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**SITE VISIT TO THE DISPLACED CHILDREN AND ORPHANS
FUND PROGRAM, *STAKEHOLDERS ACTING TOGETHER
FOR STRENGTHENED CHILD PROTECTION IN ARMENIA***

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DISPLACED CHILDREN AND ORPHANS FUND PROGRAM,
STAKEHOLDERS ACTING TOGETHER FOR STRENGTHENED CHILD
PROTECTION IN ARMENIA**

June 28 – July 5, 2012

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Acronyms

ADP	Area Development Program
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CP	child protection
DCOF	Displaced Children and Orphans Fund
DI	Deinstitutionalization componenet
EU	European Union
GOA	Government of Armenia
GTC	Guardianship and Trusteeship Committees
NGO	nongovernmental organization
RFA	request for Application
UN	United Nations
USAID	U.S. Agency for Internationa Development
WV	World Vision

Map



The Stakeholders Acting Together for Strengthened Child Protection in Armenia project implemented the same activities in all 10 ADPs. In 4 out of 10 ADPs in addition the Deinstitutionalization component (DI) implemented in the Child Care Residential Institutions. Please see below the list of ADPs:

1. Alverdi ADP
2. Stepanavan ADP
3. Tavush ADP (Ijevan) + DI component
4. Gyumri ADP +DI component
5. Talin ADP
6. Gavar ADP
7. Vardenis ADP
8. Yervan ADP +DI component
9. Sisian ADP+ DI component
10. Kapan ADP +DI component

Site Visit Purpose

From June 28 – July 5, 2012, Lynne Schaberg conducted a site visit to World Vision's *Stakeholders Acting Together for Strengthened Child Protection in Armenia project*, which was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development's Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF). The goals of this assessment trip included:

1. Developing a clear understanding of the strengths and challenges of project implementation,
2. Gaining a better understanding of the facilitating factors and challenges of effective communication between World Vision (WV) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID),

This was the first DCOF assessment of the program since its inception two years prior. During this six-day trip to Armenia, Ms. Schaberg was able to meet with USAID mission representatives, WV project staff, and partners in order to carry-out the assessment that is presented in this report. Attachment #1 includes the site visit Scope of Work and Attachment #2, the site visit itinerary.

Program Background

In January 2010, USAID's Displaced Children and Orphans Fund issued a Request for Application (RFA) calling for project proposals in the area of strengthening systems of child protection. World Vision (WV) was one of four nongovernmental organizations (NGO) that received an award from DCOF through the RFA process. The three-year project period extends from August 1, 2010 to July 31, 2013, at a total cost of \$2.5 million USD. The World Vision program has three key objectives:

1. Strengthen the national monitoring system for child protection,
2. Strengthen the child protection system at the regional level, and
3. Strengthen community-level capacity for child protection.

Armenian Country Context

The Armenian economy is slowly recovering from a downturn of over 14 percent in 2009 due to the global economic crisis, which has deteriorated the purchasing power of the population and is most negatively affecting those below or not far above the poverty line. Reforms of the child protection system began in 2001, with the objective to improve the system inherited after the collapse of the Soviet Union. A focus of the reforms has been to ensure the protection of children in difficult situations and the creation of a three-tiered child protection system linking the national, regional, and local authorities. However, a considerable impediment to achieving these goals is the high level of perceived corruption in Armenia. The United Nations Development Program in Armenia views corruption as "a serious challenge to Armenia's development." In 2011, Armenia received a 2.6 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (0 =

highly corrupt, 10 = very clean). This rating was corroborated by anecdotal reports from partners met during the DCOF trip. They frequently mentioned corruption as one of the primary reasons that the Government of Armenia is not more committed to substantively reforming the child protection system.

World Vision Staff in Armenia

The WV Armenia staff was extremely gracious and eager to strengthen cooperation and communication between USAID and WV. The staff is very dedicated and doing the best they can to improve the situation for vulnerable children in Armenia. Yeva Avakyan from WV/Washington was also present in Armenia during the site visit and her insights and expertise were much appreciated.

