

FROM VISION TO PRACTICE: THE STORY BEHIND THE FIRST PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL PROGRAMS

A BRIEF CHRONICLE IN NUMBERS AND FACTS

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The Foundation’s programs have been made possible through the generous support of the Afeyan Initiatives for Armenia (AIFA) and the Afeyan family.



INTRODUCTION

This is the story of how the Armenian Spiritual Revival Foundation (SRF) came to life—and how its flagship psycho-spiritual support program, the Armenian Revival Journey (ARJ), was envisioned, designed, piloted, refined, and deployed in Armenia.

What began as a vision in 2021 has evolved into a fully structured and innovative program now accessible to thousands. It has laid the foundation for a new, culturally rooted model of support for individuals carrying the personal consequences of collective trauma—caused by war, displacement, and other crises.

The Foundation was launched in the summer of 2022 through the vision of Dr. Noubar Afeyan, Armenian-American entrepreneur, innovator, and philanthropist, with the blessings of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, and co-founded with His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian. From the outset, SRF embraced a global mission: not only to design innovative, Armenian-spirited programs, but to share Armenia's legacy of survival and revival as a source of inspiration for other regions affected by conflict and crisis.

For centuries, the Armenian people have endured forced displacement, alien rule, genocide, and repeated calamities. Yet, time and again, we have chosen to rise—drawing strength from lived experience, heritage, culture, and the enduring role of the Armenian Church.

The roots of this Foundation grow from that search for meaning: to translate Armenia's spiritual and historical resilience into psycho-spiritual programs that blend psychology, memory, active historical thinking, and faith—empowering people to adopt a pro-future mindset and take a conscious leap beyond adversity.

This Chronicle briefly retraces that journey: the steps, insights, and milestones that shaped what is now known as the Armenian Revival Journey—SRF's flagship psycho-spiritual method of care.





...The history of the Armenian people is, at its core, a history of survival. The strongest trait in our DNA is the instinct – and the skill – to endure. Nature has endowed us with that capacity. Though it has come with great pains and losses, survival has become our defining strength.

Yet for Armenians, survival has never been the final goal. It has always been followed by revival. Our ancestors – thousands of them – who a century ago built camps in the forests of Etchmiadzin or opened orphanages for the children of war, left us a lasting legacy: the resolve not only to live, but to rebuild, to revive, and to thrive.

Today, I believe Armenia once again stands at that same threshold. After the war and its consequences, many in our society are seeking a new revival. It is our responsibility to ensure that their journey is guided and supported.

This is the mission of the Armenian Spiritual Revival Foundation – to create the capacity, systems, and platforms that bring together the collective intelligence and compassion of our people - for our people, and for many others who will need it elsewhere.

This is our shared journey – from survival to revival.



When we first began in 2022, the idea of “psycho-spiritual” care was little more than a conviction—that the centuries-old experience of revival among our people could be transformed into a modern method of healing from post-war trauma. Step by step, with humility and persistence, and in close collaboration with leading professionals in Armenia and abroad, we turned that conviction into a structured, evidence-informed program.

Throughout this journey, the unwavering support and vision of our Founder, Dr. Noubar Afeyan, have guided us forward.

What began as a small-scale pilot has since grown into a fully developed program reaching thousands across multiple cities, now ready to scale nationwide. Along the way, we have proven that psycho-spiritual revival is not only possible in Armenia, but resonates far beyond its borders.

These pages offer glimpses of that journey — from the first steps and lessons learned to the milestones achieved. My heartfelt gratitude goes to the Afeyan family, our Board of Trustees, and my dedicated team, whose commitment and belief made this path possible.



Hovhannes Nikoghosyan
Executive Director

The First Steps: Combining Psychology and Spirituality

After two months of preparation, the first meeting to unite psychology and spirituality within a holistic model of care was held on November 5, 2022.

Approximately 25 mid-career psychologists and 15 parish priests from the Armavir, Aragatsotn, and Kotayk Dioceses of the Armenian Apostolic Church gathered for a workshop in Aghveran. Following a day of intensive discussions and collaborative exercises, many participants were invited to continue into a two-week training program.

