

# **Evaluability Assessment of National childcare reform initiatives with a strong focus on de-institutionalization (DI), including in particular for children with disabilities**

## **Country brief**

### **Armenia**

#### **1. Introduction**

This document presents the main evaluability assessment findings concerning the country context of Armenia relevant to the following evaluability areas in support to a future evaluation:

- **Evaluability “in-principle”** - it focuses on the de-institutionalization (DI) country context, interventions at their inception and implementation; the national reform design and theory of change towards deinstitutionalisation (DI) with focus to children with disabilities.
- **Evaluability “in-practice”** - it focuses on the availability of M&E framework and information to enable measurement of the intended impact and outcomes;.
- **Institutional context** - it focuses on mapping of stakeholders, their roles and stake in the evaluation; explore options for the evaluation designs based on the preferences and wishes of the stakeholders

The purpose of this evaluability country brief is to present finding on each of the evaluability areas above relevant for the country, and thus to inform the development of a Terms of reference (ToR) for the future multi-country evaluation of national childcare reform initiatives with a strong focus on de-institutionalization (DI), including in particular for children with disabilities and equip the future evaluation team with the relevant information for exploring the appropriate design/approach for the said evaluation.

The sources of the information used for this brief are the following:

- Documents relevant to the DI process in the country with focus on children with disabilities, such as national policy documents, strategy papers, evaluation reports, monitoring and evaluation database available, etc., provided by UNICEF CO (Sep-Oct 2021) (Document library is attached here as annex)
- Preliminary meetings with UNICEF CO staff (Oct 2021)
- National Childcare Reform Initiatives and Evaluation Design Workshop involving UNICEF Country office and relevant stakeholders (Nov 2021). The workshop was conducted in two parts with the following purposes:
  - To explore the preferences of the stakeholders about goals/objectives/questions/requirements for the future evaluation.
  - To reconstruct and/or reaffirm the Theory of change (ToC), sharpen the results framework, and to ascertain that a shared understanding exists among implementers and key stakeholders. (See the annexes for the list of participants and workshop notes)

## 2. Evaluability “in-principle”

### 2.1. Country context and major milestones in the deinstitutionalisation process

The process of reforming the care systems in Armenia starts immediately after gaining independence. In **1992**, the Republic of Armenia joined the United Nations Child Rights Convention (UNCRC), which entered into force in the RA on 22nd July **1993**. Following the ratification of the Convention, Armenia initiated legislative changes (including the passage of the Law on the Rights of the Child in 1996) that set the foundation for furthering a child rights protection system and the child care/welfare reforms.

Year	Major policy/milestones of the reform (incl. UNICEF projects)	Notes
2005	Amendments to the Family Code were approved incorporating provisions on foster care	
2007-2008	A process starts towards transformation and closure of specialised institutions and special residential schools	Includes a component on inclusive education
2004-2015	National Programme for the Protection of the Rights of the Child	
2008	UNICEF commissioned 2008 analysis <sup>1</sup> to assess compliance of national legislation with the Convention	The analysis targeted still existing critical gaps in terms of enforcing the legislation and implementing an effective child rights protection system in Armenia
2010	Ratification of CRPD by the GoA	
2010	Following the guidelines of the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) of the Republic of Armenia (RoA) initiated strategic reforms of its social protection systems, more specifically social services-through introduction of Integrated Social Services Systems.  Acceleration of childcare system reforms and movement towards inclusive education systems.	From 2010 onwards, UNICEF in Armenia has provided technical assistance to the Government of Armenia for the identification, introduction and implementation of a model of social services. The Integrated Social Services model (based on Council of Europe’s Guidelines on Transformative Social Protection) was both recommended and supported by UNICEF Armenia as one that has proved to have a positive impact on vulnerable families as an effective system for tackling poverty, preventing children from appearing in difficult circumstances, being separated from their families or placed in institutions. Provision of technical assistance for the revised Family Code addressing foster care (2005-2010 CPD)

<sup>1</sup> Legislative reform related to the Convention on the rights of the Child. National case studies: Armenia, Barbados and Ghana, 2008, in “Toward Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Children: Expanding Alternative Care, Family Support and Inclusive Education Services as Part of Child Care Reform” Project (RFP Number: LRFP-2017-9132946) Mid-term Evaluation Final Report

