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CHILD PROTECTION IN ARMENIA

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BY

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the child rights violations in Armenia and the correlation between poverty and those violations. The study will address the causes of child rights violations and child abuse in Armenia and will identify child's rights violation cases in 2013 in the selected communities. The sample size represents Aparan city in Aragatsotn Marz with its 19 communities. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. The study was developed based on the data collected through three types of data collection instruments; review of child rights violation cases recorded by the Guardianship and Trusteeship Committees of the selected 20 communities, group discussions with Community Mobilisers who work for an NGO in those 20 communities and expert interviews. The analysis of the collected data allowed partially accepting the hypothesis that, the higher the poverty rate the higher the child rights violations in Armenia. Poverty was identified as a major cause of child rights violations in Armenia. But it was also identified that besides poverty there are also other causes such as public awareness, lack of parental and household management skills, parents' indifference, due to which the rights of children were violated in Armenia.

Glossary/ Acronyms and Abbreviations

CRC	Convention on the Rights of Child
RA	Republic of Armenia
GoA	Government of Armenia
CGT	Guardianship and Trusteeship Committee
GTB	Guardianship and Trusteeship Body
WVA	World Vision Armenia
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
NPA	National Plan of Action
LCR	Law on Child’s Rights
HRD	Human Rights Defender
NCCP	National Commission for Child Protection
CPU	Child Protection Union
CM	Community Mobiliser
Nork IAC	Nork Information-Analytical Center
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
EC	European Commission
TOSS	Territorial Offices of Social Services
FWCRP	Family, Women and Children Rights Protection
UN	United Nations
EU	European Union
ISS	Integrated Social Service
CPS	Child Protection System

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CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE...

DOROTHY LAW NOLTE

Introduction

Children are the socially most vulnerable group all over the world. They live in an environment where they can face threats coming from all sides. Child protection is now an issue which is gradually appearing in the center of attention in the Armenian society after being concealed for a long time by a silence conspiracy. It is now an issue which is receiving attention in many organizations and groups in Armenia that try to raise community awareness to eliminate child rights violations.

A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years. They are our future and children raised in a protected environment are our major hope to have a strong and mentally and physically developed generation. Children's health and their safe environment are the main preconditions to have a quality society and healthy reproduction (Antonyan, et al. 2009).

There are many factors which make the children socially vulnerable; disability, delinquent behavior, orphan hood, poverty and many others. All these factors create an environment, where children appear in the center of abuse, and violation, they become the victim of trafficking, sexual abuse, and other forms of exploitation.

The Government of Armenia (GoA) is the main protector of children living in Armenia and it has adopted a national program of child protection. The GoA acts according to its policies directed to protect children in different social groups. Next to the state there are also different organizations which support the community by implementing programs to create safe and protected environment for the children to live in.

However there are still many gaps in protecting starting from child rights violation detection to resolution of such cases and follow-up. This project aims to understand the factors which lead to child rights violations with the hope of reducing those cases or to prevent them from happening.

The work is composed of four chapters. The Chapter I is comprised of the review of literature on child protection worldwide. This chapter will also describe the methodology used to collect data and develop the project. The last subtopic of this chapter describes the ethical considerations regarding the project as a human related study.

The Chapter II tries to show the Armenian country context, which will allow a better understanding of child protection system and its specific features in this context. This chapter will also speak about poverty in Armenia which later will allow understanding its correlation with child rights violation cases.

The Chapter III will present the three tiered child protection system in Armenia. Then it will address the policies and legal frameworks on child protection in Armenia. It will speak about the Law on the Rights of the Child (LRC) of the Republic of Armenia (RA) based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The Chapter IV will illustrate analysis of the data collected through child protection experts' interviews, review of child rights violation cases recorded by the Guardianship and Trusteeship Committees and analysis of the Community Mobilisers' group discussion. Based on the analysis the study will be concluded and will provide recommendations for future research and for child protection system improvement.

CHAPTER I

Literature Review

Over the past several years, scholars, and researchers, have demonstrated that there are many factors which cause child rights violations and child protection issues. Just what those factors are, however, have been different and have been discussed for countries with different levels of development.

