



ARMENIAN FUND FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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Report on activities 2023

This annual report is the fruit of the constant commitment and sustained effort of our Fund and its staff throughout 2023. It reveals the concrete results of our initiatives over the past year, highlighting our achievements thanks to our partners' invaluable collaboration and the generous trust of our donors.

We are fully aware that achieving our mission would not be possible without your unfailing support, and we extend our sincere gratitude for your trust and generosity.

By working together to achieve our common goals, we are in a position to make significant changes.

Finally, our determination remains unaltered, and we pledge to continue our work with diligence and passion to meet the needs of our users and beneficiaries, shaping a positive difference in the lives of those who need it.

We hope this annual report provides insight into our past achievements and inspires future projects.

Our development projects

2023 was a landmark period punctuated by notable achievements in our development projects. Significant initiatives were at the heart of our action, focusing on migration, education, support for vulnerable people, and our commitment to the French-speaking world.

However, particular attention was paid to a significant program to empower vulnerable women among these multidimensional efforts.

Thus, with a deep sense of accomplishment and perseverance, we are pleased to present you with the results of the year 2023.

This annual report bears witness to the concrete results of our actions in favor of women's empowerment and the essential support provided to the displaced people of Artsakh.

Throughout the pages, you will discover the successes, the challenges surmounted, and the promising prospects that emerge from our ongoing commitment to the beneficiaries of our projects.




WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN ARMENIA

Throughout 2023, AF4SD, in partnership with the Association Arménienne d'Aide Sociale, has continued to offer crucial support to the wives of servicemen who have sacrificed their lives or been seriously wounded in the repeated wars against Armenia.

Our primary objective is to provide sustainable support to women affected by the devastating consequences of conflicts. We firmly believe in their entrepreneurial potential and ability to reshape their lives in the face of persistent challenges.

34 funded
businesses

37 vocational
trainings



Our ambition is to give them the means to overcome obstacles and build a brighter future for themselves and their families by promoting their economic autonomy.

In 2023, the Government of Australia, the Saint Sarkis Charity Trust, and The Arev Society supported the Women's Empowerment Program.

The program aims to create income-generating activities while providing vocational training.

DIRECT AID FROM AUSTRALIA

11 Funded businesses

15 vocational trainings



In 2023, with the financial support of our partner, the Australian government, AF4SD was able to finance 11 micro-enterprises and offer 15 vocational training courses.

Throughout the year, we supported over 20 women in developing their entrepreneurial skills.

Thanks to this support, these women have not only acquired new skills but have also gained self-confidence.

We have witnessed inspiring stories of women overcoming significant obstacles to achieve their goals. Financing and training have been essential to their success, enabling them to reach crucial milestones in realizing their projects.





In June 2023, a delegation of Australian Direct Aid traveled to Armenia to conduct a field visit. The visit aimed to meet the beneficiaries of economic projects supported by our organization and assess the progress made.



During their visit, the delegation members had the opportunity to visit several localities where projects were being implemented.



The meetings with the beneficiaries were particularly enriching. Members of the delegation could exchange ideas with the project leaders, discover the challenges they faced, and hear their personal stories first-hand. These testimonials vividly illustrated the impact of the projects on their daily lives.



**The project film
is available by
scanning the
following QR
code:**

HEALING POWER OF BAKING



She never knew she possessed so much strength and resilience, but she was sure she would refuse to let despair define her future. Such is the inspiring story of Nazeli, a woman who lost her husband during the 2020 war. With determination and a passion for baking, Nazeli embarked on a courageous journey to rebuild her life and support her two children.

Through her unwavering spirit and the support of the Australian Government's Direct Aid program for women's empowerment, her dreams of running a successful pastry business have begun to take shape. She confessed that she wasn't sure her application would be chosen among the numerous deserving candidates.

Still, after several meetings with the project team, she meticulously prepared her business plan, highlighting her vision, products, and the potential impact her pastry business could have on her life.

Now, the delectable aroma of freshly baked croissants and traditional Armenian "Gata" filled the cozy little bakery just across from the local hospital. Word spread quickly among the hospital staff and visitors about Nazeli's bakery's heavenly delights. Driven by the positive response and growing demand, she told us that she began envisioning expanding her sweet production beyond the local community.