<b>2012</b>	Government decree 952 on Approving the Integrated Social Services (ISS) system introduction programme	Piloting integrated social service models in 19 locations.
<b>2014</b>	New Law on Social Assistance passed. Establishing linkages to child protection system.	The reform effort has been carried forward from a pilot stage to a planned full-fledged roll out stage.
<b>2014</b>	Amendment of the Law on General Education	Until 2014 over 2,400 children with disabilities had been accommodated by 23 special schools that were segregated educational institutions operating under the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)
<b>2013-2016</b>	National Programme for the Protection of the Rights of the Child	It declared the child's wellbeing in a family environment and in the society a priority through reducing the number of children in child care and protection institutions and preventing placement of more children into these institutions
<b>2014-2017</b>	<p>The Project "Toward Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Children: Expanding Alternative Care, Family Support and Inclusive Education Services as Part of Child Care Reform".</p> <p>USAID and UNICEF serve as the main locomotive in support of the government's child-care reform agenda. UNICEF was engaged with the government in a discussion towards provision of family-type alternative services and foster care system development.</p>	Back in 2014, when the Project interventions were being designed, 14 child care and protection institutions were functioning under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), including 8 boarding schools (for children aged 6-18), 3 specialized care institutions and 3 general care institutions serving a total of 1431 children, of which 54% were male and 46% female. With respect to communities of origin the child distribution was the following: 25.2 % are from Yerevan, 17.7% from Lori and 16.4 % from Shirak
<b>2017-2021</b>	National Programme for the Protection of the Rights of the Child	The goal and the priorities include protection of interests of children in difficult life circumstances, improving the system of child's right protection and ensuring equitable, inclusive and quality education. The actions envisioned by the Strategy include reorganization of large institutions into social centres, improving the system of trusteeship and guardianship, enhanced foster family care, establishment of day-care centres, i.e. steps that will allow keeping the child in the biological family. Institutions are considered only as a last resort with an emphasis on the idea of small group homes instead of large facilities when institutionalization, in exceptional cases, cannot be avoided.
<b>2017-2022</b>	Government Programme for 2017-2022 and Human Rights Action Plan for 2017-2022	Prioritising deinstitutionalization reforms.

2020-2023	Programme to Assure the Right of the Child to Live in a Family and Have Harmonious Development	
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UNICEF Armenia is an important player in advocating for ongoing childcare reforms. UNICEF’s mandate and operations in the country have consistently emphasized child protection and inclusive education as priority areas. Realizing children’s right to education alongside with inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream education, as well as support to ongoing child welfare reforms through deinstitutionalization and transformation of residential care institutions, have been the focus of UNICEF Armenia’s 2012-2015 and 2016-2020 Country Program Documents (CPD).

## 2.2. National reforms’ design and reform logic

The childcare reform in Armenia started after the country’s ratification of Child Rights Convention (1992). The process of creating an enabling environment went through several stages and involves amendments and enforcement of regulations concerning provisions on foster care, transformation and closure of specialised institutions and special residential schools.

A theory of change guiding the deinstitutionalisation-related processes was identified in the context of a large-scale national project “Toward Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Children: Expanding Alternative Care, Family Support and Inclusive Education Services as Part of Child Care Reform”, 2014-2017, funded by USAID and UNICEF.

The overall goal of this program was to support the Government of Armenia to ensure that children realize their rights to live in a family environment and access community-based social and educational services. The project<sup>2</sup> goal was: *‘ensure that the child care system in Armenia significantly reduces reliance on largescale institutions through the establishment of a network of community based services responding to the needs of the children, families, and community.’*

The program planned to achieve the overall goal through the following objectives (summarized in the program theory of change):