What theoretical perspectives are there on the child protection issue?

Child protection is a global concern. Day by day, along with arising issues of child rights violation and their abuse and neglect, different theories and frameworks for studies are being created and revised to address those issues effectively (DePanfilis and Salus 2003; Wulczyn, et al. 2010; Challoner 2012; Carney and Young 2012; Ferguson 2004). Some authors when speaking about child protection demonstrate it as a system comprised of many other systems such as families, communities and everything related to them, thus creating a large system where each sector in it shapes the whole system and in our case the child protection system.

The authors argue that the effectiveness of that system depends on well constructed interactions between them all (Wulczyn, et al. 2010). The main argument of the authors is that the most important factor for child protection is capacity building for parents and the community. There are also international organizations, which focus on the capacity building feature when designing programs to protect children (Wulczyn, et al. 2010; World Vision Armenia 2013; Unisef 2008; Save the Children 2013).

Some authors speak about child protection and the system from the perspective of complexity theory, attachment theory and modernity (Stevens and Cox 2008; Carney and Young 2012; Challoner 2012; Ferguson 2004). Child protection is considered along with modernity. The world

can prevent child abuse if it starts to consider its modern characteristics and its roots, and protection failures in order to find ways to prevent them and protect children. Child abuse and neglect understanding is deeper and it is more nuanced through the modern approach (Ferguson 2004; Myers 2006).

In the case of complexity theory authors argue that the agents in a system are interconnected and that the change in one can lead to a change in another. The authors mention that in order to have a good operating child protection system, where families and children are its main agents, there is a need to consider the changes which can take place in the system leaving their effects on each agent. These authors argue that child maltreatment is a consequence of the complex interplay between the agents; society, family, and community. As a final argument they mention that complexity theory can serve as a tool to analyze and understand complex issues on child protection and operate it efficiently (Stevens and Cox 2008; Wulczyn, et al. 2010; DePanfilis and Salus 2003).

Reviewing the theory of attachment we find that according to some authors there are some expressions of behaviors, such as anger, and distrust which are visible when there are *attachment disorders*. According to these authors attachment theory is important for social workers in child protection. Attachment theory investigates the development of the parent-child relationship, the connection between mother and child and the consequences of connection disruption. This is closely related to child protection and child rights violation. Through attachment theory the actions both by the abuser and by the abused child can be explained. This allows one to take the step of solving the problem and preventing child abuse (Challoner 2012; Carney and Young 2012).

Social support theory is about different actors support when solving child protection issues and the main point is that only one actor him/herself cannot address those issues and challenges with a single intervention. Joint support can be conducted both formally and informally, but what some

authors suggest is that the approach to address these challenges should be family-focused (Hardy and Darlington 2008).

If we try to solve our research problems considering these three theories, we can say that modernity theory will help us to look at the issue of child protection newly, with new reasoning and a new way of thinking and solving the problems. Complexity theory will help us while understanding the causes of child abuse cases, which may be related to different agents in a system such as parents or the, community. Regarding complexity theory efforts by one agent to solve child protection issues may lead to the improvement of another agent within a system. Another conclusion for this part can be made for attachment theory. Our understanding is that social workers, who should consider this theory while working with families, can notice arising problems with a child in a family before it can become a child abuse case. Here social support theory will also help by focusing on the family and preventing many problems which later can become child protection issue.

The conclusion is that all these theories should be considered together regarding child protection in order to have the best outcome and to prevent child abuse cases both in Armenia and in the world. They can serve as tools throughout the work that starts from noticing a case and following it up to its final resolution.

What are the causes of child rights violation and child abuse?

Different literature shows that many factors lead to child abuse and the picture differs from country to country. However there are still some strong factors which are at the center as causes of the child abuse. These include harsh economic conditions, inadequate public awareness, and lack

of knowledge on treating children. Poverty is considered a major contributor to having child abuse and neglect, but it is not related to sexual abuse (Schwartz-Kenney, McCauley and Epstein 2000; Corby 2005; Myers 2006).