The program was co-designed and facilitated by renowned Armenian psychologists Dr. Davit Gevorgyan and Dr. Irina Khanamiryan, alongside Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, Fr. Shahe Ananyan, Fr. Zakaria Baghumyan, and Fr. Mesrop Aramyan.

The retrained psychologists, working in pairs with parish priests, went on to deliver multi-week psycho-spiritual support programs to about 130 individuals across eight towns. Each beneficiary received between five and eight sessions. In all locations, the participants were family members of fallen soldiers, making these encounters both profoundly personal and nationally symbolic — a real attempt to unite psychological care with spiritual guidance in post-war Armenia.



The First Attempt at Group Support

From the very first stage of our work, it became evident that while individual therapy was valuable and effective, it could only serve as a temporary solution—difficult to structure, sustain, or scale.

After extensive discussions with leading Armenian mental health professionals, SRF decided to experiment with group-based support formats.

The first group was formed in the town of Aparan, where about twelve individuals experiencing psychological distress after the war expressed willingness to participate. Psychotherapist Tigran Dovlatyan and Fr. Mushe Vahanyan, the parish priest of Aparan, led this six-week program — successfully blending psychological support with spiritual care in a group setting.

This modest yet meaningful success in Aparan became one of the key turning points that made everything that followed possible. It was here that we first challenged—and disproved—the prevailing belief that group support for people affected by post-war trauma could not work in the Armenian context.



AUDIENCE WITH THE CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS



Throughout this journey, it has been deeply important for the Foundation's growing network of experts to feel the unwavering support of the SRF Board of Trustees and to maintain a close, living connection with the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church.

A particularly meaningful moment came on March 23, 2023, when the Foundation's team of mental health experts and participating parish priests were granted an audience with His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, and received his blessings at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.





Dulwich Centre

Following extensive discussions and expert-level consultations, SRF succeeded in establishing collaboration with the Dulwich Centre in Australia – the global home of one of the world's most innovative psycho-social support approaches, narrative therapy.

In July–August 2023, joint work began with Australian, British, and Russian experts to weave together culture, active historical thinking, spiritual values, and Armenian tradition—with the goal of creating an innovative program addressing the individual consequences of collective trauma.

Alongside research and program design, SRF began carefully identifying and engaging future trainees for this new approach.

In September 2023, following the Azerbaijani attack on Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and the near-total displacement of its Armenian population, SRF's Board of Trustees and international partners reaffirmed their commitment to continue the work with renewed purpose and urgency.

The first intensive training took place in October 2023, bringing together around 30 psychologists and social workers, selected from over 100 applicants. The two-week program—crafted jointly with Dulwich Centre experts and led by David Denborough — was attempted to anchor in Armenian culture, history, and traditions.



For two weeks, participants worked closely with Sara Portnoy (University College Hospital, London) and David Newman (Dulwich Centre, Adelaide). Later, a smaller group of graduates received additional training from Natalia Savelyeva, narrative practitioner and psychotherapist based in Prague, Czechia.





International experts also conducted a series of supervision sessions with the newly re-trained Armenian practitioners, ensuring ongoing professional support and methodological coherence.

In sum, since the fall of 2023, more than 70 psychologists and social workers have been re-trained through programs organized by the Foundation. Those who successfully completed the training and received certification later joined SRF's network of experts, delivering psycho-spiritual and psycho-educational programs across cities and towns throughout Armenia.



WEB-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SELF-ASSESSMENT

With the support of our team of experts, SRF launched a web-based mental health platform that has enabled more than 12,000 people to date to self-assess their psychological well-being—anonynously, if they choose—using four internationally validated screening tools translated into Armenian.

Those whose self-assessment results indicated levels beyond the “normal” range received an invitation to join SRF’s psycho-spiritual programs. Since December 2023, around 1,550 individuals have taken part in at least one such program, beginning their own personal path of revival.

The revival.am/help platform is the first of its kind in Armenia, providing a safe, accessible space for individuals to evaluate their mental health and seek support if needed.

In the near future, the revival.am website will offer an expanded range of services—for both the general public and mental health professionals — continuing SRF’s mission to make psycho-spiritual care widely available.



BUILDING THE “ARMENIAN” MODEL

Following the fall 2023 training program, SRF—working with seven advanced-level psychologists and social workers and supported by its international partners—designed and, since November 2023, has deployed a three-phase psycho-spiritual support program in six towns: Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor, Masis, Armavir, and Abovyan.

