

EMPOWERMENT.
EDUCATION.
ENGAGEMENT.

WOMEN'S SUPPORT CENTER
2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Domestic violence affects as many as 1 in 4 women in Armenia. We're on a mission to change that. With your support, we believe that we can significantly improve the lives of women in Armenia in our lifetime.

Cover page design by Ani Asribabayan

Photograph taken by Olive Branch Arts

Dear friends and supporters,

Many of you have been with us for the last 12 years. We have made many advances in this short period of time, but we still have a lot more to do.

This year, we registered the most cases than ever before and, thanks to your generous support, we were able to offer comprehensive services and safe shelter to a record number of women and children.

We saw this coming: It is a known fact that when there is legislation and services offering protection for victims, more women reach out for support. Since a domestic violence law was passed in 2017, we have seen a 362% increase in our case numbers.

While we expected more women to reach out, we never expected to be confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic and devastating 2020 Artsakh War, both of which directly impacted our work. Sadly, since 2020, the percentage of our high-risk cases has doubled. Now, 1 in 4 women come to us when their lives are severely endangered.

Yet, we have good news to share too. Women in Armenia are not waiting as long to reach out for support. Up until 2020, the average woman came to us in her mid-30s, typically after enduring many years of abuse. In the last couple of years, this trend has dramatically changed: Now, the average woman who accesses our services is in her mid-20s.

Despite being overburdened with cases, we also focus heavily on prevention work. As designated experts in the field of domestic violence, we are called on by the Council of Europe to train criminal justice actors and social workers. Our proposed amendments to the domestic violence law and criminal code were included in the package of amendments sent to the Parliament for approval.

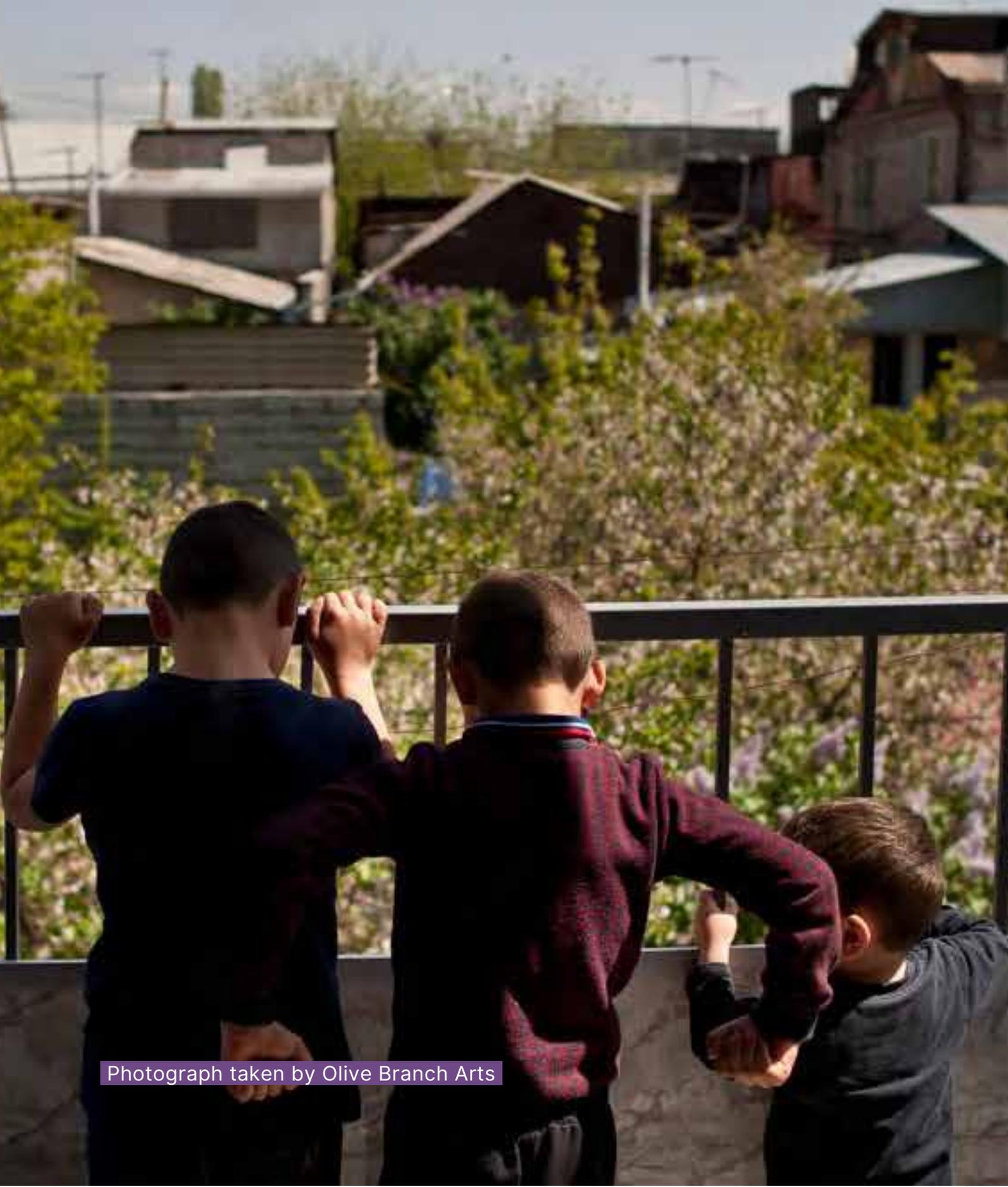
Our strong reputation as the premiere domestic violence center in Armenia comes not only from our professional work ethic but from women we serve who are thriving. Many of them have rehabilitated and made advances in their careers. Three out of four of the women we serve do not return to their abusers. Those who do return often come back to access our services, eventually breaking the cycle of abuse. We consider this a great success.