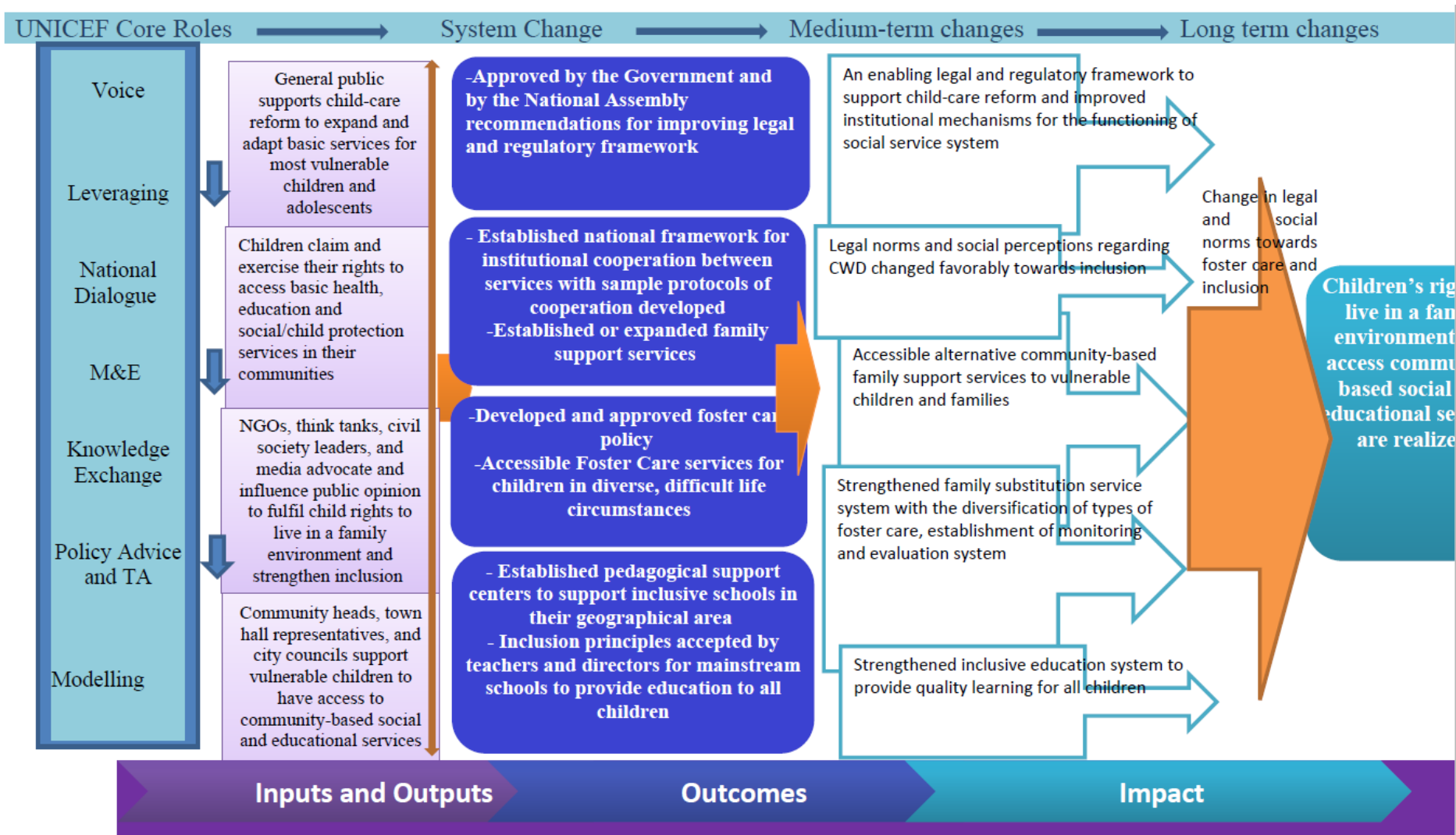
- Institutional mechanisms for the functioning of social service system are improved.
- Alternative community-based family support services are accessible to vulnerable children and families.
- Family substitution service system is strengthened with the diversification of types of foster care establishment of monitoring and evaluation system.
- Inclusive Education System is strengthened to provide quality learning for all children through set up of pedagogical psychological support centres and mainstream school trainings.
- An enabling legal and regulatory framework is established to support childcare reform.

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<sup>2</sup> Toward Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Children: Expanding Alternative Care, Family Support and Inclusive Education Services as Part of Child Care Reform

– Legal norms and social perceptions regarding children with disabilities have changed favourably towards inclusion.

Below is a visualisation of that theory of change which targeted the deinstitutionalisation of children, including children with disabilities, through an integrated approach i.e. combining interventions in both social service reforms and inclusive education interventions. However, it is important to note that it was project-based and covered the period before 2017.



No other theory of change was identified. Therefore, a reconstruction of the main elements of theory of change (relevant as of 2017) was made as part of this evaluability assessment process during the workshop with relevant stakeholders, including UNICEF CO Armenia.

The stakeholders validated that the **vision** of a successful childcare reform and deinstitutionalisation is that children live in a family environment and have access to community-based social and educational services.

The path to change is seen to start with creating enabling environment through establishing adequate legislative and regulatory network and creating quality standards to ensure services are tailored, available along the whole continuum of needs, affordable and accessible for children and their families.

**System changes** are seen as necessary in terms of national framework for institutional cooperation and expanded family support services, which requires integrated approach including educational and social services ensuring the availability of foster care policy giving way to accessible foster services for children at risk.

Expected **medium-term changes** include strengthened services for prevention and reintegration; improved quality of family-support services in the community as well as family-substitute services (foster care, extended family services, etc.); strengthened inclusive education for every child.

**The assumptions** seem to be that if the services are of high quality (high quality is recognised in terms of being need-tailored, affordable, and accessible), families will feel supported and able to provide adequate care for their children with no need to be placed in formal care. Furthermore, high quality of reintegration services will successfully bring children back to their biological families and ensure that they stay there. The core assumption is that if the provision of services is ensured to serve the individual needs of every child, then the childcare reform will positively affect the deinstitutionalisation of children with disabilities, too.

**The risks** behind the process are related to the lack of sufficiently individualised assessment of the risks and the reasons for family separation. In case the assessment is too generalised and does not reflect the specific needs of each family, the prevention services will not work.

Below is a visualisation of the theory of change, reconstructed during the workshop with national stakeholders.