The first phase, Resilient Communities, consisted of town hall-style gatherings where SRF psychologists and social workers met with local residents to assess needs, discuss shared challenges, and identify possible solutions within a supportive and open atmosphere.



The second phase involved smaller six-week group sessions, focused on psycho-spiritual practices for participants requiring more personalized care. These sessions helped individuals process their experiences, find inner strength, and then return to their wider communities with renewed perspective and tools for mutual support.





The third phase brought the SRF team back to these same communities. Drawing on insights from over 600 participants across Armenia, the team presented five narrative performances—collective storytelling events in which participants could recognize their own experiences, externalize their struggles, and see themselves and others from a new vantage point. Together, guided by SRF experts, they began to identify shared pathways of revival—as individuals, groups, and communities.



THE FIRST ATTEMPT AT A PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL GUIDEBOOK

Alongside training activities and direct work with beneficiaries, SRF continued supporting research efforts, guided by emerging evidence and insights from the field. One key area of exploration was the Armenian Church’s tradition of psycho-spiritual care – a largely untapped resource for modern mental health practice.

Months of collaboration culminated in May 2024 with the publication of the first such volume by the St. Etchmiadzin Publishing House, released with the blessings of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians. The book, titled “Christian Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy”, was co-authored by Fr. Shahe Ananyan, Tigran Dovlatyan, and Inga Harutyunyan. This theoretically rich work represents the first scientifically grounded attempt in Armenia to integrate Armenian Christian spiritual care and psychotherapeutic approaches – bridging two traditions in the shared pursuit of healing the soul affected by trauma.

In parallel, and in close collaboration with the Paradigma Educational Foundation, SRF produced its first methodological manual on integrating Active Historical Thinking as a therapeutic tool within psycho-spiritual programs—laying the foundation for the distinctive “Armenian” dimension of SRF’s psycho-spiritual model.

ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION OF EXPERTS

To engage students in SRF's mission and introduce them to the most up-to-date approaches in mental health, the Foundation regularly organizes educational events and workshops with and for university students. International mental health experts visiting Armenia at SRF's invitation also hold special sessions with students at local universities.

In 2023, Sara Portnoy (UK) and David Newman (Australia) led seminars at Yerevan State University, while Natalia Savelyeva, narrative practitioner from the Czech Republic, met with psychology students at Yerevan State Pedagogical University.



These encounters provided valuable opportunities for future psychologists and social workers to become acquainted with the principles of narrative therapy and to gain firsthand insights into the psycho-spiritual approaches developed and implemented by SRF in Armenia.



PRESENTING THE “ARMENIAN” APPROACH ON INTERNATIONAL PLATFORMS

Since 2023, a key condition set by potential international partners for engaging with SRF has been the commitment to share the outcomes of collaboration and, in the event of success, to make the developed methods available for adaptation and use abroad. This principle aligns fully with the vision of Dr. Noubar Afeyan, SRF’s Founder, who sees Armenia not only as the birthplace of the Foundation, but as the place of origin of what we call the “psycho-spiritual approach”—a model that can inspire healing far beyond its borders.

Beyond regular participation in international webinars and professional exchanges, SRF gained its first major international exposure in the summer of 2024, when, at the invitation of the UK Institute of Narrative Therapy, SRF representatives Heghine Poghosyan and Ani Manukyan took part in the Sixth International Conference on Narrative Therapy and Community Work in Liverpool, UK, joining more than 220 participants from across Europe.



An in-depth longread on SRF’s mission, programs, and impact was also published in the Dulwich Centre’s international magazine, a leading global resource for narrative therapy practitioners.

Since then, SRF experts have continued to share their experience through lectures, webinars, and professional training sessions, helping to introduce Armenia’s psycho-spiritual approach to an ever-growing international audience.



OFFICIAL LAUNCH EVENT – MAY 2024

After two years of consistent effort and program development, SRF held its official launch event on May 17, 2024. Local and international partners, representatives of international organizations, and government officials joined the SRF Board of Trustees to mark this milestone and to outline the Foundation’s forthcoming plans for expansion.

The event reflected the growing confidence in SRF’s mission—supported by the professional community and reinforced by the numerous revival stories shared by beneficiaries of its programs.