All of this is made possible with your support. Thank you for standing by us.

With gratitude,



Maro Matosian
Executive Director



Photograph taken by Olive Branch Arts



OUR MISSION

The Women's Support Center is the premiere domestic violence center in Armenia dedicated to preventing and combating domestic violence. We work to protect, rehabilitate, and empower survivors and change the legal, educational, and social conditions that contribute to a culture of silence surrounding domestic abuse.

OUR IMPACT

We make change in three key areas:

We provide comprehensive services to women and children.

We promote healthy, respectful, and non-violent relationships.

We strengthen the institutional response to domestic violence.





SAVING LIVES

In 2022, 203 women and children received safe shelter to rebuild their lives free from abuse.

984 women and children received rehabilitative services, counseling, and legal aid.

90 women gained economic independence through vocational training or starting their own businesses.

151 women received clothes, hygiene products, and household items to support their reintegration into society.

196 women and children received medical care to support their physical health and well-being.

PREVENTION

In 2022, we trained 25 social workers, 125 police officers, and 40 officers from the Ministry of Justice Compulsory Enforcement Service on how to properly address domestic violence using a victim-centered approach.

We raised awareness about domestic violence through TV appearances, social media, and local and international forums.

We also published guidelines and research studies to improve nation-wide policies and protocols to better assist victims and their families.



INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

We are a proud co-founding member of the Coalition of Domestic Violence Support Centers, comprised of women's organizations across Armenia's 10 provinces. We take a leading role in strengthening the domestic violence response across Armenia through training, mentorship, and support of all regional support center staff.

This year, we consulted with the Police Department to improve their referral procedure and risk assessment questionnaire used to determine the level of danger a victim faces. We also prepared draft amendments to the domestic violence law alongside the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and members of parliament.