The roots of child abuse and rights violations cases go deep into history. According to some historians children in past were treated callously, which was normal at those times and they explain that the term childhood and the sense of it was absent and thus the children did not have a “protected status” (Scannapieco and Connell-Carrick 2005). But there are also counter arguments to child maltreatment. The first argument is that child maltreatment was not common in the past. It was never viewed as normal, although there were harsh economic conditions. Child labor as a child rights violation was spread due to hard economic conditions and a low level of living standards (Corby 2005; Schwartz-Kenney, McCauley and Epstein 2000). Child labor is today is considered child abuse. This is not only the case because of making the child do adult labor, but also because it limits his/her access to education and playing with peers etc. Child labor is a violation of a child’s basic rights.

In history there were and even today there are conditions described in which parents leave their children, thus violating their basic right to live in a family together with parents. In the literature abandonment is connected with different circumstances; parents sometimes are unable to support children because of harsh economic conditions or poverty. Parents are ashamed because of a child’s physical conditions or they leave children in the hope that they will be taken care of by another family that can support them better (Boswell 1990, cited in Corby 2005; Scannapieco and Connell-Carrick 2005; Schwartz-Kenney, McCauley and Epstein 2000). Although it is mentioned many times that poverty causes child abuse, there are also some counter arguments, which says that there are still child abuse cases even having social progress in the world and social progress. Many authors also argue that child protection is weak due to the policies and the

mechanisms which are supposed to operate within the child protection system and prevent child abuse (Corby 2005; DePanfilis and Salus 2003; Wulczyn, et al. 2010; DePanfilis and Salus 2003; Bolen 2001).

What are child rights violation cases?

Child abuse is viewed as neglect and as physical abuse (Corby 2005; Scannapieco and Connell-Carrick 2005; Schwartz-Kenney, McCauley and Epstein 2000; Ferguson 2004). The cases of child rights violations include physical abuse (sexual abuse) both by father and mother, physical abuse by peer children, racial discrimination or being excluded from society because of low level of the living standards, because of race, or religion etc. Abuse by parents who have learning difficulties, not allowing children to have their voices, or to express opinion and be a decision maker are all examples of child abuse (Corby 2005; Myers 2006; Cox, et al. 2010). Another major research issue is child sexual abuse. According to some authors this phenomenon is widespread (Hicks and Tite 1997; Bolen 2001). Child abuse cases, and children's rights violation cases generally remain concealed and underreported (Schwartz-Kenney, McCauley and Epstein 2000; Corby 2005).

Throughout the world history there are endless cases of child mistreatment and this fact is indisputable (Corby 2005; Ferguson 2004; Schwartz-Kenney, McCauley and Epstein 2000). Children's rights violation cases or child mistreatment, as it is called in some literature, are physical chastisement, infanticide, abandonment, child prostitution, child harsh labor, birth registration issues (Davies 2004; Corby 2005; Schwartz-Kenney, McCauley and Epstein 2000; Wulczyn, et al. 2010; DePanfilis and Salus 2003). There are children whose protection status is "at risk" and they are considered to be the most vulnerable in the society such as children with an inferior health level, handicapped children (to some extent, because their protection level differs from country to

country), illegitimate children, unwanted children, female children (Myers 2006; Scannapieco and Connell-Carrick 2005; Schwartz-Kenney, McCauley and Epstein 2000; Wulczyn, et al. 2010).

What is the response of the governments to those cases, how do they address those problems and what mechanisms work?

Child abuse is a problem with deep roots. Attention to the problem started from 1960s in the US where several mechanisms were developed to intervene in child abuse cases. Studies however, showed the focus was not on problem solvers, but rather the investigators of those problems. This trend is seen as a characteristic of the situation the world faces today on child rights violation issues. The main factor of not solving those problems is seen as a lack of knowledge and awareness. Some international institutions (Unisef) or international organizations (World Vision, Save the Children) show there are programs today directed to raise the level of awareness in order to be able to treat and prevent violence against children. The same was with laws on child protection and the gaps they had which are being improved country by country based on their own worst example and the other's best example. Krugman's argument is to create a *response system* with professionals from various sectors. Krugman argues that the response system should be comprised of both private and public health care because they are considered a "helping" system and have larger financial resources (Krugman 1995). As a "helping" system proper attention to treat and prevent child abuse cases can take place. Opposite to it the authors Hicks and Tite (1997) argue that the response system should be teachers, social workers and the police. They mention that child abuse disclosure requires a number of different professionals' response because child abuse cases cannot be followed up and solved in a single sector (Hicks and Tite 1997).

