the experts of the program will help the participants to be morally prepared in the future, including to react correctly and organize child **in case** a child with special needs is born.

14 mothers included in the program, including forcibly displaced persons from Artsakh, in the prenatal and postnatal periods, received sufficient knowledge to respond and solve existing socio-psychological and health problems according to the assessed needs.

Positive feedback was received and participants effectively appreciated the participation of speech therapist and yoga and meditation specialist in the third program.

Education and awareness of pregnant mothers is extremely important, both in terms of learning about their health and parenting, and in terms of care, health, nutrition, immunizations and other aspects of the future child.

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:

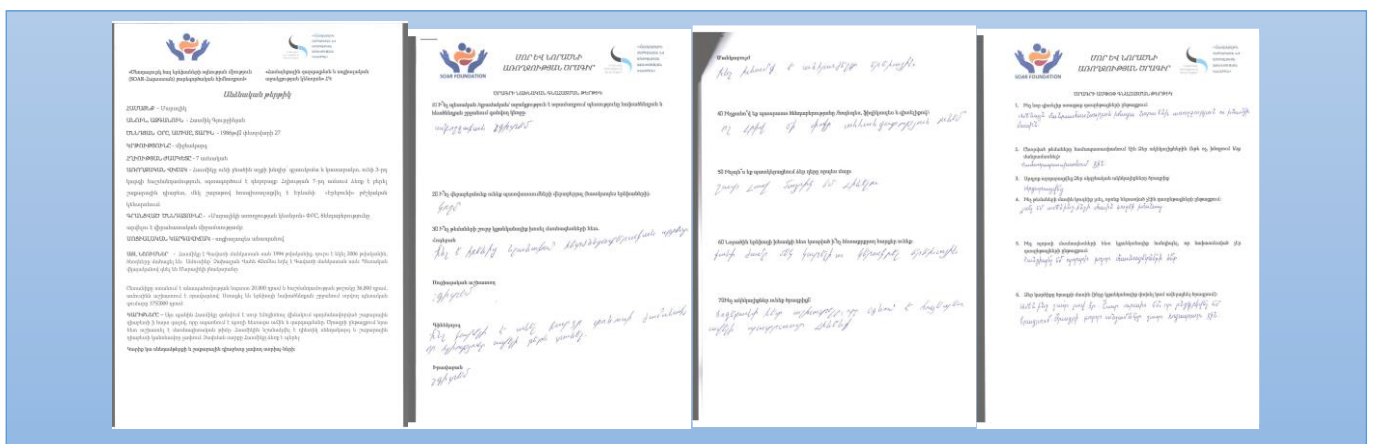
- Contribute to pregnant mothers' acquisition of health, socio-psychological, legal knowledge and to increase the level of their awareness.
- Contribute to the protection of the needs, rights, and interests of children by educating and informing their parents.

PROJECT ACTIONS AND STEPS

Steps performed during the project:

- the third phase of the program was implemented by evaluating and taking into account the positive results and achievements of the previous two programs. Fourteen mothers (also from Artsakh) participated in the third phase of the program;
- during the program, cooperation with the Department of Health and Social Affairs of Shirak Region Municipality, Gyumri USS MLSI territorial center, polyclinics, maternity hospital and other community partners was continued,
- considering the positive results of work with mothers displaced from Artsakh in the previous program, the importance of their inclusion, participation in the program was also noted at this stage,
- the program as a result of socio-psychological work helped to overcome the stress of pregnant mothers in the new environment after the move, to prevent complications during pregnancy,
- 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.