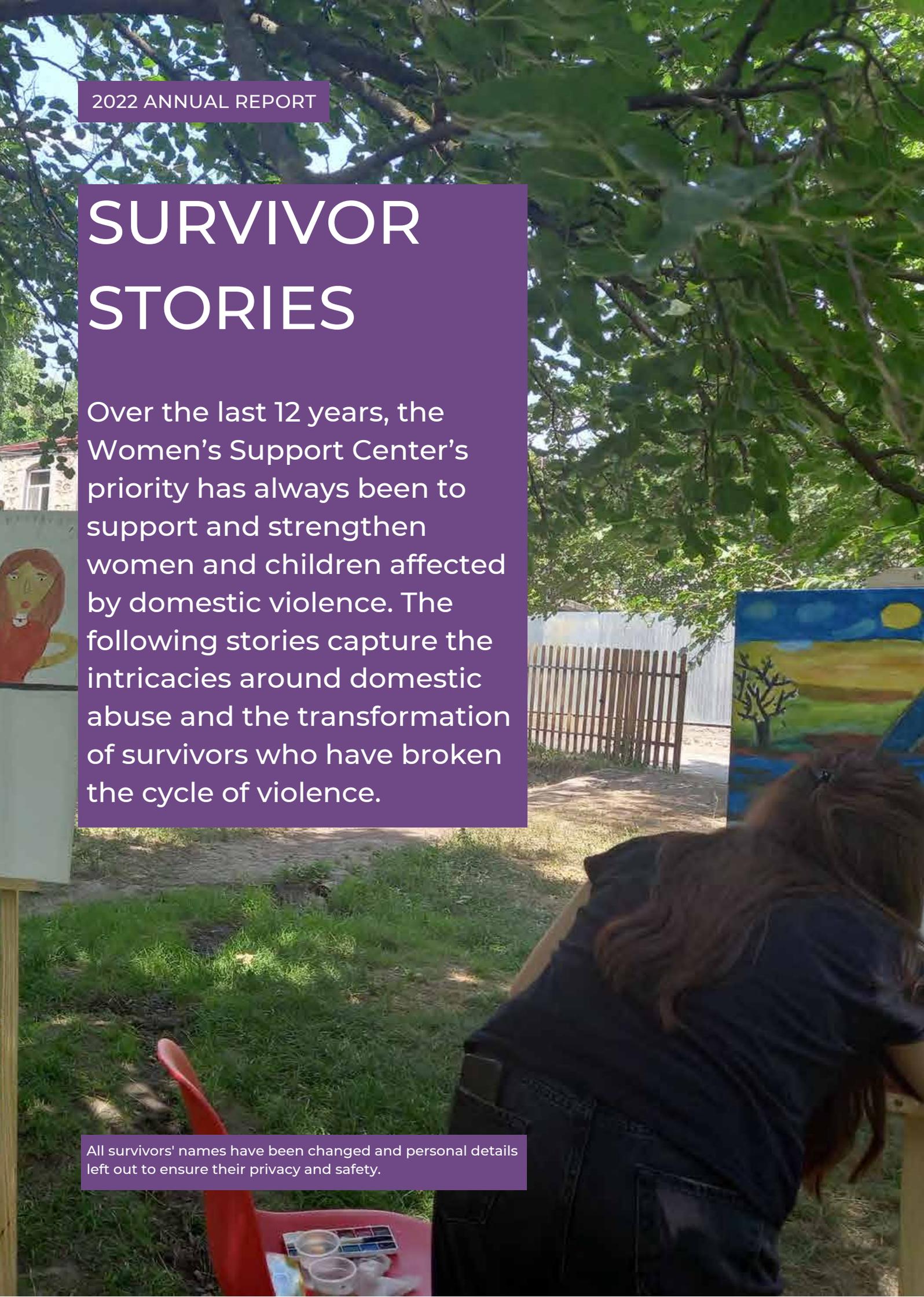


Photograph taken from National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia

SURVIVOR STORIES

Over the last 12 years, the Women's Support Center's priority has always been to support and strengthen women and children affected by domestic violence. The following stories capture the intricacies around domestic abuse and the transformation of survivors who have broken the cycle of violence.

All survivors' names have been changed and personal details left out to ensure their privacy and safety.





ARMINE

Armine lived in fear of her husband for 20 years. After one particularly horrifying episode, she took her 5 children with her to the police who were familiar with Armine's history of abuse. They issued an Emergency Protective Order and immediately referred her to our shelter. Armine was seriously impacted by the abuse. She had lost her desire to live and was barely able to meet her children's needs, let alone her own needs. While at our shelter, Armine and her children began seeing our specialists. Little by little, they began to smile and joke around. For the first time, Armine saw that she had a future, that all hope was not lost. With support from our staff, she was able to secure a job in her hometown. We provided her with one month's rent, clothes, and household items to ease her transition. We also established contact with the regional administration and local organizations to ensure that moving back would be safe. Armine is now working and able to support herself and her children. Her children go happily to day care and school. They live modestly but happily – free from abuse, free to decide what their future holds.