Programmatic Areas of Success

Two areas of project activity are making a significant contribution toward improving the child protection system in Armenia:

- Support to the Legal Sector Regarding Child Protection Issues
- Training Community-Based Social Workers

Support to the Legal Sector Regarding Child Protection Issues

In close coordination with the Republic of Armenia's Judicial School, WV has provided expert legal training to the 18 judges and 24 judicial associates that focus on minors within the judicial system. Topics used in years 1 & 2 were selected to improve the participants' understanding of typical motives underlying crimes by minors, promote a more sophisticated and appropriate response to minors, identify gaps in the current legislation, and elicit discussions on international practices and norms, e.g., conventions, that have been ratified by the Government of Armenia (GOA) that pertain to minors.

During the trainings, the judicial participants discussed age-appropriate punishment as well as alternative and restorative mechanisms for ensuring the rehabilitation, correction, and long-term well-being of minor defendants. This process helped to uncover gaps and instances of inconsistency in how cases had been adjudicated and led to the judges' request for a roundtable discussion that would bring together experts and practitioners in the child protection (CP) field to discuss the judges' findings and proposed solutions. The GOA is currently revising the Criminal Code dealing with minors and thus the judges' ultimate goal is to provide a list of the legislative proposals to the revision process with the intention that they be incorporated into the new criminal codes.

As examples of longer-term impact, the trainings developed by WV have been made into a module and incorporated into the Judicial School curriculum for the training of all new judges. A Judicial School representative stated that the WV module is the most "professionally and

insightfully” developed among all of the Judicial School modules. Additionally, WV is working toward the incorporation of the module into the curriculum of the Yerevan State University Law Department, the pre-eminent law school in Armenia.

Training Community-Based Social Workers

Prior to the WV project, there were few to no social work services available in most communities in Armenia. A key goal of the project, therefore, was to train members of community-based organizations to be social workers, while simultaneously lobbying the GOA to budget and support WV’s “one paid social worker in every community” initiative. To prepare the workforce for such an initiative, WV worked with Yerevan State University to develop a one-year on-line training course that, upon completion and in conjunction with supervision from experienced WV social workers, resulted in state-recognized certification as a social worker. In total, the project currently supports 162 social workers in as many communities, 100 of whom have completed the certification process. Some of the primary functions of the social workers include the identification of at-risk children, assessment, and monitoring using a case management approach, referral to GOA and NGO provided services, and provision of quality consultations for both the child and family members. Approximately 80 of the social workers are members of the GOA’s community level child protection entities, the Guardianship and Trusteeship Committees (GTCs). This effort has resulted in substantively strengthening the capacity within the community level structure of Armenia’s three-tier child protection system.

During the course of the site visit, it was evident that the placement of the social workers is generating both top down and bottom up appreciation of, and demand for, permanent community social workers. However, while officially recognized as government social workers, the salaries of the 162 individuals are largely paid for by the DCOF project. WV efforts to ensure that the social workers are a permanent part of the state structure were dealt a set-back when the minister of Labor and Social Issues, who had a favorable attitude toward supporting the social workers, was replaced following the Parliamentary elections of April 2012. No further progress has been made on this issue at the National level. However, WV is negotiating with the local governments regarding a municipal budget contribution to the salary of the social worker in their community. Although a modest beginning, the partial salaries of 10 social workers are now covered from community budgets. WV will continue to seek coverage for the salaries in this manner.

Programmatic Areas of Concern

The issues described below are highlighted because they elucidate perceived overarching challenges with WV’s project implementation approach, as well as the lack of a) alternative CP services in Armenia, b) level of commitment from the GOA, and c) challenges with leadership and collaboration from among the primary CP actors, which in total, limits the likelihood that substantive reform of the CP sector will occur in Armenia within the near term.