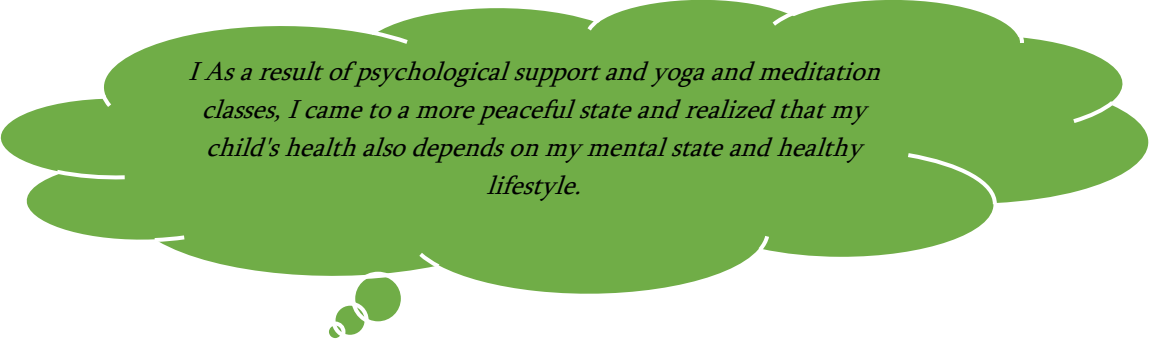


- The group included in the project was inclusive:
 - 3 women from nearby Gyumri villages, including one who has a husband with cancer,
 - 12 women waiting for their 1st child,
 - 2 women expecting their second and next child,
- The included women had different problems due to social, family and other situations created during pregnancy:
 - 0 persons who have undergone the severe path of forced deportation from Artsakh and, as a consequence, are under deep traumatic stress,
 - 0 prenatal depression, people with psychological problems,
 - 0 pregnant women from rural communities with awareness problems (legal, social, other...),
 - 5 women with health problems (including 1 with epilepsy)
 - 0 a pregnant woman expecting a child for 9 years, because of which she had a difficult emotional state,
 - 0 a young woman expecting her first child, whose husband has severe head and spine cancer, underwent myotherapy.
- In the course of the program, specialists worked with mothers with unstable prenatal emotional state, depression, fears, and health problems in accordance with the assessed problems.
- A young woman (M...) from Nagorno-Karabakh, who got married after deportation, lost her job, did not adapt to the new environment and had intra-family problems and a stressful state. As a result of psychological work, she overcame her stressful state, integrated with other mothers in the group, gave great importance to her future child and her peace of mind.

I found the strength to value my health and personal harmony for the sake of my baby's happy future...

From the words of M

- M... from Artsakh, who has serious health problems and is preparing for the birth of her second child. As a result of the work done, after consulting with doctors, the issues related to the care of her and the future child became even more important. She met other women displaced from Artsakh and regained her cheerfulness and smile in the inclusive group...Expressed exceptional satisfaction with the program.