“I turned into a self-sufficient person thanks to the Center. The support they give you inspires confidence in yourself. After the abuse, your life isn’t over; you have a life to live.”

HASMIK

Hasmik arrived at our shelter with her two children—confused, scared, and hungry. Earlier that week, they had been kicked out of their house, arriving with nothing on them but the clothes on their backs. Prior to this, Hasmik had contacted the police, but they didn't recognize the abuse as serious and attempted to reconcile the couple. When Hasmik arrived at our shelter, she was crying incessantly and worried about her children's health. The children had stopped talking, were wetting the bed, and had become very aggressive. After some time at our shelter, Hasmik started opening up and coming back to life. She spoke about her love for embroidery and started embroidering beautiful patterns. Months later, after working with our team to rehabilitate, Hasmik and her children moved in with her parents. The children no longer wet the bed. They are talkative and no longer have problems at school. After participating in our economic empowerment program, Hasmik now makes and sells a variety of handicrafts and has started her own small business.

"I have seen a lot of changes in myself thanks to the Center and to their specialists... I learned that a woman isn't just born to take on chores or made to feel guilty about everything. Rather a woman is also a person who has rights and who should be protected."

The background image shows an outdoor art workshop. In the foreground, a woman is painting a landscape on a canvas mounted on a wooden easel. The painting depicts a bright yellow sun in a blue sky, a yellow field, and a dark tree. In the background, another woman is painting on a canvas, and a third person is partially visible on the right. The scene is set in a lush, green, wooded area.

NINA

We met Nina the first time at a workshop we organized for women displaced from Artsakh. That day, we talked with her and others about the signs of an abusive relationship and where to reach out for support. A couple of months later, Nina called us. Nina was still suffering with grief from the war. Her mind was cloudy and she was finding it hard to focus. She enrolled her children in school and was trying her best to meet all their needs. But the abuse at home was intensifying, and she wanted a way out. We helped Nina create a safety plan and escape the violence. We also helped her understand her legal rights and choices she has. To this day, she and her children receive counseling. Grief, loss, and abuse take time to overcome, but Nina is determined to change her life course. With our support, she enrolled in a vocational training program to learn floristry. She opened up her own small boutique and is slowly growing her business. She remains optimistic about the future.

“Everything in my life was in black and white. I never imagined that my life could change and that it could turn positive and full of light, that I could be an independent person, economically stable, and create a life for myself.”

To date, the Women's Support Center has provided domestic violence services to over 4,000 women and children throughout Armenia.