Parental Skills Classes

WV offers parental skills classes to parents and caregivers from vulnerable families. The goal of the classes is to inform the caregivers about the developmental needs and rights of their children and to counteract the proclivity of vulnerable families to place their children in State or private institutions. Skills classes are a common and often useful activity in programs working to improve the child protection system. However, the parental class observed in Yerevan during the site visit was disturbing in two ways: 1) the method used was non interactive with highly abstract rather than practical teaching, e.g., the use of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and 2) the attire and palpable tension of the participants suggested that they were in attendance for reasons other than genuine interest in the topic. This perception was confirmed by the WV staff who stated that it was extremely difficult to garner caregiver class participation. Attendance was achieved by paying for transportation costs and offering snacks and lunch. This situation gave the impression of a possible co-dependent relationship between WV with their beneficiaries. WV seeks attendance for their activities and the beneficiaries' desire continued material support from WV. This pattern was observed in home visits to two households of parenting class participants where there were direct requests by the beneficiaries for additional material support from WV. WV reports that unlike the group in Yerevan, the project's parenting skills classes held in other regions of Armenia are very popular with robust participation.

Humanitarian Assistance vs. Development

Through discussion, WV agreed to address DCOF suggestions regarding the parenting classes and is making substantive changes to the class format. However, DCOF's main concern is that WV too often acts as a direct service provider rather than as a facilitator working to strengthen the overall CP system

DCOF understands the difficulty of adopting a facilitator approach in a country like Armenia whose government offers so few services. But as observed in many countries worldwide, as long as NGOs continue to provide the services that should be the government's responsibility, governments are typically content to allow them to do so, and the citizens 1) develop dependent relationships with the NGOs, and 2) do not become empowered enough to lobby their governments for change. Given that Armenia in many respects is a highly developed country and has potential access to considerable resources from the Armenian Diaspora, the possibility of executing programs from a completely development rather than humanitarian assistance approach is considerable.

Deinstitutionalization

Upon visiting Armenia, it is apparent that for the present moment, WV is fighting a losing battle in their effort to deinstitutionalize children. Although publically the GOA states their commitment to closing institutions, their actions do not support their words. A typical pattern is for the GOA, in collaboration with an NGO, to identify an institution for closure, conduct an assessment, and then "determine" that it is possible for only some of the children to be reintegrated with their families. This leaves the institution open and, because there are no gatekeeping mechanisms in place, it is possible for new children to be admitted, thus keeping the

institution in business. It is also true that, as in many Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), family vulnerability is exacerbated by the sizeable number of parents who migrate for work in Russia. Thus, it is true that in some cases it is not possible to reintegrate children within the family or extended family. Because there are few to no alternative services in place, e.g., foster care, group homes, the only possibility is for the child to remain in the institution. Thus, although it has been extremely beneficial for WV to demonstrate to the GOA that it is possible to successfully reintegrate institutionalized children, their efforts have had little to no positive overall net effect as the child protection system necessary to prevent institutionalization does not yet exist in Armenia. As in other CIS countries, the pressure to reform the CP system in Armenia may rest with the European Union. And although both the UN and the EU express concern about the degree of institutionalization in Armenia, as yet, there is minimal action in place that will definitely require the GOA to make substantive and permanent changes.