System Change	Medium term change	Long term changes	Vision
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- Approved by the Government and by the National Assembly recommendations for improving legal and regulatory framework
- Introducing quality standards to ensure services are tailored, available along the whole continuum of needs, affordable and accessible

- Established national framework for institutional cooperation between services with sample protocols of cooperation developed
- Established or expanded family support services

- Developed and approved foster care policy
- Accessible Foster Care services for children in diverse, difficult life circumstances

- Established pedagogical support centres to support inclusive schools in their geographical area
- Inclusion principles accepted by teachers and directors for mainstream schools to provide education to all children

An enabling legal and regulatory framework to support child-care reform and improved institutional mechanisms for the functioning of social service system.

Legal norms and social perceptions regarding CWD changed favourably towards inclusion.

Accessible high-quality alternative community-based family support services to vulnerable children and families.

Strengthened family substitution service system with the diversification of types of foster care, establishment of monitoring and evaluation system.

Strengthened inclusive education system to provide quality learning for all children.

Strengthening the service environment towards prevention of future institutionalisation.

Supporting reintegration of children in formal care back into their biological families.

Change in legal and social norms towards foster care and inclusion

**Children's rights to live in a family environment access community based social educational services are realized**

When looking at the above theory of change in the context of the Technical guidance<sup>3</sup> toward DI for children with disabilities, it seems that the theory of change in Armenia corresponds to the key elements in the child ecology to support family and community-based living. However, it seems that services targeting the development of children with disabilities in particular are not sufficiently explicitly articulated, such as services specifically aiming at rehabilitation, development of social competences, therapeutic and psychological services, etc. along with community awareness raising interventions.

### **3. Evaluability “in-practice”**

#### **3.1. M&E frameworks/tools**

Two national programs ‘Programme to Assure the Right of the Child to Live in a Family and Have Harmonious Development 2020-2023 and National Child Protection Strategy 2017-2021<sup>4</sup> refer to deinstitutionalization as well as children with disabilities separately. There is no specific focus on children with disabilities in residential institutions.

Both programs do not have a comprehensive framework of objectives, expected outcomes and indicators related to deinstitutionalization except for reintegrating at least 50% of the children living in residential institutions. Both programs do not refer to preliminary analysis on the needs of the children in institutions.

A rapid assessment on available data on children with disabilities was done by UNICEF in 2019<sup>5</sup>. It indicates that a small share of children with disabilities live in residential institutions. Still, the number of CWD living in institutions remains stable over the years of 2012-2017.

The Programme of the Government of Armenia 2017-2022 and 2019 declared closing down all institutions for children by developing alternative care. However, no clear action plan was identified to accompany those programs with specific objectives and indicators.

Data is available in the different national and project documents, but they are collected for the reporting purposes; nor are they collected regularly and for all indicators.

Each of the responsible ministries has their own administrative data, but there is no regulation to support the reciprocal exchange of information, there is no statistical evidence of how many children with the status of “disabled child” are going to school or kindergarten, or how many of them have special educational needs, how many are receiving home care, or hospital care, or are in special schools<sup>6</sup>. Most importantly, there is no data or information on major barriers these children are facing in their regular life and what the main obstacles for their full social inclusion are.

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<sup>3</sup> Deinstitutionalisation of children with disabilities: Technical guidance for UNICEF engagement in national reform efforts, 2019, Helen Jones.

<sup>4</sup> Programme to Assure the Right of the Child to Live in a Family and Have Harmonious Development 2020-2023 and National Child Protection Strategy 2017-2021

<sup>5</sup> Data gap analysis availability and cross-sectoral exchange of data on children with disabilities in Armenia

<sup>6</sup> There is no such regulation framework among the ministries, but all ministries provide administrative statistical information to the National Statistical Service of RA.

There is data disaggregated by disability status on children receiving care in residential institutions, however, there is no summary statistics on children with disabilities with distribution of care and support they receive.

The main sources of official data on children with disabilities are periodical publications of the National Statistical Service of RA: “Social Situation of Armenia”<sup>7</sup>, “Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia”, and “Annual Statistical Yearbook”, as well as “Health Statistical Yearbook” of the Ministry of Health. National Statistical Service of RA is in the process of developing the framework for collecting data for Sustainable Development Goals, which is not finalized yet. The data published by NSS RA is collected directly from education settings, health settings, care institutions and is also received from the State Health Agency, the State Agency for Medical-Social Examination (MSEA), and the National Centre for Education Technologies (NCET) of MOES.

#### 4. Institutional context

The assessment identifies the key stakeholders at the different levels (national, international, and local (NGO s and service providers) involved in the process of deinstitutionalisation in the country.