She targets other cafes and restaurants in the city that would appreciate her pastries' exquisite flavors and artisanal quality. She hopes to inspire others to chase their dreams, overcome obstacles, and believe in the incredible strength that lies within them.

Nazeli's journey reminds us all that even in the face of adversity, with passion, determination, and the right support, we can create a future filled with sweetness and success.

EMPOWERING VULNERABLE WOMEN

The second project, funded by the American charity AREV, extended the list of beneficiaries of the Women's Empowerment program in Armenia in synergy with our previous initiative.

Thanks to this project, six micro-enterprises have been created, and six training courses financed.

The project's impact is already visible and tangible. The new micro-businesses have started to generate income, improving the women's and their families' living conditions.

Moreover, the skills acquired during the training courses have boosted the participants' self-confidence, making them better able to overcome entrepreneurial challenges.


6

funded businesses

6

vocational trainings

**Le film du projet
est disponible en
scannant le code
QR suivant:**



MELINE'S CHALLENGING JOURNEY TO FIND HOPE



When my husband was taken from me during the war, life became abruptly tough, and I didn't know what to do or where to turn. It was a difficult time, and I struggled with how to heal my pain. But I refused to give up hope.

Despite the family support I needed to raise my son to become self-sufficient. It is tricky if you are in a remote rural area. I had no access to different resources and opportunities like people in the city, making it challenging to live further. As time went by, it grew on me that launching any activity without financial support would be almost impossible. I used to work as a hairdresser several years ago before the war, but after it, at first, I was bereaved and disempowered by a tragic event, then I had no savings and scraped the idea of having my salon. One day, my sister, who also lost her husband during the war, told me that she was fortunate to come across a charitable organization that helped her fund her small business.

I contacted the Armenian Fund for Sustainable Development, and they told me I could apply for funding within the women empowerment project funded by Arev Society. They supported the launch of my hairdressing business, one of the best things that ever happened to me after the tragic war. Thanks to this women empowerment project, I was able to turn my life around. I have always been passionate about hairdressing, and now I hope I can turn my passion into a profitable business. The day when I have enough clients, I will leave my part-time job and fully devote myself to my business. I will put all my heart and soul into my work so that my salon becomes a success. It is not easy, but I will do it. The support I received from the charitable organization went beyond just financial assistance. They provided me with training and mentoring to help me build and do everything to grow my business.

The women empowerment project helped me overcome the many obstacles in my way. It gave me hope to live further and succeed.

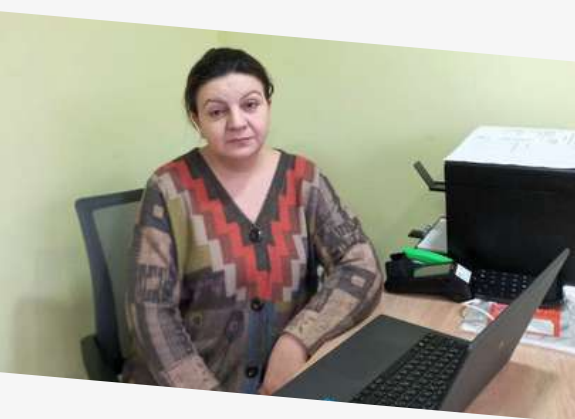
SAINT SARKIS CHARITY TRUST



The Saint Sarkis Charity Trust and the Association Arménienne d'Aide Sociale have worked together for several years to strengthen the social protection of vulnerable women in Armenia. Their collaboration has led to the implementation of concrete, high-impact projects to improve women's living conditions and offer them opportunities for economic and social development.



In 2023, 17 microenterprises were launched thanks to funding from the joint project. In addition, 16 vulnerable women received vocational training.



These micro-businesses cover various sectors and offer not only sustainable sources of income for the women but also services and products that benefit their local communities.

The project will continue in 2024 and may include refugee women from Artsakh.



17

funded businesses

16

vocational trainings

THE ART THERAPY OF PHOTOGRAPHY



When war erupted in 2020 in Artsakh, Nagorno-Karabakh, Lilit's world crashed. Her husband went missing in action, leaving her desperate and distraught as a mother of two young children. For nine agonizing months, she searched tirelessly for her husband, making it her sole focus during an incredibly traumatic time.