There is another view on intervening and preventing child abuse cases expressed by Davies (2004), who provides a totally different argument on this matter. She mentions that in order to protect children effectively a dual strategy is required, and must involve the concepts of *prevention* and *protection*. Opposite to the arguments of the authors we have mentioned above, she does not speak about a certain system, but about concepts which will direct the child protection policy. Davies speaks first about the protection strategies, then about the systems and their role in it. After this argument she speaks about community involvement in the creation of a network of adults in order to investigate and have an increase in the reporting of child abuse. And as we see this author's argument is to have a whole community, the general public, and to use their "eyes and ears" as a response system in contrast to the authors arguments mentioned above (Davies 2004). As we go through all the research mentioned, one can say that the primary goal they set is raising the level of public awareness in child protection and the works done related to this issue (Hicks and Tite 1997; Krugman 1995; Davies 2004).

Summary

After reviewing all the arguments of the authors cited in this paper, our concern is that there is a relatively small number of distinct studies on the causes of child abuse. The literature is mainly speaking about child sexual abuse, but limited literature on child rights violations in terms of having no access to education, health care and getting immunization. These are problems and by addressing them it will be possible to develop a tool, which will prevent further child abuse cases. This appears to be the gap in the literature and can be among the topics for further research.

Another gap which is noticed is that there are no scholarly articles on child protection issues in Armenia. There is a need to undertake studies related to child protection and their rights violations in the sphere of education and health care. It is important to understand the government's response to those problems in Armenian.

As it was suggested in the literature there are different causes of child rights violation such as economic conditions, public awareness and lack of knowledge in treating the children. But the literature we reviewed suggests that poverty is the major contributor of child rights violations. Based on this data this study proposes a hypothesis that *the higher the poverty rate the higher the number of child's rights violations in Armenia*. The study will try to test this hypothesis through the answers to the following research questions:

1. *What are the causes of child rights violations and child abuse?*
2. *What are child's rights violation cases?*
3. *What is the response of government to those cases?*

Methodology

This work is based on mixed methods: both quantitative and qualitative. The study answers all the research questions based on the data collected through three types of data collection tools (triangulation: review of child rights violations records of Guardianship and Trusteeship Committees (GTC), group discussion with Community Mobilisers (CM) and interviews). The study used three types of data collection tools because some of the tools may be vulnerable to bias.

Aparan city of Aragatsotn Marz with its 19 communities was chosen as the population of the study sample, because according to the National Statistics on poverty in 2012 Aragatsotn Marz was

one of the Marzes ranked with relatively low percentage of poverty and the study aims to find correlation between the poverty and existing child rights violations.

Expert interviews were structured. They were conducted with the experts from the non-governmental organizations, which are the primary actors in child protection field in Armenia. Interviews were also conducted with the government representatives from the regional level of child protection system. While reviewing the case records, the members of the GTCs in the 20 communities were also asked one question.

The data collected from WVA's CM records will cover 3000-3500 children from 0-17 years old living in Aparan city and its 19 communities. This is data which was collected by the CMs working for WVA. The CMs collected the information through monitoring on a semiannual and annual basis during their home visits. The data collected through CMs group discussion illustrates the cases recorded during 2013. This allowed the project to understand deeply all the violation cases and also the cases which were being hidden for different reasons.

Through the GTCs case records review this study aims to understand the child's rights violation cases in 2013. This will help the study to understand the cause of poverty as well as the government's and all the other related actors' participation and law implementation level regarding child protection in Armenia. Those records are *written* child rights violation cases, which were addressed by the members of the GTC of the certain community.

