



Mission Statement:

To protect fundamental human rights of and advocate for the interests of disadvantaged local and refugee elderly persons, women, young people, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups achieving improvements in the quality of their lives.

Vision:

**SOCIETY FOR ALL STRATA
&
FOR ALL AGES**

Mission Armenia is an Armenia-based NGO and operates countrywide. It was created in 1988 with a group of volunteers and registered in 1993 shortly after the introduction of the NGO sector in Armenia.

Over these years, Mission Armenia has supported up to 18,000 local and refugee vulnerable people of different age and gender groups, including refugees from Syria. The NGO has provided integrated social, health, care, legal services, as well as Mission Armenia distributed emergency humanitarian assistance up to 496, 000 vulnerable persons, both local and refugee. Since its inception, tens of short-term and long-term projects have been implemented by Mission Armenia.

The NGO has received and administered over USD 35 million in grants funding by UNHCR, European and US agencies/governments. Main fields of charity work of Mission Armenia are: Community-based social, legal and health services, education/vocational support, economic empowerment initiatives for local and refugee vulnerable adults, young people and children.

For the provision of services/assistance Mission Armenia has established and been operating about 30 community-based social infrastructures that Mission Armenia has set up throughout Armenia. These are day care centers, training resource centers, soup kitchens, 24- hour rehabilitation centers, social houses for temporary accommodation of the elderly and refugees, etc.

Since its inception, Mission Armenia has successful track record in the engagement of

- aging, poverty reduction, refugee assistance;
- community-based services;
- social partnership;
- local and regional civil society empowerment initiatives.

Refugee Assistance

UNHCR- the major donor, as well as BPRM/Save the Children, Caritas Sweden, German Embassy, US Embassy, Jinishyan Memorial Foundation, WFP, Australian Friends of Mission Armenia, IDEA, as well as some private benefactors' donations.

Mission Armenia is the accredited implementing partner of UNHCR since 1995 and since then thanks to UNHCR funding has uninterruptedly been providing a variety of assistance and services to the entire refugee groups that have fled Armenia from their countries of origin and

were settled in Refugee Group Centers countrywide, social housing facilities, as well as in rented apartments.

Unlike other organizations, it has been for long years now that Mission Armenia provides assistance to the largest refugee groups in Armenia: Armenia is at the moment a host for **Syrian, Iraqi, Azerbaijani and Ukrainian refugees, as well as refugees from other countries.**

Please note that **Armenia**, being one of the smallest countries in the region, is **the third** in the Eurasian region of hosting **Syrian refugees**, being an important recipient of thousands of Syrian refugees.

The scope of activities includes but is not limited to community-based social, health, care services, vocational education support, legal assistance and a variety of humanitarian emergency assistance, including rental subsidy support, temporary shelter support through social housing, support with schooling, winterization, food stuffs, basic household items, kitchen utensils, furniture, etc. aiming at: mitigating their extreme vulnerability; empowering them with economically self-help self-reliance skills and knowledge; facilitating their integration process in local society.

The refugee assistance targets different age and gender groups from Azerbaijan, Iraq, Ukraine and from Syria. The scope of assistance encompasses diversified assistance according to beneficiary needs and Mission Armenia carries out beneficiary-centered, addressable, needs-based and solution-oriented comprehensive services and assistance, therewith ensuring maximum effectiveness and purposeful and efficient use of donors' funds. Mission Armenia offers diversified assistance for people with and without special needs.

For physically incapacitated beneficiaries Mission Armenia provides support to maintain their physical independence and promote their social activation. For those beneficiaries that have no physical disability, yet they are marginalized because they do not have skills and knowledge of a great demand in the labor market, Mission Armenia has arranged competitive vocational training courses that ensure gainful job opportunities for them, supported them with income generation/interest free microcredits and job finding process.

Elderly Support

Armenian Authorities, USAID, UNHCR, Caritas Sweden, Tufenkyan Foundation, OXFAM, OSI, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

The entire scope of Mission Armenia's varied activities for the elderly population has two major directions:

- 1) mitigate the extreme vulnerability and physical incapacities of the marginalized elderly populations in Armenia, helping them exercise their rights and empowering them with relevant skills for self-help and self-advocacy initiatives;
- 2) promote the establishment of lasting tools and sustainable mechanisms for social service provision in Communities, as well as initiate networking activities on aging and betterment of social support system at national and regional levels.

The NGO is the innovator, executor and promoter of the **Elderly Community-based Service Provision Model** in Armenia and in the Caucasian Region. The ultimate goal of this assistance is to ensure dignified life for non-institutionalized disadvantaged elderly people and prevent their social-psychological segregation from their community, mitigating their unprotected and unattended status, responding to their unmet priority concerns.

In the early 90s, Mission Armenia elaborated and introduced the abovementioned community-based assistance model in the country, which, versus the institutional system (old age home care, for instance), supposed service provision directly in the homes and in the communities of the beneficiaries. This innovation came to respond to the radical transformations in the social-economic arena that were dictating profound change and innovation within the social support system and which the country, unfortunately lacked.