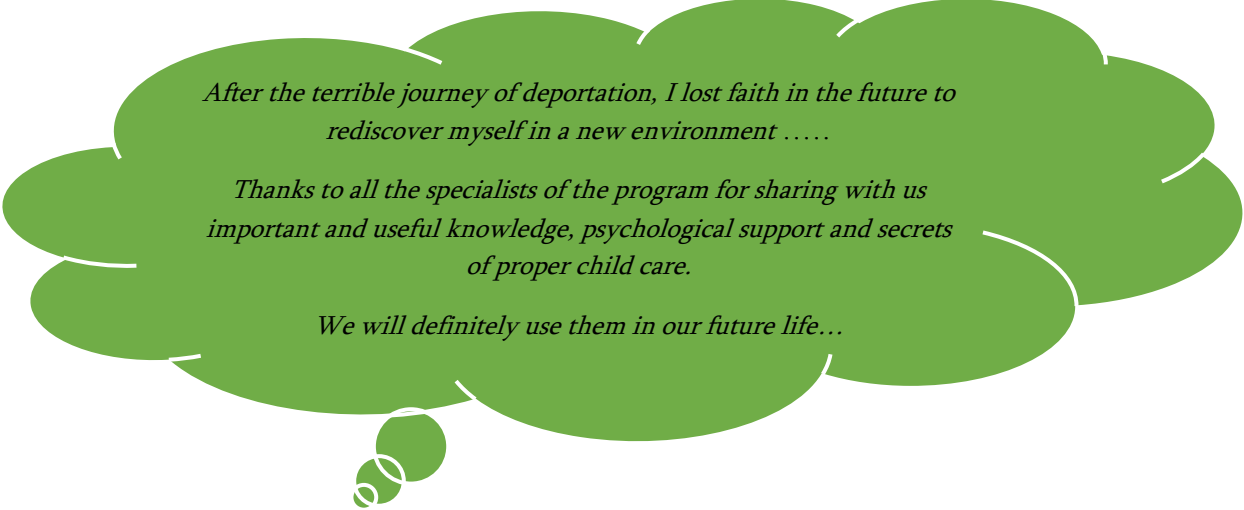


I As a result of psychological support and yoga and meditation classes, I came to a more peaceful state and realized that my child's health also depends on my mental state and healthy lifestyle.

From the words of M

○ M was deported from Artsakh with her large family. She has a serious health problem (epilepsy) and is constantly under the supervision of doctors. The program's expert doctors constantly gave necessary consultations to ensure that the medications taken due to the disease would not affect the future child's health.

New acquaintances, healthy and inclusive environment created in the program had a positive impact and M admitted that her emotional state improved.



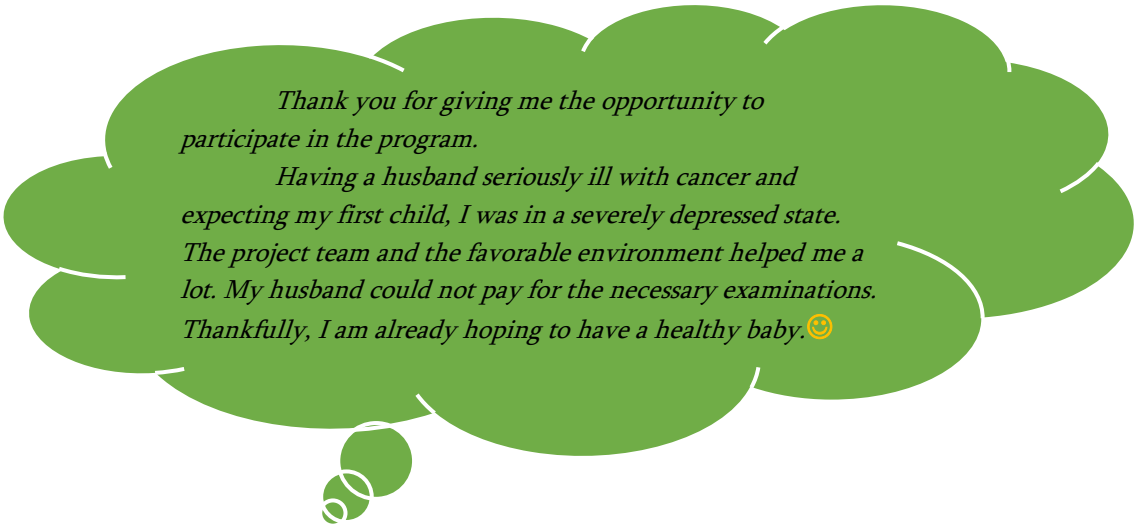
After the terrible journey of deportation, I lost faith in the future to rediscover myself in a new environment

Thanks to all the specialists of the program for sharing with us important and useful knowledge, psychological support and secrets of proper child care.

We will definitely use them in our future life...

From the words of M

- 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. R lives in a village near Gyumri, in very difficult, poor conditions, as the family is large and her young husband currently has a severe form of cancer of the spine and head. She was having problems paying for additional tests because the expected child was not developing and the family was short of money. We contacted a specialist at the partner's maternity hospital in Gyumri regarding this issue, various discussions and efforts were made..... as a result, it was hardly possible to organize free examination and inpatient treatment for the pregnant mother.



Thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in the program.