According to Dr. Noubar Afeyan, the goal of this pro-future approach—and of the project as a whole—is to support all those whose lives have been affected by war and its consequences, and, above all, those who are ready to embark on their own journey of revival. The SRF Founder reaffirmed his commitment to stand behind everyone willing to take that step toward renewal.





The event was attended by Armenia’s Minister of Health Anahit Avanesyan, USAID Armenia Mission Director John Allelo, UNICEF Representative in Armenia, Christine Wiegand, local and international partners of the Foundation, and members of the mental health expert community, etc.

In keeping with the spirit of the event and the day, SRF signed a cooperation agreement with the Matenadaran—the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts.

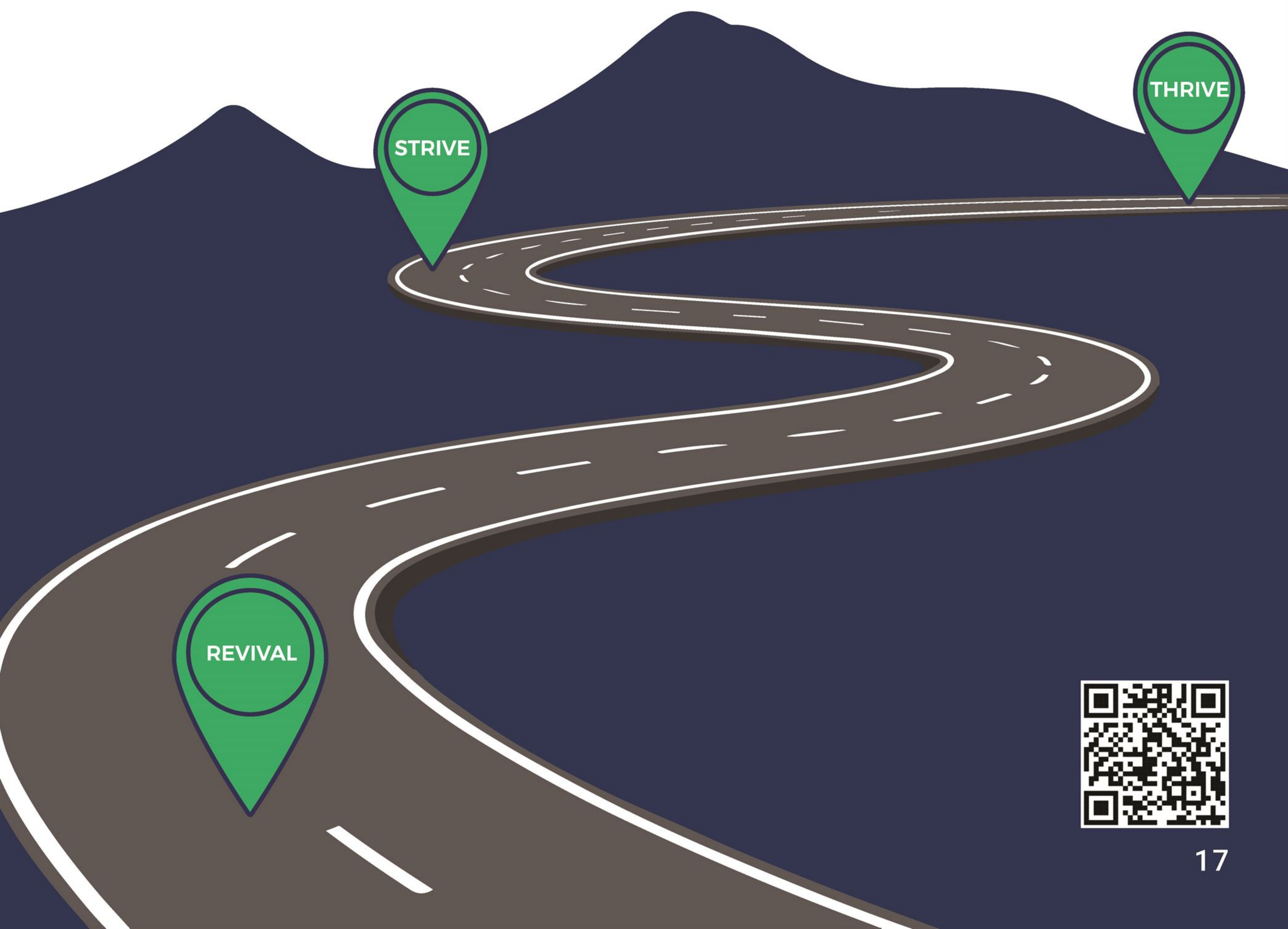


“ARMENIAN REVIVAL JOURNEY”: A NEW BEGINNING THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

The year 2024 marked a turning point for the Armenian Spiritual Revival Foundation (SRF).