Yet even in her darkest moments, Lilit found solace in photography - an art form she had loved since her youth. She studied the craft and purchased her first camera years ago while living in Saint Petersburg, using it to document her family's charming life. Lilit described photography as a form of art therapy for her - a creative exit to focus on the positive rather than dwell in grief. As she captured happy memories through her lens, it comforted her and gave her the strength to carry on. After finally finding a job to provide for her family, Lilit learned of an opportunity that reignited her passion for photography. The Armenian Fund for Sustainable Development had a “Woman Empowerment” project that provides grants for women to start their own businesses. Though initially doubtful that her ideas would get approved, Lilit decided to take a chance and apply with a proposal to open her own photo studio.

Lilit was super excited when she got the great news that she was accepted into the program!

With her grant support, she opened a small photography studio in her hometown of Abovyan, Armenia, where she now works on weekends and after her day job. For now, Lilit combines her full-time employment and passion project to make a living, taking family portraits and capturing memorable moments for clients. She hopes to build up her photography business to the point she can devote herself to it full-time. Lilit has discovered her silver lining by turning her talent for photography into an inspiring small business.

ARMENIA EMERGENCY

Despite the resources we have mobilized to help vulnerable displaced people in Artsakh, demand continues to grow, so we are asking for additional support to alleviate the suffering of the surviving families, most of whom are composed of elderly people and young children.

Photo credits: M. Baghdasaryan



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Association Arménienne d'Aide Sociale

77, rue La Fayette 75009 PARIS

HUMANITARIAN AID



In the face of escalating conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in autumn 2023, over 100,000 Armenians were forced to flee to escape persecution and ethnic cleansing.

In September 2023, the AAAS launched a fund-raising campaign among its members to help hundreds of displaced families settle in their new homes.

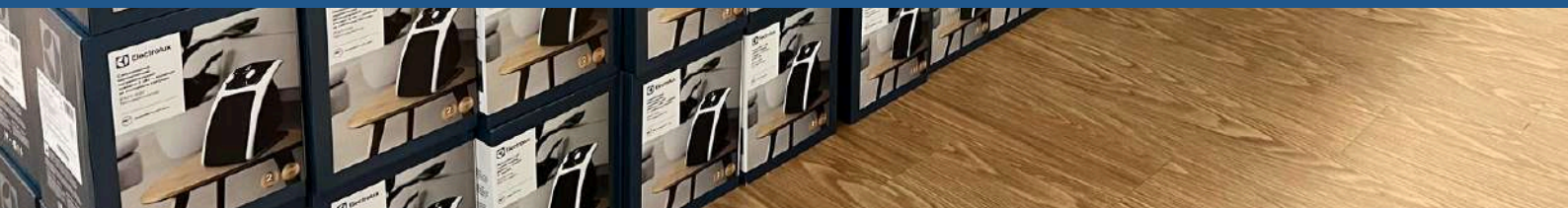
We want to extend our warmest thanks to all the generous donors who have enabled AAAS and AF4SD to accomplish their humanitarian assistance mission. Nevertheless, solidarity with the displaced people of Artsakh has only just begun.

AF4SD aims to launch an economic empowerment program for refugee women in the spring of 2024, offering them training, personalized support, and micro-business financing.





SETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE FOR ARTSAKH REFUGEE FAMILIES



The Armenian Foundation for Sustainable Development in Armenia, in cooperation with local organizations and humanitarian agencies, has identified 50 refugee families in urgent need of settlement assistance.

The average family consists of two adults and three children.

After carrying out a needs assessment, we were able to ascertain that, in view of the winter season, electric heaters and bedding would need to be purchased according to the number of members in each family.

To achieve a double objective, we decided to identify among the beneficiaries of our "Vulnerable Women Empowerment in Armenia" program women entrepreneurs who could make the bedding items the project aims to offer refugees.

So, instead of buying the items from retailers, orders were placed with the beneficiaries of our projects, who received financial support.