While looking back over the span of these years, it should be noted that this innovation was not an easy task to accomplish, because the NGO had to pave alone this new way without any supportive leverages and experience, without accurate statistical and demographic data on the elderly, lack of methodology, expertise and experience in non-institutional/community services, lack of manuals/studies/guidelines on social work/gerontology. The NGO overcame all those impediments and very soon, the Elderly Support Model enjoyed national and regional recognition. Due to its pertinence to the regional setting and its comprehensive coverage, at the earlier stage, Caucasian NGOs requested Mission Armenia to introduce and execute Mission Armenia's Model in their countries too (by the funding of Danish Refugee Council and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation).

Thanks to continuous improvement and advancing of its methodology and quality management this Model has proved to be a viable tool in combating elderly vulnerability and it is greatly desired by the elderly population. It has a lot of advantages over the institutional care. Over these years, the Model components have proved their feasibility, efficiency and pertinence and have produced positive outcomes and improvements in the lives of thousands of vulnerable elderly persons. Unfortunately, for many non-institutionalized elderly people this is the only substantial way or the only alternative to have access to vital social and healthcare services.

The Model is comprehensive, easily replicable, has well-developed implementation and documentation modules that are justified with respect to the current peculiarities of the Region. Mission Armenia's Model is not just a strategy of a local NGO, but it has been incorporated in the Strategic Planning of Armenia (State National Program, Decree #485).

Due to its best knowledge on the specifics of the target caseload, Mission Armenia offers prioritized, differentiated and beneficiary-centered assistance and channels assistance to the most vulnerable in the most effective manner, thereby purposefully and efficiently using the available resources.

The services this beneficiary group receives help maintain their physical independence and promote their social activation. This intervention is very vital for the target beneficiaries in many terms: food, health, social assistance, care, rehabilitation activities, psychosocial support, socialization, etc. At the same time Mission Armenia initiates activities that help create a positive

image of ageing and older persons featuring the elderly as the teachers and transmitters of knowledge, culture, traditions and spiritual values.

For provision of services, Mission Armenia has set up Community Socio-Healthcare Centers. The services are designed for Center attendees and for homebound persons; respectively the provision of the services is being rendered at the Centers and through home visits.

For hundreds of abandoned and marginalized persons the Community Center has become a warm and cozy corner for socialization and mutual support, a place where they spend most of their daytime enjoying the love and companionship of their peers and the Mission Armenia staff.

For most of the Center attendees this is a unique chance to have access to a variety of social and health services, as well as have a three-course hot calorie meal. Private consulting is one of the important components of the Center activities. The beneficiaries can get information on various social and legal issues, being advised by social workers and lawyers where and how to apply for solving their issues.

Very nicely is organized the leisure time of the beneficiaries at the Community Center: they can play games, listen to music, watch TV, read newspapers, exchange views, share with their problems. The older persons can participate in several vocational and cultural amateur groups, events and meetings organized with different representatives of formal and informal structures, etc.

Another important component of the Center-based activities is the formation of a self-help/self-advocacy network that is being realized by the efforts of the elderly. The key units of the network are the self-help groups, civic activation and initiation groups. On the one hand the self-help network is to address the basic needs of the elderly, on the other hand it is to promote their social activation and adequate participation in the societal life.

Another important infrastructure in this regard, is the four-storey **Social House “Nreni”** that Mission Armenia constructed in the mid-2000s. **The Social House** offers accommodation through one-room apartments to refugee and local single older and disabled persons who lack permanent shelter. They can dwell there and at the same time access the Community Center services as the other target beneficiaries in Yerevan and have foster young vulnerable neighbor family support who too live in that Social House.

Mission Armenia has taken care of thousands of single elderly and disabled persons too who are **homebound** and unable to self-care and have no one beside them to look after. Home care improves personal and household hygienic conditions of the frail homebound older persons and addresses their basic needs. In-home services also prevent the socio-psychological segregation of the elderly from the community and enable them to lead a dignified lifestyle.

Armenian Authorities and USAID have played an important role in the development of the elderly support model of Mission Armenia. Namely:

Armenian Authorities: This is the first precedent in Armenia, when a local NGO- Mission Armenia receives cost-sharing funds and/or subsidies from Armenian authorities for community-based integrated social services. Mission Armenia has established outsourcing/cost-sharing

procedures with Central and Local Authorities as a result of Mission Armenia's highly successful model of using integrated services to reduce social tensions in communities.

And today, Mission Armenia is one of the few CSOs that along with broad constituency base have managed to create diversified funding sources and even become an implementing partner of the Ministry of Social Affairs for the provision of certain services. In the realities of lack of social contracting in Armenia, nevertheless, Mission Armenia's services were so pertinent and important for poverty mitigation that since 2005, Mission Armenia has been receiving funds from local authorities as cost share for social services projects. Since 2007, central authorities too have also been outsourcing subsidized funding for certain budget lines of Mission Armenia's integrated services. Summarizing the above-mentioned, it should be noted that Mission Armenia has gained a national recognition for the design, execution and promotion of integrated community-based services in Armenia and Caucasian region. This model has no equal in the country and has become the basis for establishing a standard system for community-based services in Armenia and as a powerful tool for poverty mitigation.