Building on earlier achievements and working in close collaboration with local and international partners, the SRF team of experts finalized its flagship psycho-spiritual group support program—now formally branded as the Armenian Revival Journey (ARJ).

Through the revival.am/help self-assessment and self-enrollment platform, participants were invited to join this innovative support program based on their individual needs and readiness to engage in one or more of its three phases:



PHASE 1: REVIVE – Designed for individuals experiencing mid-to-severe post-traumatic stress, this six-week group support program offered a structured, safe environment for participants to begin processing their experiences and rebuilding inner stability.

PHASE 2: STRIVE – Developed for Revive graduates and individuals showing moderate levels of acute post-traumatic stress, this two-day intensive psycho-spiritual program guided participants toward co-creating a collective revival story – a shared narrative that fosters mutual understanding and inspires renewed purpose.

PHASE 3: THRIVE – A one-day celebratory psycho-educational event for graduates of the first two phases and a guest of their choice. This final stage showcased personal revival journeys through panel discussions and a short narrative performance authored by participants themselves.

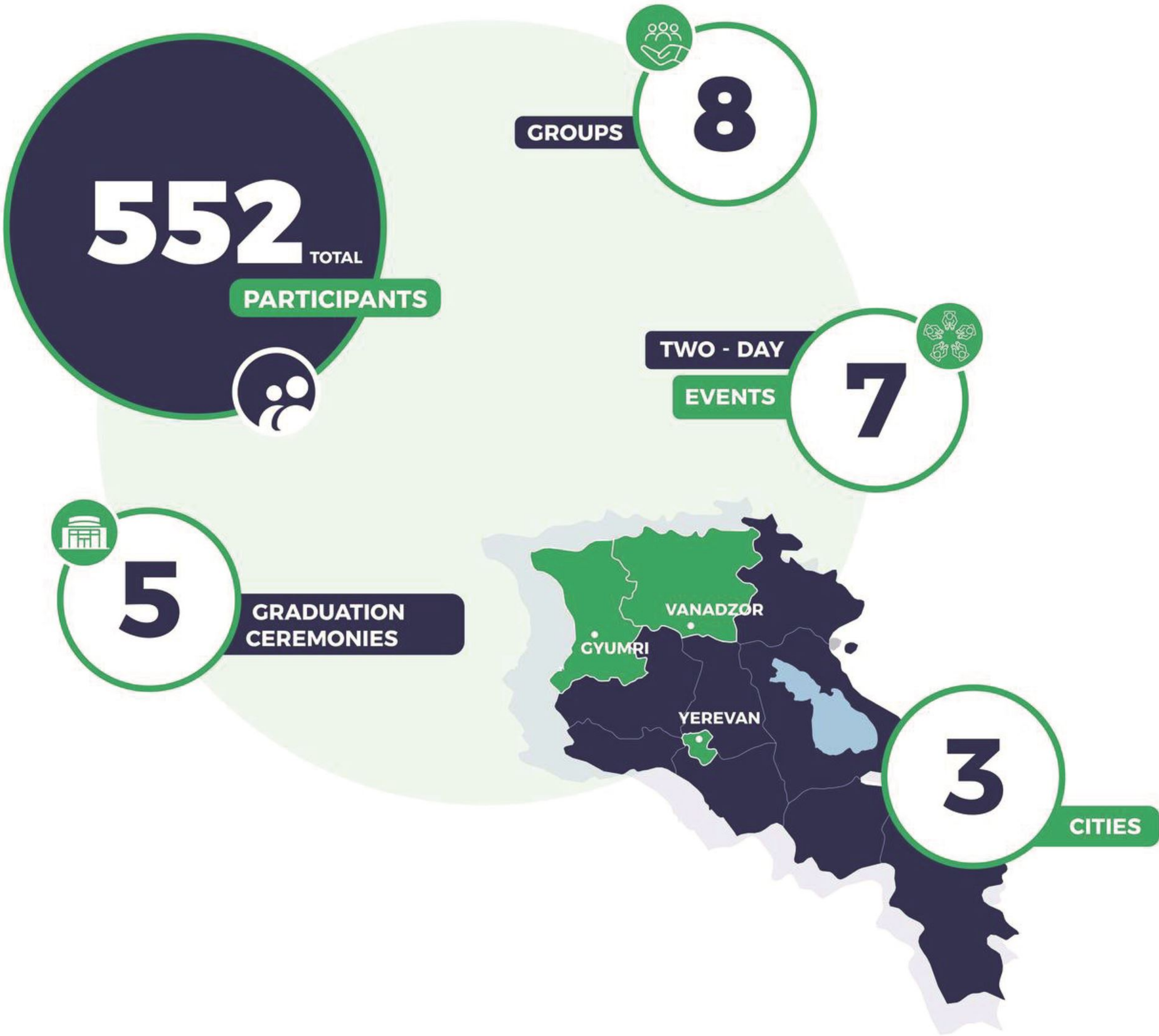


THE PRIMARY GOAL OF THE ARMENIAN REVIVAL JOURNEY—AND EACH OF ITS PHASES—IS TO AWAKEN AND STRENGTHEN A PRO-FUTURE MINDSET AMONG PARTICIPANTS, HELPING THEM TAKE THEIR FIRST CONSCIOUS LEAP OF FAITH TOWARD THE FUTURE THEY WISH TO CREATE, BEGINNING WITH ACTION IN THE PRESENT.



Between September 2024 and January 2025, the online self-assessment platform at revival.am/help was used by more than 1,500 people. Many of those from Gyumri, Vanadzor, and Yerevan chose to join the Armenian Revival Journey program.

In these cities, eight Revive groups were organized, engaging a total of 90 participants. According to feedback surveys, 96.5% of participants reported that their needs and expectations were met appropriately.



Following this, seven Strive groups—two-day intensive sessions—were held with more than 200 participants overall. About 97% of participants shared that listening to the stories of others provided them with strength and inspiration.