Type	List	Role in DI child care reforms	Stake in evaluation
<b>National level key stakeholders</b>	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA)  Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)  Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development (MoTAD)	The MoLSA initiate and implement social policy and strategic reforms of its social protection systems.  The MoES implement national education policy including inclusive education.  The MoTAD implement territorial policy and self-governance.	Following the guidelines of the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) of the Republic of Armenia (RoA) initiated strategic reforms of its social protection systems, more specifically social services- through introduction of Integrated Social Services Systems.
<b>International organisations</b>	USAID UNICEF Save the Children World Vision Bridge of Hope	USAID and UNICEF support the government’s child-care reform agenda. UNICEF was engaged with the government in a discussion towards provision of family-type alternative services and foster care system development.	UNICEF and USAID serve as the main locomotive in support of the government’s child-care reform agenda.

##### 4.1. Exploring evaluation design options with the CAEM tool

Within the evaluation design workshop organized by UNICEF CO and RO in November 2021, the key national stakeholders’ preferences were explored in terms of goals, objectives and requirements for the future evaluation. The objective was to engage stakeholders in the selection of a range of evaluation questions and goals while showing their direct relevance and applicability to the methodological choices. The stakeholders were invited to take part in a series of polls<sup>8</sup> enhancing the understanding of the evaluation design process through

<sup>7</sup> [www.armstat.am](http://www.armstat.am)

<sup>8</sup> The polling questions were about different objects and entities (goals, questions, requirements)

application of the CAEM tool (Choosing Appropriate Evaluation Methods). Using this approach in the evaluability assessment has meant that stakeholders have been able to express:

- their preferences in terms of evaluation questions to be answered by the evaluation;
- their wishes and desires for the evaluation, or what goals they would like the evaluation to achieve; and
- their knowledge of the likely conditions under which the evaluation will be implemented; thus indirectly providing the facilitator with a picture of the methodologies that are more likely to be feasible in each country context

The information collected in the polls has been assigned numerical values to allow for the calculation of average responses (See the table below).

		Normalised scores					
POLLS		Bulgaria	Georgia	Armenia	Serbia	Montenegro	ALL
<b>Other goals / preferences / abilities</b>	1 - Understanding and explaining outcomes	1.03	1.01	1.05	1.08	0.99	1.03
	2 - Participation	1.00	1.01	1.02	1.04	1.07	1.03
	3 - Rigorous Evidence	1.01	1.11	1.06	0.95	0.95	1.01
	4 - Complexity, Networks, and Systems	0.99	1.00	0.94	0.91	0.95	0.96
	5 - Other	0.97	0.85	0.93	1.01	1.03	0.96
<b>Evaluation questions</b>	6 - Net effect and beyond	0.98	1.17	1.03	1.11	0.98	1.05
	7 - How and Why	1.03	1.08	1.11	0.95	1.06	1.05
	8 - Supporting and explanatory factors	1.00	1.04	0.96	0.95	0.98	0.99
	9a - Relevance	0.97	0.97	1.08	0.97	1.07	1.01
	9b - Efficiency	0.96	1.02	1.01	1.02	0.86	0.97
	10 - Networks and Partnerships	1.05	0.72	0.81	1.02	1.06	0.93
<b>Methodological Requirements</b>	11 - Theory of Change	1.12	1.11	1.21	1.04	1.15	1.13
	12 - Participation	1.10	1.09	1.21	1.24	1.19	1.17
	13 - Experiments	0.82	0.78	0.69	0.72	0.68	0.74
	14 - Data availability	0.95	1.01	0.89	1.01	1.00	0.97

Armenia’s preferences in terms of questions concentrate on the “how & why” and “relevance” groups, and to a lesser extent on the “net effect and beyond” group. The question “What is the net impact of the program (reform)?” was the most favoured, but almost all the questions in the how and why group have very high scores. The key question for relevance is “What are the primary goals or outcomes of the reform from the perspective of different stakeholders?”. In other groups, the questions “What factors were necessary and / or sufficient for the intervention (reform) to work?” and “What are the primary goals or outcomes of the reform from the perspective of different stakeholders?” have very high scores.

In terms of additional goals for a prospective evaluation, the preferred groups are the “understanding and explaining outcomes” and “rigorous evidence”. The single item with the highest preferences is “Investigating what factors are necessary and / or sufficient for the intervention to produce results” but also “Ensure that the results obtained are credible, reliable, and face a wide range of stakeholder criticism / challenges” and “Assess whether the factual data of the assessment are reliable / conclusive as a basis for the results obtained, measure the level of reliability of the conclusions reached” gather high favour.

In terms of requirements, Armenia seems relatively confident that it will be able to implement ToC and participatory designs. In general, the most problems are envisaged with requirements for experimental and non-experimental methods, although much is uncertain at this stage.