Ethical Consideration

Child protection and child rights violations are an extremely sensitive topic because it is human related issue and most importantly, children are the main focus of the study. This study will follow all the written and unwritten rules, and standards in an ethical process and with extreme care to

prevent harming anyone. All the data collected for answering the research questions will be kept highly confidential and they will be presented without mentioning children's names, or their families. The group discussion participant community mobilisers' identity would not be linked to the information provided by them during the discussion.

The interviewees, MCs and the GTC members were not asked to sign a consent form because no children, family or community name would be seen in the research. These participants were orally informed with a short description about the research project, about the researcher who conducts the research study and the institution the researcher represents. They were also notified that the participation in this research is voluntary and the participant may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits as well as an assurance of confidentiality.

As mentioned above, the cases documentation in the 20 communities and the names related to each case will not be written. The communities' names will not be announced either as there are small villages with a small size of population and it is easy to identify the cases and the people related to it.

CHAPTER II

Armenia, Country Context

Child rights violation remains a major challenge in many countries all over the world. This can be considered the case in Armenia as well. The factors causing child rights violation are varying from country to country.

Armenia's internal situation as well as external relations with its neighboring countries Azerbaijan and Turkey is having a negative impact on the country's socio-economic development. This in turn affects the lives of the Armenian population where children are the most vulnerable group. The condition of the people living in the rural areas is more disadvantaged, because many villages have poor infrastructure, problems with water and sanitation systems and access to health treatment etc. These are some of the basic issues which many rural areas face today in Armenia and these are the factors which have impact on different child protection issues including the high death rate of children under the age five in rural areas. According to the data by World Bank mortality rate of children under five in Armenia (per 1000) was counted 20 in 2010 and 16 in 2012 (Trading Economics 2014).

According to the Child Protection Network about 40% of Armenian children live in poverty (Panorama 2012). As of the January 1, 2013 totally 743,000 children are counted in Armenia, among them 52.9% are boys and 47.1% are girls. 211,000 children are less than five years old, 360,000 are between the ages of 5 and 14 years old and about 172,000 children are between the ages of 15 and 18.

Nork Information-Analytical Center (Nork IAC) registers children in difficult life situations detected by communities and families and regional child protection pillar representatives and as of the November 1, 2013, Nork IAC registered 506 orphaned children and children with single parent, 928 children with special needs and 752 children who can be considered among those of

social orphans group, mainly children who are deprived from their parents care etc. According to the Nork IAC database there were 16 foster families in Armenia, but this information differs from the one reported in the research by “Save the Children” and “Educational Research and Consultation Center” organizations in 2013, that says that there were 25 foster families in Armenia (Gevorgyan, et al. 2014).

Poverty in Armenia, 2012

Poverty is a “pronounced deprivation in well-being” (Khandker and Haughton 2009, p. 1). Broadly defined poverty is individual’s capability to function in society in terms of being able to acquire certain types of goods and services such as having enough food, shelter, access to education and health care (Khandker and Haughton 2009). Poverty is a lack of the basic capacity to participate effectively in society. Poverty is manifested differently and expressed materially and non-materially and in different aspects of life including security, work and life dignity. Non-material poverty is expressed by poor health, social exclusion, illiteracy or low educational level, inapplicability of rights, no freedom of speech.

Socio-economic changes have had an impact on Armenia's living standards following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Poverty indicators are almost the same both in urban and rural areas in Armenia (World Bank 2012). There are defined indicators of welfare, and established minimum standard of those indicators which allows setting the poverty line (Khandker and Haughton 2009). Malnutrition can be considered as an indicator of poverty and it is the basic reason for the children’s physical underdevelopment. Each year there are many cases of deaths of children under-five (0-59 months) in developing countries and about more than half of those death cases are of children with malnutrition (Unisef 2000). This is the case in Armenia as well. As a result of poor

nutrition children living in rural areas have anemia. But this is not only because of poverty, but also healthcare awareness of mainly young mothers and child's caregivers living in rural areas. The families with limited budget often buy food of low quality and having unknown nutritional value in case when they can get inexpensive and healthy food in their communities (World Vision Armenia 2013).