Five large “Thrive” graduation events were held in Gyumri, Vanadzor, and Yerevan, bringing together a total of 270 participants.

Survey results showed that 74% of participants expressed willingness to join a continued network of revival alumni if offered, while 95% endorsed the mission of the Foundation.

According to triangulated qualitative and quantitative data, 91.7% of participants in the Revive stage reported positive behavioral changes; 80.2% of those in Strive noted an increased sense of belonging; and 68.5% of Thrive participants described a stronger social connection—feeling supported by others and becoming a source of support themselves.



THE RESULTS AND LESSONS OF THE PAST PILOT PHASE HAVE INSPIRED THE SRF FOUNDER AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES TO DEFINE THREE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR THE FOUNDATION'S DEVELOPMENT IN 2025-2027:

- ✓ **R&D and Innovation:** Transform Armenia into a knowledge hub for psycho-spiritual support innovation.
- ✓ **Deployment in Armenia:** Build a nationwide psycho-spiritual support ecosystem accessible across all regions, improving mental health and psychosocial well-being among the general public.
- ✓ **Internationalisation:** Position Armenia as a pioneer in culturally grounded psycho-spiritual healing and support the adaptation of SRF's model in humanitarian settings worldwide.



AI Integration: Enrich existing psycho-spiritual support programs with AI-driven solutions to enhance scalability, personalization, and accessibility—enabling SRF to reach a wider base of beneficiaries more effectively.



THE MOST IMPORTANT INNOVATION, IN BRIEF

The core innovation of SRF's psycho-spiritual approach lies in its vision-driven and now evidence-based formula for mitigating the individual consequences of collective trauma and guiding people onto a path of revival.

It proposes that personal agency can be restored when individuals are supported to engage with their lived experiences, cultural memory, identity, the stories of others around and in history, and their spiritual values – enabling them to take the first step, their own leap of faith, toward a self-defined future, beginning with action in the present.