Having explored the stakeholders’ preferences for evaluation questions, goals and methodological requirements, the CAEM tool shows what evaluation methods are best to reconcile these preferences with the requirements. The image below represents the summary results as they are returned by the CAEM tool. In the first two lines, the greener the cell, the higher the ability of the corresponding methodology to answer the preferred questions and achieve the preferred goals. In the third line, the greener the cell, the more feasible the corresponding method is likely to be on the basis of the information input by the user. The last two rows are represent, respectively, the number of essential requirements (to apply the corresponding method) that the user has indicated they cannot meet (fifth line); and that they don’t know if they can meet (fourth line). The former gives the user an idea of how far they are from being able to implement the method; and the latter of how much information still needs to be gathered to know more about the former.

The detailed CAEM tool analysis does not return super clear pathways, although the clearest seem to be connected with Participatory Systems Mapping, Soft Systems Modelling, and Realist Evaluation (to a lesser extent to Process Tracing and Causal Loops Diagram).

SUMMARY RESULTS - ALL STAGES	RCT	Difference-	Statistical	Instrument	Outcome	Most	Soft	Causal Loop	PSM	BBN	ABM (Agent	Realist	QCA	Process	Contribution
	(Randomised Contol Trial)	in- Difference	Matching	al Variables (RDD)	Mapping	Significant Change	Systems Modelling	Diagram	(Participato ry Systems Mapping)	(Bayesian Belief Networks)	Based Modelling)	Evaluation	(Qualitative Comparative Analysis)	Tracing/ Bayesian Updating	Analysis
Stage 1: Which Method is Best Suited to Answering My Key Evaluation Question(s)?	55/100	50/100	45/100	50/100	45/100	65/100	55/100	50/100	65/100	65/100	70/100	60/100	55/100	60/100	50/100
Stage 2: Which method is most able to address my other interests?	54/100	51/100	52/100	41/100	66/100	61/100	80/100	70/100	75/100	58/100	78/100	73/100	60/100	68/100	66/100
Stage 3B: Which Methods are most likely to be feasible at this stage?	20/100	24/100	22/100	28/100	69/100	1	82/100	69/100	72/100	64/100	47/100	80/100	57/100	63/100	78/100
Stage 3A: Which Method has the fewest essential methodological requirements that I don't know if they can be met by my evaluation / intervention? (Which method is most feasible to use?)	2	4	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
Stage 3: Which Method has the fewest essential methodological requirements that cannot be met by my evaluation / intervention? (Which method is most feasible to use?)	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Based on the CAEM analysis of national stakeholders' preferences, the main OECD DAC criteria<sup>9</sup> in which the national stakeholders seem to be interested are presented below:

Evaluation areas and questions	Armenia
<b>Effectiveness</b>	
How, under what circumstances, and why did the DI reforms generate the desired outcome(s) <sup>10</sup> ?	x
How did the DI reforms (and other factors) contribute to the outcome <sup>11</sup> ?	x
Which mechanism(s) <sup>12</sup> generated the desired outcome(s) <sup>13</sup> ?	x
What did the DI reforms achieve that was either intended or unintended?	
What changes, if any, did the DI reforms have on the behaviour, attitudes and thinking of stakeholders?	
What are the factors enabling (necessary and/or sufficient) for the DI reforms to give result <sup>14</sup> s at different levels?	x
Have all groups of children targeted by the DI reforms actually been reached by it (i.e. has anyone been excluded)?	
What was the process / mechanism <sup>15</sup> by which the DI reforms led to or contributed to outcomes?	x
<b>Impact</b>	
What difference did the DI reforms make to the children in alternative care at the time of the reform, and under what circumstances? Since the reforms have taken place, what has been the impact on children passing through the new services? What challenges remain?	x
How and why did the DI reforms make a difference in terms of strengthening/establishing prevention services and family-based alternative care services, if any? What challenges remain?	x
How, why, in what way did the DI reforms generate sustained changes in services, financing mechanisms, legal frameworks and policies?	x
How, why, and in what way did the reforms contribute to strengthening the social service workforce, in particular the social work profession?	x
What was the additional/net change caused by the DI reforms?	
How much of the observed outcome(s) can be attributed to the DI reforms?	
<b>Coherence</b>	
What key DI reforms partners can influence the DI reform implementation, performance and sustainability?	
Who were the key influencers to achieve the needed changes? Who needs to be influenced?	
What is the relative importance of a particular institutional actor or individual in a network (for example, a sector, institution, community)?	
What characterizes the links and the relationships among these individuals and institutions/organisations and how do they affect the network as a whole?	
How are individuals, groups, or other entities connected within a specified network? And how are these connections and entities working to achieve change (or resist change)?	
<b>Relevance</b>	

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> By 'outcome' it is intended to look at the national objective of the reform, as well as the normative outcome described in the previous section, which focuses on system wide reforms in line with the UN Guidelines on the Use and Conditions of Alternative Care for Children. Section 7 has more details.