The global economic crisis hit the Armenian economy in 2008. From 2008 to 2010 the crisis and its influence was still seen in Armenia. In 2010 there was noticed a modest growth although it did not prevent poverty from increasing. The economy growth in 2010 was 2.2%, in 2011 it became 4.7%, but an increase in the economic growth rate in Armenia in 2012 of 7.2% had its influence in reducing the poverty (NSS 2013).

The level of well-being in Armenia is being assessed through the value of consumed food and non-food goods (among them own production goods, the humanitarian organizations' assistance, etc.) and the estimated value of durable goods. Poverty is being assessed through absolute poverty and the population. It is based on the living conditions divided into two types: the poor population, and the non-poor population. The poor, in turn, are divided into the very poor and the extremely poor.

The poverty rate is the key indicator through which the population's welfare and living conditions are being estimated. In 2012 the poverty rate decreased compared to the previous year and there was not much difference between urban and rural communities which was 32.5% and 32.1%, respectively. In 2011 the poverty rate was accounted 35.0%. But poverty rate increased from 2008-2012 and the main factor of the increase was a sharp economic decline in 2009. During 2008-2012 the poverty rate in Armenia increased from 17.4% to 32.4%. According to the National Statistical Service (NSS) poverty increased by 5.6% in Yerevan, whereas the increase was 4.5% in other urban communities. According to the NSS in Armenia in 2012 Aragatsotn (21.2%) and Vayoc

Dzor (20.7%) marzes had the lowest percentage of poverty ranked as poor, and the Shirak marz had the highest percentage (46.0%). The same also was the case when considering the ranking of extremely poor population where Aragatsotn was a marz with 0.9% extremely poor people, Syunik with 0.7% and Vayotz Dzor with 0.5% (NSS 2013).



Map I: Source- Armenia: Poverty Rate, by Regions and in Yerevan, 2012, National Statistical Service of RA, 2013

Poverty directly relates to the major sectors in a country such as education, health. In society children should be healthy and educated in order to contribute to the socio-economic development in the country. In 2012 the child poverty rate was higher regarding the age groups of 0-5, 6-9 and 15-17 years compared to other age groups (NSS 2013). 4.1% of the children of 0-5 years old, 3.6% of the children of 6-9 years old, 2.1% of the children of 10-14 years old and 2.7% of the children of 15-17 years old are counted as extremely poor in 2012. In the Table I Aragatsotn is the marz with the lowest child poverty rate among the 10 marzes and the capital Yerevan.

Table I – Armenia: Poverty Rates, Gap and Composition, by Regions, 2012

(percent)

	Extreme child poverty rate	Total child poverty rate	Poverty gap	Percentage share in poor population	Composition of children headcount
Yerevan	2.7	30.2	5	26.6	31.8
Aragatsotn	0.5	21.3	2	2.1	3.5
Ararat	3.0	39.1	5	9.5	8.8
Armavir	3.9	34.9	7	8.8	9.1
Gegharkunik	2.3	40.3	6	8.4	7.6
Lori	4.6	42.3	8	11.3	9.7
Kotayk	6.1	47.9	13	14.0	10.6
Shirak	6.2	48.1	9	11.1	8.3
Syunik	-	27.5	3	3.1	4.0
Vayotz Dzor	0.4	21.4	3	1.1	1.9
Tavush	1.4	30.8	7	4.0	4.7
Total	3.3	36.2	7	100	100

Source: NSS 2013

As it was mentioned there are several indicators of poverty. The first indicator is self-treatment, which really in many cases can set forth many problems especially in case of children. The second largest indicator of poverty is when people do not apply for any health service (NSS 2013). Another indicator is the location of the nearest health facility, which is related to the poor economy of the state.

Another indicator is regular health examinations and immunizations for children under five years of age. Statistics show that those visits are often not paid for a number of reasons such as no need of those services, the quality of medical services, the location of health facilities and the fees of such services. According to the NSS (2013) for 90% the services were not needed, for 0.2% the medical services had poor quality, for 0.1% the healthcare facility was too far and for 0.2% of the households the services were too expensive. The data showed that only about 35.8% of households took their child to get immunization (NSS 2013).