This pro-future mindset is key to sustaining post-traumatic revival.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- ✓ **Design and Deployment:** Development and implementation of a group-based, community-centered psycho-spiritual program that effectively addresses acute post-traumatic stress through a time-limited and scalable model.
- ✓ **Training and Education:** Creation of a training curriculum and educational materials to prepare early-career psychologists and social workers for delivering psycho-spiritual programs.
- ✓ **Digital Access:** Launch of a web-based self-assessment platform — revival.am/help — enabling individuals to self-enroll in SRF programs quickly and according to their needs.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

This work would not have been possible without the active involvement of local and international partners, and the support and participation of the mental health expert community. The following institutions have played a particularly significant role in advancing SRF's mission:

Armenian General Benevolent Union - Armenia

Zinapah. National Foundation for Servicemen Insurance

Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute

Matenadaran – Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts

Dulwich Centre - Innovative home for narrative therapy



APPENDIX

“Rapid Response Program for Artsakhtsi Compatriots”

The Azerbaijani attack on Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in September 2023, followed by the mass displacement of Armenians from their ancestral homeland, was a profound shock for the entire nation.

In response, Dr. Noubar Afeyan, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, and Anna Afeyan, Co-Chair of the Afeyan Foundation, announced a \$2 million commitment to support more than 100,000 displaced people from Artsakh who had been forced to leave their homes. A portion of this broader humanitarian effort was implemented by SRF.

Mobilizing within a short time, SRF designed and launched a Rapid Response Program, providing psycho-spiritual and psychosocial support to hundreds of children and adults affected by the crisis.

Professional Up-Skilling for Psychologists from Artsakh
Approximately 20 psychologists displaced from Artsakh took part in a special professional up-skilling program organized by SRF.



Following an initial needs assessment, participants underwent two weeks of intensive re-training led by senior-level psychologists, focusing on three key areas:

- ✓ Child Psychotherapy
- ✓ Gestalt Psychotherapy
- ✓ Art Therapy

Those who successfully completed the program were subsequently organized and supported by SRF to deliver free, group-based psychological support to Artsakhtsi children and adults across Armenia.



SUPERVISION SESSIONS AND BALINT SUPPORT GROUPS

SRF organized free supervision sessions for psychologists who volunteered to provide support to children and adults displaced from Artsakh. These group supervision meetings, held twice a month either in person or online, were facilitated by leading experts in the field.

In parallel, SRF also offered Balint support sessions for first responders working directly with displaced individuals from Artsakh. These sessions aimed to prevent professional burnout and help participants manage the emotional strain of their work.

Approximately 100 first responders took part in these Balint groups, which included medical staff, teachers, psychologists, social workers, community organizers, and other professionals. This segment of the program was designed and implemented in collaboration with the Armenian Balint Society.



SUPPORT TO ARTSAKHTSI MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

In partnership with AGBU-Armenia, SRF implemented a group support program for mothers and children displaced from Artsakh.

Over the course of two years, SRF experts have provided psycho-spiritual support programs at the AGBU “Nairi” Camp, offering a safe space for displaced families to process their experiences and begin envisioning paths toward renewal.

In 2024 alone, SRF worked intensively with approximately 650 mothers and 560 children, helping them take the first steps—at least in imagination—toward their own revival journeys.

Following the completion of the Rapid Response phase in 2024, SRF facilitators have continued to provide ongoing support to hundreds of children and mothers at AGBU camps throughout 2025.



In 2025 the SRF facilitators have already provided support to 225 mothers and around 700 children at AGBU camps.



SRF experts organized a range of therapeutic activities for children, creating space for their mothers to participate in group sessions focused on stress management and self-care.



Since March 2025, SRF has continued its collaboration with AGBU to support children and mothers displaced from Artsakh—a project that later expanded to include the Zinapah. National Foundation for Servicemen Insurance as a new partner.



IMPACT IN NUMBERS



Beneficiaries supported to-date: >4000 adults and children

Up-skilled and re-trained mental health experts: >70



Psycho-spiritual facilitators engaged in programs: 15

Institutional presence in three largest cities: Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor. Completed projects in multiple other cities and towns across Armenia.



91.7% of participants with severe acute PTSD self-assessment scores demonstrated positive behavioral change after completing the six-week psycho-spiritual program, with most showing continued improvement in follow-up assessments six months later.