Lack of Leadership and Cooperation among Primary Child Protection Actors

In DCOF's experience, deinstitutionalization in a country is typically brought about because there are one or two NGOs that prioritize deinstitutionalization within their portfolio and work with the government toward this end. This is not an easy or "popular" role as typically governments are quite resistant to undertake such challenging reforms. Unfortunately, there is no lead agency comprehensively taking on the issue of deinstitutionalization in Armenia although there are three influential organizations working in the child protection sector: UNICEF, Save the Children, and WV. This is not to say that each organization is not working to improve the CP system, because they are. But rather, that none of the three organizations have taken deinstitutionalization as their primary issue and are thus consistently and forcefully putting pressure on the GOA to undertake country-wide deinstitutionalization. Neither are any of the three groups substantively piloting all the necessary reforms to achieve deinstitutionalization in a single geographic area, e.g., gate keeping, developing alternative services, case management, etc. In a recent effort, WV and UNICEF are collaborating on work related to the deinstitutionalization of children with disabilities; there is no significant collaboration between Save the Children and WV. An additional impediment to substantive change is the fact that all three groups appear to be advocating for different child protection reforms. The GOA welcomes the assistance of all three groups, yet, unlike the Government of Georgia's example, does not bring them together to implement GOA-sponsored comprehensive reform including commitment to concrete targets.

Recommendations

In a separate communication, five issues have been provided to DCOF staff as recommendations for the writing of future RFAs and overall considerations for improving DCOF programs. No recommendations are offered in this report for WV because the recommendations that came out of the site visit: 1) were adopted during the site visit (parenting classes, domestic adoption, budget), 2) are not agreed to because of differences in the understanding of humanitarian vs. development assistance, or 3) are out of WV's control, (lack of GOA commitment and cooperation among the major CP organizations, etc.).

Attachment 1: Assessment Scope of Work

The primary goal of the DCOF assessment is to monitor project progress, achievements and challenges, vis-à-vis the original program description and current country context. It is primarily a technical visit and thus activities should be geared towards providing the USAID team with the technical information necessary to understand the evolution of the project, and what, if anything, can be done to improve the project or overcome any current obstacles. Site visits and meetings should be prioritized towards activities that demonstrate sustainable changes occurring at the level of the child protection system, e.g., amendments to the NCCP charter, training of social workers, facilitating effective interaction among the 3 level system (national, GTC, CPU), deinstitutionalization, etc. But as DCOF is not present in Armenia, we ask that WV work with USAID/Armenia to determine the most productive agenda. Specific activities ideally would include:

Meetings organized by World Vision:

1. Activities that will provide the team with a good understanding of the accomplishments and challenges of the 3 primary project objectives, e.g., (1) Strengthen the national monitoring system for child protection, (2) Strengthen the child protection system at the regional level, (3) Strengthen community-level capacity for child protection. If time allows and substantive interaction can take place, site visits would be conducted to the national, regional and community level to observe project activities.
2. Activity observation/discussions that will assist the team in better understanding the accomplishments and challenges encountered regarding:
 - progress on the development of the GOA's 2012-2016 Child Protection strategy and amending the NCCP charter,
 - placement and replacement prevention activities,
 - deinstitutionalization of children both within the WV project and the country as a whole,
 - capacity building and improved coordination among the GTCs, CPUs & CBOs,
 - training of judges and court personnel,
 - education of children on addressing CR violations,
 - children's mini projects,
 - parental skills classes.
3. Discussion with World Vision regarding:
 - plans for WV's increased budgetary spending,
 - any overlap between USAID's 'Stakeholder's' project and US State Department projects with World Vision in Armenia.

4. Meetings/discussions in which a visit from 'USAID/Washington' could be used to further the project's goals.

Meetings organized by USAID/Armenia:

1. Meeting with relevant stakeholders in Yerevan, engaged in assisting vulnerable children and the process of deinstitutionalization. This could include but not be limited to relevant technical officers from the GOA, UNICEF and Save the Children as determined by USAID/Armenia.
2. Meetings with relevant USAID/U.S. Embassy officials as determined by USAID/Armenia. As the DCOF assessment will take place over the July 4th holiday, this meeting perhaps needs to take place on July 2nd or 3rd?