Education is another sector which is also influenced directly by poverty. Accessible education can have a high impact on the poor and vulnerable people and raise their awareness. This, in turn,

influences the health growth and development of the whole community and country (NSS 2013). Even if education is accessible poverty creates conditions which force parents to keep away their children from school and send them to work to make living.

In Armenia, poverty remains high. Risks for poverty include households that have four or more children, as well as the households having no working member to get income and in rural areas also the absence of land (NSS 2013).

CHAPTER III

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Child Protection System in Armenia

Today in Armenia there is no integrated child protection system to facilitate coordination and activities across government agencies. A three-tier system of child protection was established in Armenia in 2006 financed by the European Union (EU) (Table 2), which remains the case today. There is also a new model of integrated social service which is being piloted in two regions in Armenia.

- ✓ The National Commission for Child Protection (NCCP, National level)
- ✓ Child Protection Units (CPUs, Regional level)
- ✓ Guardianship and Trusteeship Committees (GTCs, Community level)

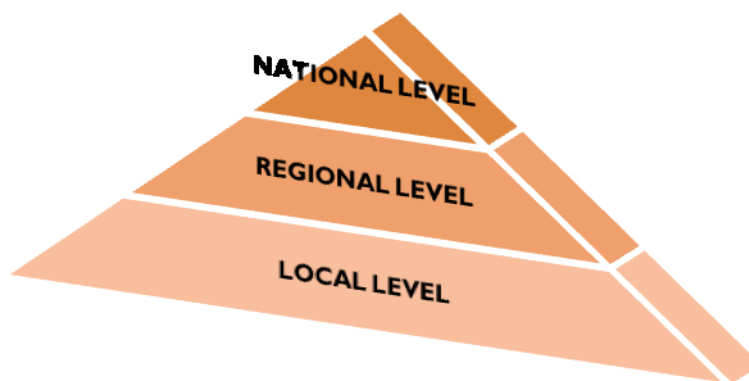


Table 2: Child Protection System: Three Pillars

After the ratification of the UN Convention on Rights of the Child, children's rights and their protection started to gain more attention by the GoA. In the long process of increasing efforts the GoA jointly with The World Bank (WB), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Commission (EC) initiated reforms in child protection system in Armenia. Those reforms were involving the main actors of

child protection system, which are the three pillars of the system (Table 2) and the Territorial Offices of Social Services (TOSS) (Sherwin and Lerch 2012) (Table 3).

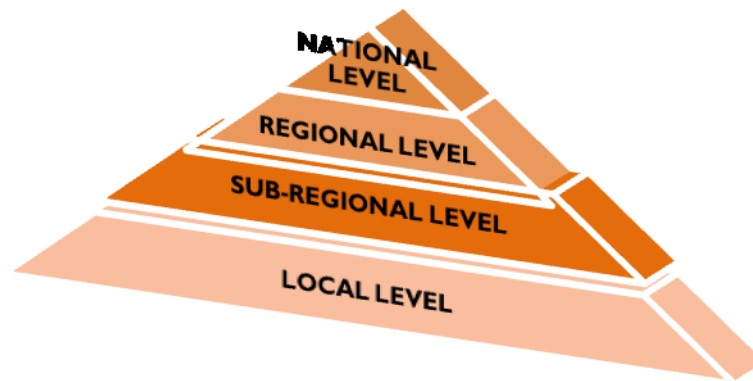


Table 3: Current Child Protection System (Sub-Regional level has piloted

in Tavush and Lori marzes)

The three-tiered system of child protection has passed 5 years of a probationary period and as a result of the cooperation between the state agencies and NGOs working in child protection sphere it became clear that the three-tiered system does not fully cover the issues on the child rights violations, such as case detection or case management, and this was the reason of the reform. This created the basis for having the idea of “one window” or Integrated Social Service (ISS). Through the ISS people will come up to it and present their problem and then the ISS will make a decision where to send them for solving their problem. The reform towards ISS was launched by the Minister of Labor and Social Issues, and approved by the GoA becoming a key priority for 2011 (UNICEF, Annual Report for Armenia 2011).

