Monaco, November 2023

Dear Sponsors,

I've just returned from Armenia. This country has experienced dark times since the annexation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region by Azerbaijan. A feeling of both incomprehension and anger overcame the people, just as their patriotic duty to welcome the announced 120,000 Karabaghtsi was to be fulfilled. These families arrive with nothing, some with only their papers and the clothes on their backs. However, they arrived in Armenian towns and villages with stories that were difficult to hear: the dead at the battlefronts and the people still hiding in the forests, the prisoners of war believed to be in Baku, nine months of blockade, hunger, cold, hours spent in the cellars of houses under the threat of bombs, and finally the three-day exodus at the end of September, with the death of the most vulnerable abandoned by the roadside.

Nelly, 19, displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh with her family and her father, wounded at the battlefront.
"I'm still very scared, but I'd like to resume my studies at the Academy of Fine Arts".

The Armenians live to the rhythm of the arrivals and the generosity of these people towards their own kind is never-ending. However, the recent defeat at the hands of the Azeris, blamed in part on Armenia's Prime Minister, Mr Pachinian, and the misunderstandings about the countries allied to this region, have left Armenians increasingly uncertain about the future of their country.

Nevertheless, young people continue to study at university despite the high cost of living, particularly in the capital Yerevan. Children are attending school and pursuing their education and, for those who can, their extra-curricular activities, with great assiduity. Families are struggling to meet their most basic needs as a result of the price inflation affecting the country. With the onset of winter, with temperatures approaching -10°C, many of them will not be able to afford heating.

In the midst of this general instability, education is an anchor for those who are finding a new home and the assurance of a more serene life for all. Mission Enfance, thanks to its sponsors and the collaboration of its invaluable partners, ensures that this path to school is accessible to as many people as possible.

Milena and Artiom, two residents of the Boghossian centre, during playtime.

At the Boghossian centre, the residents, aged between 3 and 17, are cared for in an environment that fully meets their needs. From school to extra-curricular activities, from three meals a day to their wardrobe, the children lack for nothing. The Sisters of the Congregation and the educators provide daily care for these children, whose dramatic family situation is painful. The atmosphere in the centre is joyful and helps to eclipse somewhat the past of a neglected childhood. There are currently 13 boarders. 15 other children join them at the centre every day to benefit from schooling, meals and extra-curricular activities before going home to spend the night. Around twenty other children, including university students, are looked after by the sisters, and receive food and clothing support in addition to their sponsorship.

Before going to bed, Mariam rereads her poetry with the help of the Sister.

The centre helps many displaced families from Nagorno-Karabakh. The children are welcomed and benefit from all the activities on offer, as well as meals. The congregation houses the most vulnerable families in flats near the centre. Their mission is essential to this community, and above all, to these children. Mission Enfance supports the congregation with emergency aid to help accommodate the many families who knock on their door every day.

Arman, apprentice cook on duty at Endanik secondary school.

In the morning, 250 students follow a wide range of state-recognised vocational training courses at the Endanik centre. They all benefit from a free canteen. 86 students graduated last year and are progressively entering the world of work. In the afternoon, 1,500 children take turns in the 37 workshops on offer: languages, embroidery, tapestry, jewellery, radio electronics, singing, dancing and so on.

The sponsored children excel in many fields. Their countless victories in national championships in karate, chess and wrestling are testimony to this. The many prizes won in cooking, drawing and painting competitions are further proof. The singers, dancers and musicians practise every day of the week to perfect their talent. The centre is very proud of them, and the rolls of honour, prizes and certificates are displayed in the entrance hall.

Hasmik, in the drawing workshop.

Since September, Endanik has welcomed almost fifty families who survived the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. 120 children have taken part in the language, dance and singing workshops. Thanks to these activities, they have found a safe environment in which to develop, learn and make new friends. 8 young people have started vocational training at the secondary school. Mission Enfance has provided these children with warm boots to face the winter and 56 families with hygiene kits, blankets and basic necessities to live with dignity in Guymri.

Once again this year, we are proud to end the sponsorship of young men and women who are now doctors, teachers, translators and interpreters. Thanks to the support of their sponsors, they are an example of how hard work and motivation can lead to success.

"The road to Armenia was difficult, especially for my mum who had just given birth to my little brother in Karabagh. But we're all alive!"
Sponsor Hayk, aged 7, and help him to live, surrounded by his teachers and family.

We would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the opportunity you are giving to all these children and young people! Thanks to you, 206 children are being sponsored in Armenia.

For Christmas, we need to get involved with the families who have survived Nagorno-Karabakh, and we're asking for your help in finding sponsorship for 26 children we met on our mission.
This sponsorship will ensure their schooling and they and their families settle in Guymri for the long term, with the support of the two sponsorship centres.

We know how difficult it can sometimes be for you to provide your own sponsorship, but your commitment is essential to help these children believe in a future. So help them by telling your friends and family about Mission Enfance's sponsorships!

On our website, www.missionenfance.org, you will find information and photos relating to sponsorship. If you would like further information about Armenia or your godchild, please do not hesitate to contact me. For those of you who live in our region, I will always be delighted to welcome you to our offices.

Sincerely,

Marie Vauban
Sponsorship manager