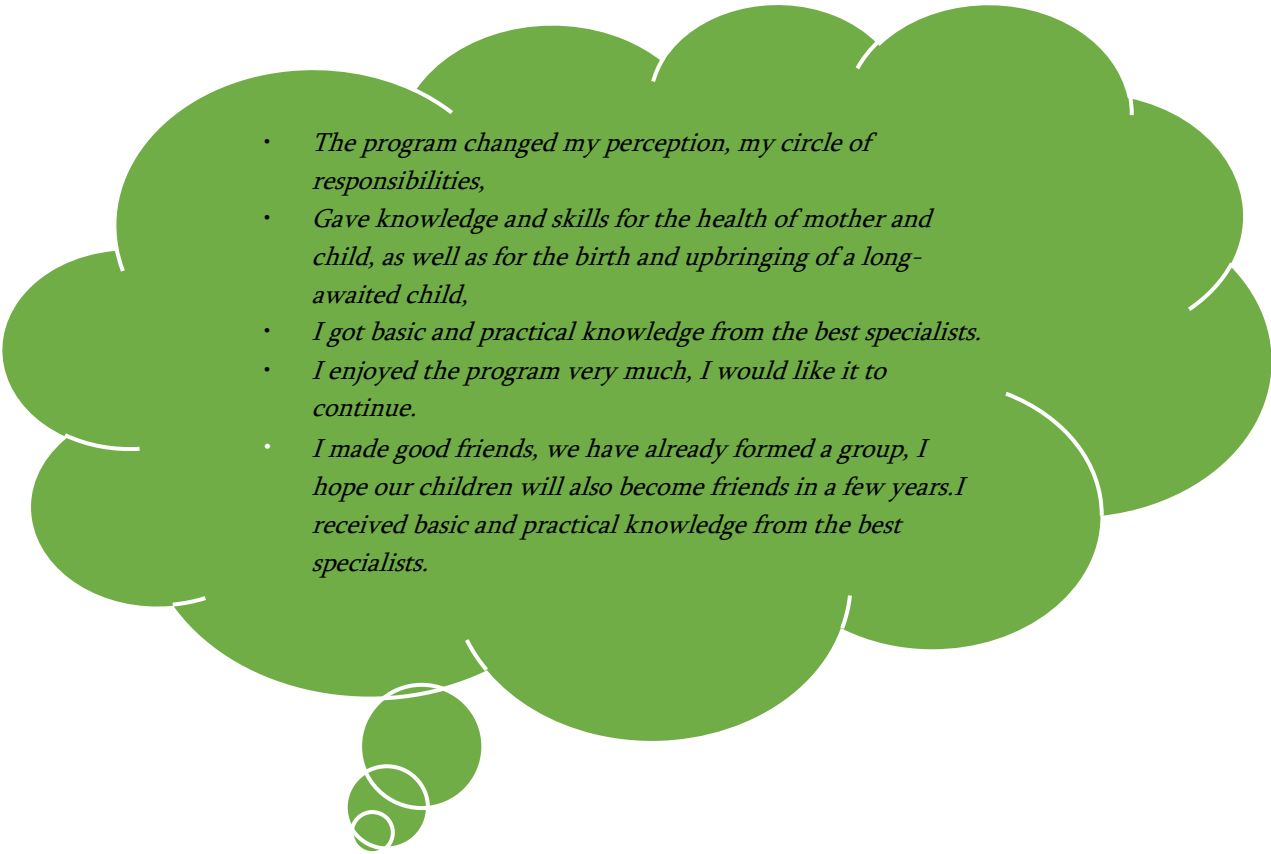
Having a husband seriously ill with cancer and expecting my first child, I was in a severely depressed state. The project team and the favorable environment helped me a lot. My husband could not pay for the necessary examinations. Thankfully, I am already hoping to have a healthy baby. 😊

From the words of R

- The inclusive group of pregnant mothers was also held in a positive environment this time and the participants are ready to maintain the established friendship for a long time to come. The participants and the professional team recorded positive changes and exceptional effectiveness.

The vision of the project was achieved in this respect.

