

Cooperation Project: Armenia - Switzerland

How it started



The former head of Nephrology at the University Children's Hospital in Zürich, Prof. Ernst Leumann, followed a call for nephrologist after the horrible earthquake in Armenia in 1988. He immediately realised that emergency aid would not be enough and founded a charity organisation with the help of his wife Christina, a teacher, speech therapist and also a multitasking person. Thus VAD (Verein Armenienhilfe Direkt: www.vad.ch) started in Switzerland in 1991.

In cooperation with its partner organisation DAA (Direct Aid Association: www.daa.am), VAD aims at the sustainable development of a holistic, professional approach towards children who are ill, disabled or socially underprivileged.

Thanks to VAD, the small Swiss NGO managed by committed people like the Leumanns, a lot of projects could be done such as the current one which is financed by the Kanton Zurich (county of Zurich), Swiss Scientific National Funds, private companies and donors.

The exchange of knowledge in special needs education is part of it. Also other disciplines of the University Children's Hospital Kinderspital Zurich (nephrology, neurology, endocrinology, radiology, developmental paediatrics, paedia-audiology etc.) and even specialists from other hospitals and schools in Switzerland are involved. A wonderful side-effect is that now the Arabkir hospital is a reference centre for Armenia and the nephrologists started to pass on their knowledge and experience to others in Armenia and even in Lwiw (Lemberg, Ukraine) and Kishinev (Moldova)!

The Programme for Special Needs Education

A long time ago, Christina Leumann with the help of VAD founded the hospital school in the Arabkir Children's Hospital in Yerevan. They also made it possible for some hospital teachers (e.g. Liana Sanamyan) from the Arabkir Children's Hospital to come and visit our hospital school of the University Children's Hospital Kinderspital in Zurich and other schools as well. In April 2005 Christina Leumann and I went to Armenia to lecture in co-operation with Armenian doctors, hospital teachers and other specialists. In June 2006 we offered again a course and opened it up for participants from the regions. This course was also supported by Mission East and Unicef. One goal this year was to found a national organisation for special needs teachers all around in Armenia.

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Christine Walser
Stetterstrasse 20
5507 Mellingen
Switzerland
ch.walser@gmx.ch

Verein Armenienhilfe Direkt VAD
Christina Leumann
Segetenweg 3
8053 Zurich
Switzerland
info@vad.ch
www.vad.ch

Direct Aid Association Yerevan DAA
Hasmik Tadevosyan
Amikonians 30
375014 Yerevan
Armenia
daa@xter.net
www.daa.am