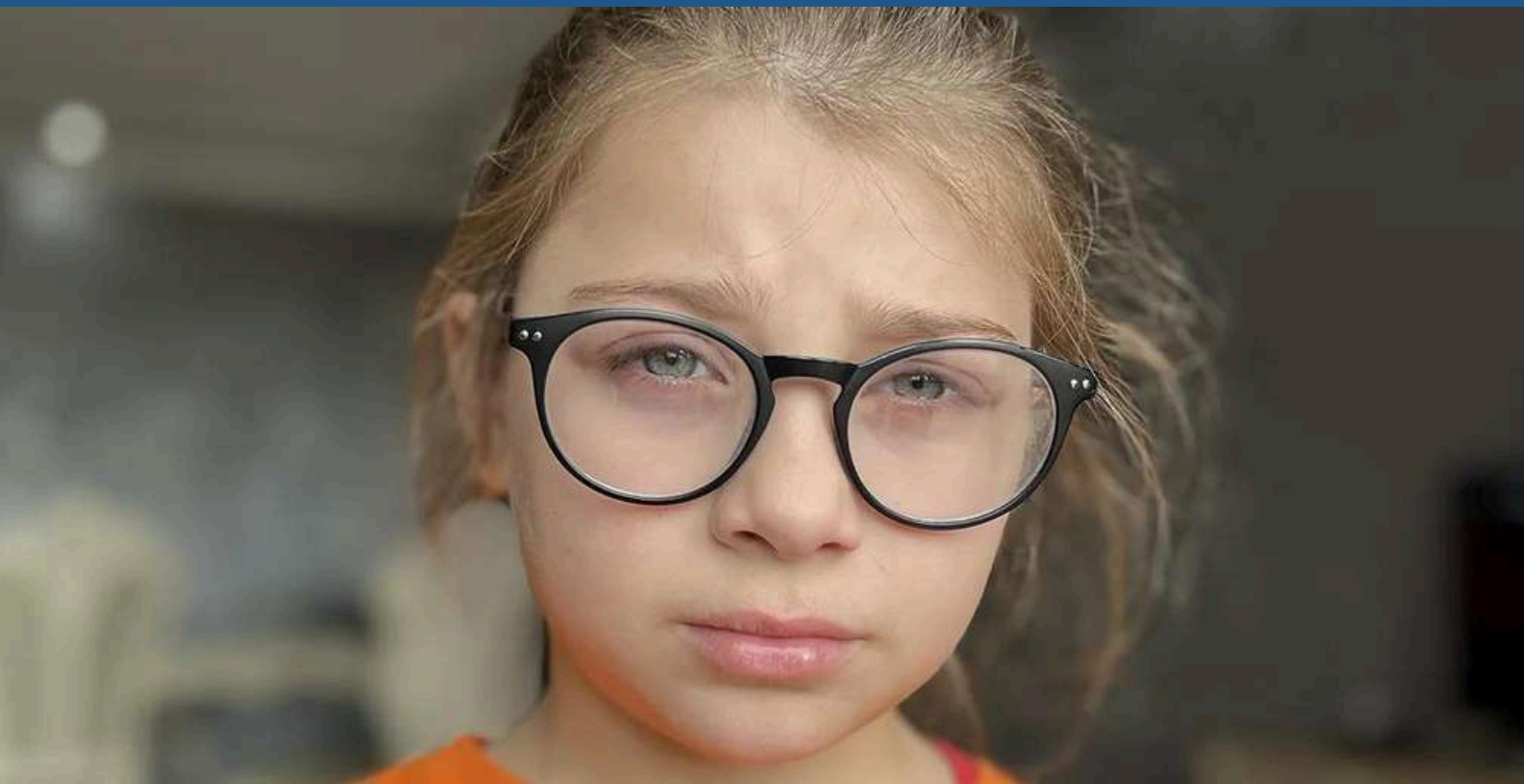
250

people (50 refugee families comprising two adults and three children)

3

businesses created by vulnerable women are financially supported

URGENT HELP



Among the families identified as requiring priority assistance are Gohar and her six children. Originally from Martakert, a town in Nagorno-Karabakh, she fled her home in a hurry under the bombardments. Having arrived with no resources, Gohar couldn't make ends meet. Every day, on a small gas stove, she would bake a dozen traditional "Jingyal" loaves from Artsakh, which she would sell in the village for 80 drams each.