<sup>11</sup> As above.

<sup>12</sup> The term "mechanism" (also "generative mechanism") refers to the cognitive or emotional reasoning of members of the target group responding to the resource, opportunity or constraint provided by the programme, Pawson R, Tilley N. An introduction to scientific realist evaluation: Sage; 1997

<sup>13</sup> See footnote 14.

<sup>14</sup> See footnote 14

<sup>15</sup> ibid

What services are needed? How are they best delivered?	x
What are the primary objectives or outcomes of the DI reforms from the perspective of different stakeholders?	x
Which outcomes of the DI intervention(s) being evaluated do children and families, professionals and decision makers consider to be the most important?	x
Efficiency <sup>16</sup>	
Does efficiency vary across contexts or subgroups? If so, by how much and for which groups?	x
What is the DI reforms effect in relation to its cost?	x
Are the DI reforms efficient to run compared to other similar interventions?	
<b>Retrospectively<sup>17</sup>:</b> What resources (national, EU, other donors) were available to carry out DI? What have been the transition costs, covered by whom and for how long? How, what and how much resources have been ring forced and reallocated/ transferred from closing down institutions (system) to a system based on diversified family and community-based services and inclusive education, including between sectors? <b>Now and future:</b> How are services financed? What are the costs of the new services (versus institutional care) and what are the costs for the transformed system overall versus the one reliant on institutional care?	x

The above preferences and suggested methodological approaches will be incorporated in the Terms of reference of the prospective multi-country evaluation to reflect the country-specific needs.

## 5. Annexes

### 5.1. Document library<sup>18</sup> of documentation on policy, evaluations, studies and research on deinstitutionalisation in the country

- Armenia\_FINAL REPORT\_Mid-term\_Evaluation\_Social Inclusion\_with Annexes
- Assure the Right of a Child to Live in Family and Harmonious Development\_ googletranslated
- Commitments under the Convention of the rights of the child-the state of fulfilment by Armenia. Ad Hoc public report
- Core Diagnostic of the Social Protection System in Armenia
- Data gap analysis availability and cross-sectoral exchange of data on children with disabilities in Armenia
- Government Programme for 2017-2022
- National Child Protection Strategy and Action Plan for 2017-2021\_ googletranslated
- SWD (2020) The EU Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance ('GSP+') assessment of Armenia covering the period 2018 – 2019, Joint Report to the European Parliament and the Council
- Assessment of service needs of children with disabilities in special residential schools (in Armenian only)
- Assessment of day care for children in difficult situation
- Deinstitutionalisation of children with disabilities: Technical guidance for UNICEF engagement in national reform efforts, 2019, Helen Jones.
- UNICEF (2020), Evaluation of National Policy and Programmes for Children with Disabilities in Armenia

<sup>16</sup> Measured through efficiency analysis.

<sup>17</sup> These sets of questions were added by the RO CP section.

<sup>18</sup> The documents above can be provided by UNICEF CO at request

- UNICEF (2018), Evaluation of Toward Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Children: Expanding Alternative Care, Family Support and Inclusive Education Services as Part of Child Care Reform Project
- UNICEF (2018) Situation Analysis on the Status of Children's and Women's Rights in Armenia
- UNICEF (2015) Evaluation of family support services and stakeholders contribution to related services/systems

### 5.3. Evaluation Design Workshop Armenia (24 Nov 2021) - workshop notes

Below are notes from the workshop part on deep dive into the country context and reconstructing/reaffirming the theory of change:

#### **Overview of key country milestones within 3 main periods:**

- **2005-2010:**
  - ✓ *Approval of Amendments to the Family code with inclusions on foster care*
  - ✓ *National Commission on Child Rights Protection established*
  - ✓ *Early steps towards closure of specialised schools and institutions*
- **2010-2017:**
  - ✓ *Reform of social protection systems - intensive process of developing integrated social services following the guidelines of UNICEF and the Council of Europe to align, regulate and better streamline reform processes.*
  - ✓ *Acceleration of childcare system reforms with explicit guidance on Inclusive Education.*
- **2017-2021:**
  - ✓ *Elaboration of a package of targeted strategic policy documents to keep children in their biological families and in a family environment rather than in large institutions (2020-2023 Comprehensive Program and Action Plan on Fulfillment of the Right to Live in a Family and Harmonious Development of the Child -family reunion, alternative care service network, specialized services for children with disabilities, improved system of guardianship, enhanced foster family care...)*

#### **General Comments by Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs:**

- *More than 25 legal documents are to be amended in a large-scale review of the country's legal framework. These reviews are taking place in cooperation with UNICEF and CSOs also.*
- *DI has reached an important stage, with reforms and research in child rights protection leading to a reduction in the number of children in formal care - 555 children are currently in institutions of whom 458 are children with disabilities.*