Attachment 2: Tentative Itinerary for Donor Visit

Date	Location Organization name and where meeting will take place	Time From/To	Meetings/visits/people Name and title/role	Purpose of Activity Provide a clear description of why WV has scheduled this meeting and how it will assist USAID to understand the role of the organization in the project. Additional information could include any issues that USAID should raise at the meeting as well as background/challenges that USAID should be aware of before going into the meeting.	WV Staff Member(s) Note who will accompany the USAID team and/or participate in each meeting.
ARRIVAL Wed., June 27		4:20pm	Marriott-Armenia Hotel	Arrive from Moscow, Armavia - Flight 509 Globe Travel emergency contact number: (093) 700-111	
DAY 1 Thurs. June 28	USAID	09:15am – 10:00am	Stephen Brager, DHSRO Director and Ani Manukyan, DHSRO PMA, USAID	Orientation meeting/ Discussion of the work schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one from WV
	Departure from USAID to World Vision	10:10am			
	World Vision Armenia National Office	10:30 am– 11:30 am	Shaghik Mahrokhian, WV- A Operations Director	Meet with WV Armenia Senior Management Team and DCOF Project Team to review SOW and itinerary, including preliminary discussion of the project’s progress, achievements and challenges vis-à-vis the original program description and current country context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Lusine Simonyan, Project Coordinator • Artak Saghatelian, Project M&E Expert • Mary Galstyan, Project Assistant
	School in Yerevan* N85	12:00-12:45	Yerevan ADP staff, School Director	Mini-projects Observation in Schools*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Lusine Simonyan, Project Coordinator
		1:00- 2:00	lunch		
	Yerevan ADP	2:30- 3:30	Marina Hovhannisyan (ADP Manager); Zara Aslanyan (DCOF project point person); and DCOF-funded social workers and	Meeting with the staff who implement the project in Yerevan, including social workers working in communities with families with children at risk of being institutionalized and children already reunified with their parents, as well as those involved in the education of children and families about prevention and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Lusine Simonyan, Project Coordinator

			community mobilizers	response to child rights violations	
	Beneficiary family*	3:30-5:00	De-institutionalized children and family who has benefited from prevention activities funded by DCOF	Meet deinstitutionalized children and their families to assess the impact of program activities at the community level in preventing and responding to the institutionalization of orphans and other vulnerable children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Luisine Simonyan, Project Coordinator
DAY 2 Friday June 29	Tsakhkadzor facility* Tsakhkadzor	10:00-12:00	Judges involved in CP training	To observe the training and sensitization of Armenian judges, law clerks, and other court personnel in child protection issues at the national level in Yerevan*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager
	Yerevan	2:00 – 4:00	DI and prevention families parents/care givers	Observe parental skills training to assess the impact of program activities on beneficiaries and the viability of long-term changes at the household and community levels*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Luisine Simonyan, Project Coordinator
	Child Support Center	4:00- 5:30	Dr. Mira Antonyan, CSCF Director and Child Protection Expert who serves as a Social Work Specialist for the DCOF Project	Meet to discuss deinstitutionalization of children and broader context of project activities, including its long-term impact and the conditions necessary at all levels of the CP system to sustainably improve children’s well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Luisine Simonyan, Project Coordinator
DAY 3 Sat. June 30	World Vision Armenia National Office	10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Yeva Avakyan, WV-US Gender Advisor; Shaghik Mahrokhian, WV-A Operations Director; and Kristine (“Tina”) Ter-Abrahamyan, Senior DME Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss DCOF’s observations over previous 2 days with follow-up about project’s progress, achievements and challenges vis-à-vis the original program description and current country context. In specific, review DCOF’s SOW with regards to the aspects listed under #2 for meetings organized by World Vision. • Conduct a data quality assessment (DQA) to review WV data collection process on the 3 required indicators (# of people served, # trained, and # of organizations strengthened) • Discuss plans for WV’s increased budgetary spending • Discuss any overlap between this USAID/DCOF-funded project and other projects funded by the U.S. State Department • Review itinerary for following week 	DCOF project staff including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, DCOF Project Manager • Luisine Simonyan, Project Coordinator • Artak Saghatelyan, Project M&E Expert • Mary Galstyan, Project Assistant