USAID: Mission Armenia has experienced a successful years-long partnership with USAID and has been deeply engaged in improving Armenia's social support system and civil society. USAID has played a crucial role in these achievements with over ten years large-scale funding to Mission Armenia. Mission Armenia first served as a sub-grantee under USAID's *Social Transition Program* (2000–2003). Based on the project's successful outcomes and positive evaluation results, Mission Armenia, as a local NGO, was thereafter awarded direct funding for the implementation of *Support for Soup Kitchens Program* (2004-2011). This was the first precedent when USAID directly allocates funding to a local Armenia-based NGO.

Just recently in March 2016, another USAID-funded program was closed out which had started in December 2014. It is called "Support to Social Sector Reforms in Armenia" program. This time Mission Armenia implemented the program in a consortium of two Armenia-based and one US-based CSOs, Mission Armenia being the lead organization. The major roles of the Consortium were to mobilize and empower citizens with relevant capacities to ensure citizens' engagement in the monitoring of social sector reforms that Government of Armenia (GoA) has recently introduced in Armenia to the social services, child protection services, and pension system.

Economic Empowerment Activities

Economic empowerment activities have always been on the focus of Mission Armenia as part of this or that project, including UNHCR-funded initiatives that included not only vocational training, but also allocation of interest-free loans to the refugee-trainees to start their own small business. Caritas Sweden too has supported Mission Armenia in a variety of vocational support activities for children and young people.

In this range two very important initiatives are also worth mentioning. In August 2016, Mission Armenia's three year project was completed, called: "Strengthening the Livelihoods and Voice of the Poor and Vulnerable Persons in Armenia". It has been funded by the Japan Social Development Fund and the World Bank that had a component of a variety of vocational education courses and micro-business grant allocation to extremely vulnerable populations, focusing also on people with disabilities among them. Within that framework, vocational and business management trainings were organized for vulnerable beneficiaries in age of 18-55 and

sub-grants have been provided to the most successful ones among them for establishment of small business.

The applicants for sub-grant have presented their business plans for the following types of businesses: agriculture: greenhouse management, agricultural services, animal and poultry keeping for milk and meat production; food processing – pastry, confectionary, bakery; home-based production – bed linen; furniture making and refurbishment, shoemaking; trade of various goods; beauty salon; entertainment for children, etc.

In July 2015, Mission Armenia completed a “Small Business Opportunities for Syrian Refugees” program funded by Julia Taft Fund through the US Embassy to Armenia. It promoted employability for the target caseload through business training sessions on small businesses, liaising the beneficiaries to the State Employment Service Agencies and other jobseeker networks for trainings and job opportunities; as well as providing toolkits and/or seed money support at hundreds of USD value per beneficiary, mostly women for initiating group entrepreneurial activities, establishing micro businesses, and/or starting income generation.

Renovation/Rehabilitation activities of Mission Armenia include Collective Centers Rehabilitation Project for Refugee Families in Armenia- funded by BPRM through Save the Children and Household repair assistance to non-institutionalized single disadvantaged older persons a very important yet unique project that Mission Armenia implemented in 2000-2007 by the funding of Swiss Agency for development and Cooperation. Another project of the same field Mission Armenia implemented in 2009 under the funding of Embassy of Japan in Armenia to rehabilitate Elderly Care Home in Syunik Region.

Significant is Mission Armenia’s involvement also in **public awareness, advocacy and lobbying** activities. Mission Armenia has implemented several projects for the protection of social rights of the vulnerable and high-risk groups in Armenia, as well as has elaborated the draft law on the "Provision of Social Assistance” and Social Services for Senior Citizens; Law on Charity, has been involved in Corporate Social Responsibility Support initiatives and Promotion of Philanthropic Mentality in Armenia, as well as Black Sea NGO Network initiatives. These activities have been carried out under the funding of OSI, Eurasia Foundation, Armenian Assembly of America NGO Center, OXFAM, the World Bank and ICSW.

The NGO has active involvement in societal issues, plays a significant role in national poverty reduction initiatives and continues to have a direct impact on the development of social welfare programs and systems in the Republic of Armenia. The NGO promotes the introduction of NGO contracting mechanisms in the country and works for the betterment of aging and social support system Due to its consistent and substantial initiatives Mission Armenia has earned national and inter-regional recognition for its contributions to, and experience in, community care and civil society up-building.

The NGO is also active in initiating and hosting large-scale national and Regional forums, convening the First Aging National Conference with 100 representatives from Central and local authorities, civil society sector, Academy with its different Institutes, higher educational institutions, etc. and 2 Black Sea Regional Civil Society Forums with representatives of more than 50 Civil Society Organizations of the Black Sea Region.