- *In 2020, there was increased placement of children in foster care linked to COVID and other factors.*
- *However, the no. of children in specialized schools has not decreased given problems with adoption and foster care. 90% of children in specialized care have health issues - mental and functional impairments. Armenia is working with UNICEF to assess these health needs to better map services to address the needs of these children as many challenges persist regarding family reunification. The number of children placed in specialized foster families still remains low and re-institutionalization can be a risk in light of general unwillingness/inability/unpreparedness to adopt children with disability.*
- *Another area where no specific progress has been made relates to the deinstitutionalization of children who are now 18+, including persons with disabilities, who are still living in formal care. This is a known problem, and it has been difficult to find alternatives, but their integration and active participation in active life remain a priority for the Government.*
- *The change in mentality regarding DI observed 20 years ago has not been accompanied by a change in methodology and tools to improve results in DI and the latter are needed to drive the reforms in place.*
- *There is also a stark need to investigate the quality of services offered with targeted budgeting to avoid re-institutionalization and focus also on services for children in daycare centers.*
- *3 yrs. ago the Government moved to provide improved services through the **personal assistant service** which gives efficient assistance to children with disabilities through individual plans to develop and improve their physical condition and also to other children in difficult life situations to help with their socialization and reintegration. The Government is working now to identify core services necessary for children and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is currently preparing key activities to be implemented.*

***Deep dive into country specifics:***

***Question to participants on this Vision:*** “Children’s rights to live in a family environment with access to community based social educational services are realized.”

***Is this projected change identified in 2014 still relevant today and what were the levels of change expected to achieve this?***

***Group one***

- *Relevant but incomplete - The destination (final change projected) does define the whole path in terms of what was agreed back then and the final goal for children. It is however quite insufficient to effect desired change.*
- *There is no mention of strengthening **the environment** or **preventing future institutionalization** - little consideration previously given to those two elements for the desired change. The focus at that time was: public support > DI > child in family environment but not*

necessarily considering the important role of an **enabling environment with emphasis on prevention**.

**Group two**

- *Relevant but incomplete - Needs to be re-worked/re-tweaked.*
- ***Prevention** is key and needs to be emphasized in this change process as well as the need for **family reunification** (right to live in their family).*
- *Prevention has become an important pillar and being looked at through different lenses. In the past, funds were allocated to prevention AFTER institutions were closed and public funding was only given to certain organizations for prevention.*
- ***Inclusive education** is also a key element*
- *More emphasis on **access to quality services** – no long-lasting changes are possible if the service component is weak, and in some cases, inexistent.*
- *The services offered are too general in nature and not sufficiently specialized – they need to be specific, affordable and accessible to ensure social inclusion (health, education and social services).*
- *More **personal assistance to support and strengthen families** will also eliminate many obstacles and get help to where it is most needed. Some families even see formal institutional care as a solution because they have no alternative and are left alone to deal with difficult situations.*

**Availability of data to measure change:**

- *Routine monitoring indicators – some available in disaggregated format in MANUK, the national information system used in child case management.*
- *A new system is being designed and will be ready in 2022*
- *Proper disaggregated data on children with disabilities (age, gender, type of disability...) is not readily available.*

**5.3. List of participants**

No	Name of the participant	Position	Organization/ Institution
1	Tatevik Stepanyan	Deputy Minister	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
2	Anahit Hovhannisyan	Senior Specialist, Child Protection Unit	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
3	Lilit Baghdasaryan	Specialist, Child Protection Unit	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
4	Robert Stepanyan	Head of Department on Project Development and Monitoring	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports
5	Anahit Svajyan	Director	Republican Pedagogical-Psychological Center

<b>6</b>	Hasmik Ohanyan	Specialist	Republican Pedagogical-Psychological Center
<b>7</b>	Iveta Shahbazyan	Head of Child Rights Unit	Human Rights Defender's Office
<b>8</b>	Monica Sargsyan	Head of Unit for Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Human Rights Defender's Office
<b>9</b>	Marine Avagyan	Assistant to Ombudsperson	Human Rights Defender's Office
<b>10</b>	Susanna Tadevosyan	President	"Bridge of Hope" NGO
<b>11</b>	Marina Parazyan	Founding and Managing Director	Source Foundation
<b>12</b>	Mira Antonyan	Executive Director / President	FAR children center / Armenian Association of Social Workers
<b>13</b>	Aida Muradyan	Child Protection Specialist	World Vision Armenia INGO
<b>14</b>	Anna Safaryan	Coordinator, Community Level Access to Social Services (CLASS) Program	Child Development Foundation (CDF)/ World Vision Armenia INGO
<b>15</b>	Hasmik Ghukasyan	Specialist/Coordinator, Data 4 Impact Project	USAID Armenia