Unfortunately, this wasn't enough, and the widow and mother of 6 children were experiencing a great deal of stress and fatigue.

Visiting the family, the AAAS and AF4SD representatives could gauge the extent of the needs, observing that the children had neither warm clothes nor shoes suitable for winter. The mother of the family worked in exhausting conditions in a garage.

Unfortunately, this refugee family's story is far from an isolated one. Of the more than 120,000 displaced persons in Nagorno-Karabakh, many have lost everything and are trying to rebuild their lives in precarious conditions.

"I'm so tired... but I have to fulfill my role as a mother to help my children get back on their feet," says Gohar, aware that her family needs her courage. As we said goodbye, we learned that little Rima would be celebrating her birthday on December 23, so we decided to give them a little surprise and offer them everything we could gather to help this family: a new gas stove to replace the small, defective stove and warm clothes and winter shoes for the children.

This wonderful surprise was made possible by the generous donation of Ms Sergine DUBOIS-DJIVELEKIAN.

Meetings with beneficiaries of micro-entreprise projects



In the photo, from left to right: Vasken MELDONYAN, Managing Director of AAAS; Alain TOUHADIAN, President of AAAS; Suzanna GEVORGYAN, project beneficiary; Raffi GARABEDIAN, Director of EHPAD l'Eglantier.

Beneficiaries can share their stories, challenges, and achievements with the Fund's partners, creating a space for exchange and mutual inspiration.

These encounters create a sense of ongoing support and encouragement. Partners have the opportunity to see first-hand the impact of projects on women's lives and witness their resilience in the face of difficulties.

The Armenian Fund for Sustainable Development maintains close contact with all its Women's Empowerment project beneficiaries by organizing regular visits. These visits are an opportunity for the Fund to showcase the women beneficiaries, who have demonstrated courage and determination in their entrepreneurial journeys, and to introduce them to its partners.



In the photo, from left to right: Guillaume NARJOLLET, Cultural Action and Cooperation Advisor (French Embassy), Marie LORGEUX, Decentralized Cooperation and Civil Society Attaché ((French Embassy), Arpine STEPANYAN, Director of AF4SD, project beneficiaries.

Unwavering support for our project beneficiaries

In November 2023, the AF4SD team organized an accounting training session focusing on micro-enterprises. The session was led by our beneficiary, Anna Harutyunyan, who is now the proud owner of her accounting firm.

We are proud to contribute to the success of our beneficiaries by supporting their projects.



More than 20 women, also beneficiaries of our projects, actively participated in the training, gaining valuable knowledge of the Armenian tax system.

The meeting explored the pros and cons of running a registered business, offering participants a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in this field.

Beyond the enriching educational experience, participants had the opportunity to expand their professional network and forge ties that will undoubtedly contribute to their future success.

VOLUNTARY RETURN

385 funded
businesses

2159 returns



For over 20 years, AAAS and AF4SD have been helping undocumented Armenian migrants in France to return to Armenia.

As part of this project, we work closely with OFII (French Office of Immigration and Integration).

Beneficiaries of the assisted voluntary return program are eligible for social reintegration assistance and support in setting up micro-businesses.

Aid allocation committees are held at the French Embassy in Armenia and chaired by the Ambassador.

Regular field visits are organized to ensure economic projects run smoothly.

Since the project was launched in 2005, 2159 people have returned to Armenia thanks to the program, and 385 businesses have been created.

In 2023, 51 people returned to Armenia, and 12 micro-businesses were financed.

FRENCH CLASSROOMS

Since 2018, AF4SD has partnered with the "Stepan Gishyan" Charitable Foundation to create French classrooms in schools in remote areas of Armenia.

Thanks to our joint efforts, eight functional rooms have been set up in schools where the teaching of French is prioritized. These spaces represent real learning environments dedicated to the French language and culture.



We firmly believe that comfortable and inspiring educational environments are vital to student motivation and academic success.