DAY 4 Mon. July 2	Tavush marz	9:00-7:00	Director of Residential Institution Tavush CPU Head Ijevan GTC Aigehovit GTC Ijevan Community Social Worker Aigehovit Community Social Worker Tavush CBO –Young Tavush Memebers Benefitiaries Tavush ADP Manager and Point Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Dilijan Residential Institution and observe the conditions of institutionalized children under the current system, in preparation for meeting with government representatives at the national, regional and community levels (NCCP, GTC and CPU). • Observe the effectiveness of current interactions between the 3-level system (national, GTC and CPU) from the local perspective. • Discuss placement and replacement prevention activities cooperation with GTC and CPUs. • Meet with the two communities’ GTCs and the Tavush CPU to discuss coordination with CBO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Lusine Simonyan, Project Coordinator
DAY 5 Tues. July 3	UNICEF	9:00 am–10:00am	Ms. Henriette Ahrens UNICEF Representative and Mr. Eduard Israyelyan, UNICEF Child Protection Officer	Discussion of the Armenia Child Protection System and UNICEF’s involvement in assisting vulnerable children and the process of deinstitutionalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one from WV. • AManukyan from USAID
	Zatik orphanage	10:30-11:30	Director of the Orphanage	Discuss efforts to close the orphanage and reform it into a family care center providing community-level social services, with regard to long term effectiveness of program goal and GOA policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Lusine Simonyan, Project Coordinator • Yeva Avakyan, WV US
	MLSI	2:15pm - 3:15pm	Meeting with NCCP Secretary and Head of Family, Women and Child Rights Protection Department Ms. Lala Ghazaryan and Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Mr. Filaret Berikyan	Discuss the development of the GOA’s 2012-2016 Child Protection strategy and amendments to the NCCP charter and national monitoring system. In particular, purpose of meeting is to reinforce the project goals and use USAID/DCOF’s visit to raise the profile of structural reforms needed within the CP system at all levels based on USAID and DCOF’s observations during the visit to date.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Artak Saghatelyan, Project M&E Advisor to the Government • Yeva Avakyan, WV US • AManukyan from USAID

	Save the Children Armenia Country Office	3:30pm – 4:30pm	Ms. Irina Saghoyan, Country Director Save the Children Armenia	Discussion of the Armenia Child Protection System and Save the Children’s involvement in assisting vulnerable children and the process of deinstitutionalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one from WV, • AManukyan from USAID
	Judicial School	5:00 -6:00	Mr. Vardanyan, Director of the Judicial School; and Ms. V. Ohanayan, Project Point Person of Judicial School	Discussion of cooperation between WV and JS and effectiveness of Judicial training, with support from USAID and DCOF to reinforce the project’s goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Mary Galstyan, Project Assistant • Yeva Avakyan, WV-US Gender Advisor
DAY 6					
Wed.	Gyumri ADP* ARDA*	9:00 – 3:00	Meeting with members of GTC, CPUs, social workers, family with reintegrated child	Visit many of the program elements in Gyumri district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Luisine Simonyan, Project Coordinator
July 4	World Vision Armenia National Office*	3:30-5:00	Meeting with Social Work Experts	Discuss the prevention efforts of the social workers in communities*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anoush Davtyan, Project Manager • Luisine Simonyan, Project Coordinator
DEPARTURE					
Thurs., July 5		02:15am	Pickup from Marriott Hotel to the Airport	Depart for London - Washington, DC, Flight BMI 932 at 04:55am Globe Travel shuttle service (ext. 4678), GT emergency contact number is (093) 700-111	

* N.B. Activities that are starred indicate meetings at which the USAID team is invited to observe and discuss program activity-related matters, as opposed to broader issues at the strategic level of the program goal, expected results, and long-term impact. Therefore, these visits are option and can be cut if time is limited.

U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523
www.usaid.gov