Photograph taken by Olive Branch Arts

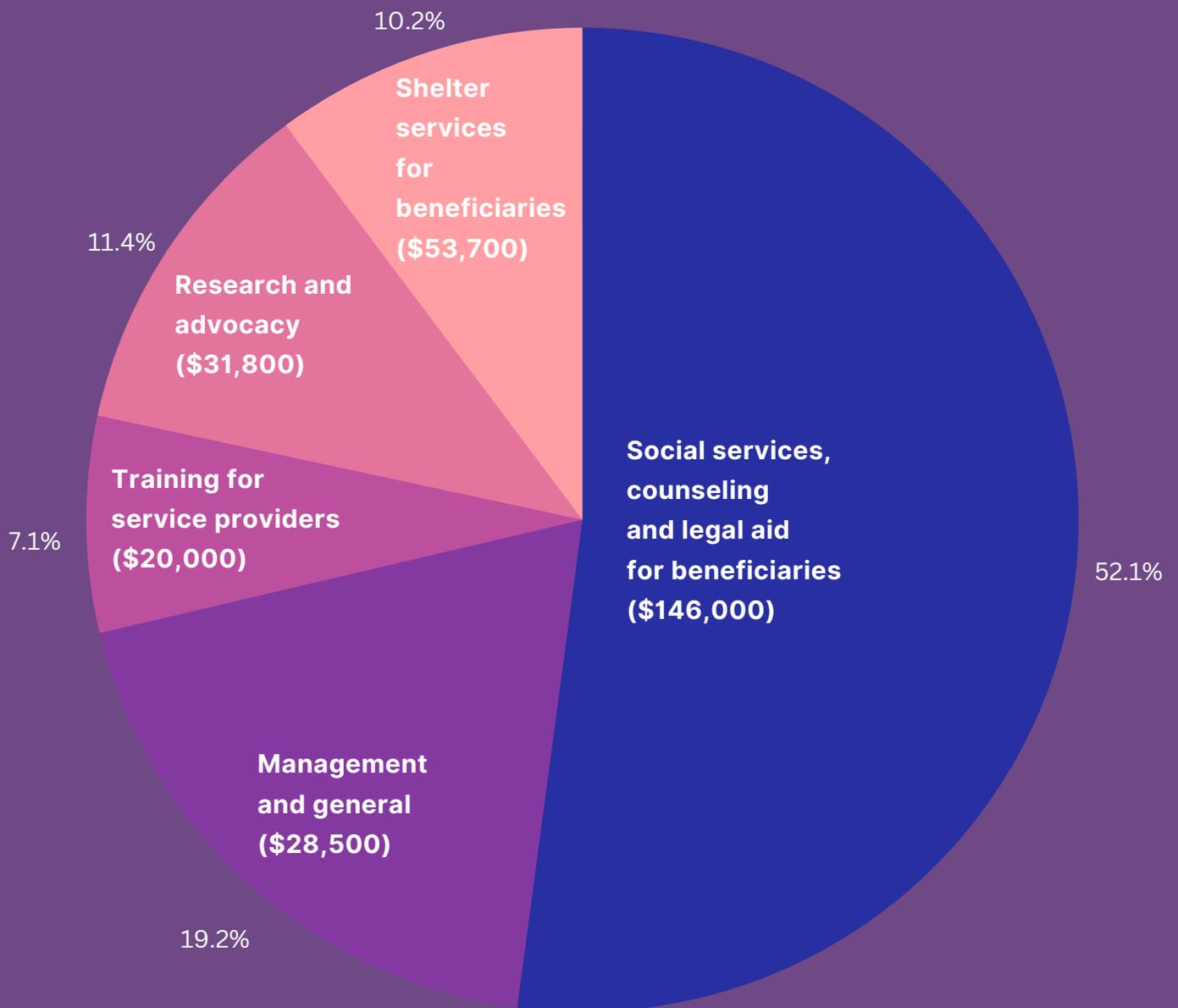
FINANCIALS

We are proud to report another year of strong support from our donors who enabled us to serve more women and children than in any previous year. As we grow and expand our center, we remain committed to fiscal prudence to ensure sustainability and high-quality programming for all those we serve.

2022 total revenue – \$260,423

2022 total expenses – \$280,000

Allocation of expenses



WHAT'S AHEAD

We will renovate and repair our shelters and establish a transitional housing program to support women and children to live independent lives free from abuse.

We will continue to strengthen the Coalition of Domestic Violence Support Centers through monitoring and standardization of approaches and practices.

We will lead awareness raising campaigns using creative approaches.

We will continue training service providers and working with state bodies to improve legislation and domestic violence mechanisms to ensure greater protection of domestic violence victims.

OUR TEAM

Our team is comprised of 22 dedicated and hard-working professionals who are committed to preventing and addressing domestic violence in Armenia. On our team, we have 16 specialist service providers (2 social workers, 2 psychologists, 2 lawyers, and 8 shelter aides), 2 technical and support staff members, and 6 administrative staff members. In 2022, we were thrilled to welcome two new team members: our Director of Development and PR/communications Specialist.



Photograph taken by Olive Branch Arts

OUR VOLUNTEERS

A big shout out to our amazing volunteers for supporting our communication and research efforts this year!



OUR PARTNERS

Thank you to our generous and compassionate partners for supporting our mission.



JOIN OUR MOVEMENT TODAY.

Together, we can do so much more.

Donate to our center and shelters to offer life-saving services for women and children.

Volunteer with us and support our work with your knowledge and skills.

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram @womensupport.armenia to stay up to date with our latest news, photos, and videos.

For more ways to get involved, email us at wsc.armenia@gmail.com or call us at +374 60 525 535.



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