- 2018 - School n°11 Hrazdan
- 2019 - School n°8 Hrazdan
- 2019 - School n°1 Ijevan
- 2019 - School n°2 Spitak
- 2020 - School n°10 Gyumri
- 2021 - School n°10 Azatan.
- 2022 - School n°3 Goris
- 2023 - School n°2 Goris





LE COQ FRANÇAIS

Created in 2017 thanks to the joint efforts of the Association Arménienne d'Aide Sociale and the Armenian Fund for Sustainable Development, "Le Coq Français" competition aims to contribute to the influence of the French language in Armenia. It brings together the best students from French-speaking public and private schools from all regions of Armenia.

In 2023, the "Le Coq Français" competition registered an exceptional participation of over 2100 students from all regions of Armenia.

Once again, we were impressed by the participants' high level of French proficiency.

For the final event, the French University in Armenia generously provided us with rooms, offering a prestigious academic setting for the participants. This logistical support was essential for the competition's smooth running and helped to enhance its status.



The 2023 edition of the competition also benefited from the partnership of the French Embassy in Armenia and the French Institute of Armenia. These collaborations reinforced the importance and influence of the competition, underlining France's commitment to promoting the French language and culture in Armenia. The support of these institutions enriched the participants' experience and underlined its scope.

Mr. Allain TOUHADIAN, Chairman of the AF4SD Board of Trustees, SE Ms. Anne LOUYOT, French Ambassador to Armenia, and Ms. Salwa NACOUZI, Rector of the French University in Armenia, presented gifts and certificates to the 24 competition winners.

The students' speeches of thanks were filled with gratitude, emotion, and the characteristic brilliance of the youth who accomplished great things.

**The project film
is available by
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Dis-moi dix mots à tous les temps

The "Dis-moi dix mots à tous les temps" competition, organized by the French Embassy in Armenia/Institut français d'Arménie in partnership with the Armenian Fund for Sustainable Development, was held successfully on April 6, 2023, at the N56 school in Yerevan.

The winners received an exceptional prize: a language trip to France, enabling them to discover the beauty and diversity of French culture while perfecting their language skills.



Each year, the French Ministry of Culture, the Institut Français, and the General Delegation for the French Language and Languages of France select ten words. These words are chosen for their originality, diversity, and expressive potential and are often linked to a specific theme.

When waste recycling rhymes with creativity

To raise schoolchildren's awareness of environmental issues, AF4SD, again in cooperation with the French Embassy in Armenia and the Institut Français d'Arménie, launched the "When waste recycling rhymes with creativity" competition for schools with reinforced French.

Schoolchildren had to recycle their everyday waste to make useful objects for the educational process while filming and explaining the process in French.



Three schools stood out for their pupils' creativity. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Mr Alain TOUHADIAN, presented the prizes to the schools' representatives at the Fund's premises.

The winners were
 School N° 11 in Hrazdan, Kotayk region;
 School No. 2 in Spitak, Lori region;
 School No. 3, Goris, Syunik region.





OUR OUTLOOK FOR PROJECTS IN 2024

In 2024, in addition to managing our multi-year projects, our priorities have evolved in response to the tragic events in Artsakh.

In the face of this humanitarian crisis, our attention has been focused on urgent humanitarian initiatives, temporarily postponing other projects.

Despite these adjustments, we remain committed to empowering vulnerable women.



We are still planning to create around 30 income-generating activities and organize vocational training to meet the growing needs in this area. Our Fund is stepping up its humanitarian efforts, offering significant support to people affected by recent events, mainly displaced families from Artsakh.

In this challenging context, we also recognize the growing importance of digital skills. That's why, in addition to our existing initiatives, we plan to organize digital literacy training courses for vulnerable and refugee women in Artsakh. These courses will equip participants with the skills they need to navigate the digital world, opening up new opportunities for employment and financial independence.

By combining our immediate humanitarian efforts with long-term training and economic development initiatives, we hope to contribute significantly to the reconstruction and stabilization of war-affected families.

Our partners



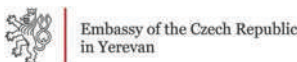
SAINT SARKIS
CHARITY TRUST



ՀՀ Կառավարություն



ՀՀ կրթության և
գիտության նախարարություն



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