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

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- *The program changed my perception, my circle of responsibilities,*
 - *Gave knowledge and skills for the health of mother and child, as well as for the birth and upbringing of a long-awaited child,*
 - *I got basic and practical knowledge from the best specialists.*
 - *I enjoyed the program very much, I would like it to continue.*
 - *I made good friends, we have already formed a group, I hope our children will also become friends in a few years. I received basic and practical knowledge from the best specialists.*

From the words of the participants

MAIN TOPICS OF THE COURSES INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT

The courses were conducted by the experienced specialists on the field, with long working experience.

New topics have been included, taking into account the experience of the first pilot project.

During the courses, in interactive discussions, unplanned questions were also asked by the participants, to which answers were given as comprehensively as possible.

1st meeting

May 25th 2024

- ✚ *Introduction*
- ✚ *Introducing the Maternal and Newborn Health Project*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*
- ✚ *Completing initial assessment sheets*

Project Coordinator: T.Tumasyan

Social Expert: G. Gyunashyan

2nd meeting

May 27th 2024

- ✚ *Pregnancy and emotional stages*
- ✚ *Motherhood and psychological preparation for the birth of a child*
- ✚ *Interactive exercise "when I was a child..."*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Psychologist: N. Sargsyan

- ✚ *What psychological stages a child goes through during intrauterine development*
- ✚ *Interactive exercise "one hope, one worry with the child"*
- ✚ *Nomophobia, negative impact on the psycho-emotional development of the child*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Psychologist: N. Sargsyan

3rd meeting

May 30th 2024

- ✚ *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

- ✚ *Pregnancy management, mandatory medical supervision*
- ✚ *Stages of fetal development from a medical point of view*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Doctor, gynecologist, national expert: L. Gevorgyan

4th meeting

June 04th 2024

- ✚ *Pregnant women's dental care, hygiene*
- ✚ *First teething, how to help your baby*
- ✚ *Baby teeth care and hygiene*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Doctor, dentist: L. Amatuni

- ✚ *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

5th meeting

June 8th 2024

- ✚ *Newborn care*
- ✚ *Breastfeeding, complementary foods*
- ✚ *Sleep regime*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Family doctor, therapist: P. Gevorgyan

- ✚ *Healthy nutrition healthy lifestyle*
- ✚ *Avoid extra pounds*
- ✚ *Products that cause allergies*
- ✚ *Discussion, Q&A*

Family physician, therapist: P. Gevorgyan

6th meeting

June 19th 2024

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

Specialist of the Gyumri office of the Unified Social Service: S. Hakobyan

- + *Conflicts, prevention, positive socialization*
- + *Interactive exercise "combination in the context of socialization and family ties between newly created and already formed families - family, dreams, expectations, reality"*
- + *Discussion, Q&A*

Social Expert: G. Gunashyan

7th meeting

June 22nd 2024

- + *Stages of a child's speech development*
- + *Early detection of problems and the need to seek professional help*
- + *Discussion, Q&A*

Speech therapist: A. Martirosyan

- + *Disorders of speech and behavioral development for the purpose of early detection of problems in children with autism*
- + *Preventive measures and professional support*
- + *The role of family and parents in controlling, supporting the child's speech and behavioral disorders*
- + *Discussion, Q&A*

Speech therapist: A. Martirosyan

8th meeting

June 24th 2024

- + *Yoga specialist: A. Petrosyan*
- + *Carrying out therapeutic psychological work "my name, our child's name".*
- + *Conducting relaxation meditation "a miracle lives in me" .*
 - *helps to relax*
 - *relieve anxiety*
 - *creates, strengthens the emotional bond between mother and child*
 - *gives a sense of security, safety*
 - *strengthens the belief that everything will be all right.*
- + *Discussion, Q&A*

Yoga specialist: A. Petrosyan

9th meeting

June 26th 2024

- + *Postpartum stress and coping*
- + *Toward a Healthy Childbirth*
- + *Hello Baby*
- + *Interactive exercise "I wish one of my baby's memories of me was "*
- + *Discussion, Q&A*

Psychologist: N. Sarkisyan

- + *Childbirth*
- + *Proper birthing techniques*
- + *Postpartum stages*
- + *Discussion, Q&A*

Doctor, gynecologist, national expert: L. Gevorgyan

10th meeting

June 27th 2024

- + *Yoga for shoulders and neck and upper spine.*
 - o *Relaxes tense muscles during prenatal and breastfeeding, improves blood circulation.*
- + *Discussion, Q&A*

- + *Relaxing meditation of "love and gratitude".*
 - o *relaxing, calming*
 - o *relieves the body and mind of stress and anxiety*
 - o *improves blood circulation, heart function*
 - o *helps to focus on the resources available by highlighting and appreciating them.*
- + *Discussion, Q&A*

Yoga specialist: A. Petrosyan

11th meeting

June 29th 2024

- + *Performing "anapana" meditation - teaching /conscious breathing/*
 - o *helps to calm the body, control the mind*
 - o *live in the present, letting go of negative emotions from the past, as well as worries and anxious thoughts related to the future.*
- + *Discussion, Q&A*

Yoga specialist: A. Petrosyan

12th meeting

July 01st 2024

- + *Project summary*
- + *Submission of proposals*
- + *Discussion, Q&A*
- + *Filling in the final evaluation sheets*

Psychologist: N. Sarkisyan

Social Expert: G. Gunashyan

Breaks

Breaks during the course help to create inclusive bonds in the group, especially in terms of communication between Artsakh residents and locals, creating new connections and new opportunities.

Like in the two previous projects, participants remained highly active in the WhatsApp group and have continued their connection after their children were born, congratulating one another and celebrating each new arrival."

13th meeting

July 12th 2024

A meeting-discussion planned by the program was held with health workers of government institutions who presented the problems related to pregnant women during their work. They were familiarized with the program and positively evaluated the work done, presented certain proposals and expressed their willingness to cooperate in the future. 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.

14th meeting

July 28th 2024

The final meeting of the program, like last time, was held at the newly opened and colorful Kumkum Café in Gyumri. Specialists teaching the program were also invited. Everything took place in a warm, humorous and inclusive atmosphere. These meetings foster further connections, new friendships and opportunities to bond with the children as well as the families.

Professionals deleviring the program, representatives from SOAR CHF and CDSS BNGO were also present.



The groundwork has been laid for the creation of a third self-help and support group for expectant mothers."



At the end of the program, the gift bags provided by SOAR CHF were a pleasant surprise for the young mothers, who lovingly accepted and expressed their gratitude both for the knowledge and attention received.

At the end of the program we had 5 babies born, 3 of which were pre-term and 1, whose mother gave birth after 9 years of waiting, is under the care of doctors and hooked up to an oxygen machine. We are waiting for the birth of the next babies and, as in the case of the previous groups, we maintain feedback with the mothers and provide socio-psychological and other counseling when necessary.



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 third stage of the project was also positively evaluated by state and community structures and doctors.

PROBLEMS ARISING DURING THE PROGRAM

In the course of the program sometimes there is a need to change pre-scheduled courses, meeting days. Project experts have another main place of work and there is a need to harmonize the pre-scheduled days with the working hours of the expert.

Sometimes there is a need to change the meeting day also taking into account the simultaneous request of several pregnant mothers-participants due to their inability to attend the meeting for valid reasons.

PROPOSALS RELATED TO THE CONTINUATION OF THE PROJECT

- The positive results of the third phase of the program once again confirmed the importance of educational, informational activities related to maternal and child health and the need to continue.
- The third phase of the program also confirmed the need to implement an inclusive art therapy program involving also children displaced from Artsakh, children with disabilities and their

parents. Currently, they have many stresses and problems related to adaptation to new conditions in the post-crisis situation.

- Given the positive feedback from government partners about the program and the proposal to include more pregnant mothers, including displaced persons from Artsakh, if possible add another group to the program in another community.

President of CDSS BNGO

G. Gyunashyan