The National level of the child protection system in Armenia is the National Commission for Child Protection (NCCP). The NCCP shall ensure child protection and rights through a unified government policy at the national level (Sherwin and Lerch 2012). According to the RA Decree N 835 the main objectives of the NCCP are to support the provision of child protection and rights guarantees, to solve the problems that emerge during child rights protection, design

recommendations addressing the resolutions of those problems, support the resolution of the social problems of children in difficult situations of life, support the cooperation of the government agencies, political, social, scientific and other organizations which act to ensure child protection in Armenia (RA Decree N 835, 2005, cited in Shatvoryan 2011). The NCCP is composed of the Commission president, 10 members, who are the representatives from the RA Ministries and Departments, and the secretary. The hearings of the NCCP are being headed by the Commission president, the Minister of the Labor and Social Issues. Among the personal staff of the NCCP there are representatives from RA Ministries, Committees, Departments (RA Ministry of Labor and Social Issues, Health, Culture, Police, Education etc.) (RA Decree, N 835, Annex N 2, 2005, cited in Shatvoryan 2011).

According to the N 07 and N 66 Joint Order of the RA Minister of Territorial Administration and RA Minister of Labor and Social Issues, the regional level, the Child Protection Units (CPUs) of child protection represents the department of the Families, Women and Children Rights Protection (FWCRP) of Marzpetarans in marzes and of Municipalities in the Capital Yerevan. CPUs are responsible for the families, women and children protection policy implementation (Sherwin and Lerch 2012). Some of the objectives the FWCRP of Marz Department are to ensure the right of child to live in a family, ensure protection of the child living in difficult situation etc (Shatvoryan 2011).

The main functions of FWCRP are to implement the protection policy in marzes, to design different programs aiming to protect the target group's rights, design programs for children in and families in difficult life situations and ensure their implementation, operate the information system of children in difficult life situation and registering the children deprived of parental care, beggar children, vagrant children, offender minors, children left out from education, children of special needs (from birth), children from socially vulnerable families and children in boarding and medical

institutions. Among the functions of FWCRP departments are others aimed at implementing the rights protection of the children with problems described above ensuring the implementation of all the rights stipulated by the Law on Child Rights (LCR) of the RA (Shatvoryan 2011).

The FWCRP department cooperates with the community level based GTCs and other centers, governmental offices and organizations. It is composed of at least 5 civil servants (lawyers, nurses, social workers, teachers etc) (Shatvoryan 2011).

As it was mentioned above in 2011 a new model was introduced by GoA, which aims at integrating the social services. This is a step addressed to improve the efficiency of the CPUs and the weaknesses of the local level pillar, GTCs. Currently the new model is being piloted in Lori and Tavush regions (Sherwin and Lerch 2012). This new model represents the TOSS as the sub-regional level of child protection system in Armenia. It identifies poor and vulnerable families, provide case management, and design and implement programs for addressing the revealed cases. It also provides assistance (including financial) required for the case resolution (Sherwin and Lerch 2012).

The local level pillar represents the GTCs, which are operated by the communities' heads and ensures the protection of children deprived from parental care (Shatvoryan 2011). Chapter IV addresses these Committees in details with illustrations from the data collected from the GTCs.

Child Rights based on the Convention on the Child Rights (UN) and Law on Child Rights (RA)

The Republic of Armenia is signatory to the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Children (CRC) and the Hague Convention on International Adoption. The UN Convention on Children's Rights (CRC) was ratified in Armenia in June 1992 giving primary importance to child protection issues and involving them in the national programs. After ratification also special

attention was given especially to the children in difficult situations of life. In 1996 the Government of Armenia (GoA) adopted Law on Child's Rights (LCR). In Armenia the LRC shall be considered when applying and implementing the rights of children (Decree NI745 2009).

In December 2003, the GoA approved its National Plan of Action (NPA) on Protection of the Rights of the Child for 2004-2015. This was updated for 2012-2016 with a primary focus on child protection and the promotion of community-based family support initiatives (Sherwin and Lerch 2012). The NPA is largely based on the provisions of the UN CRC as well as the principles stipulated by the LRC of RA. Many activities included in the NPA are linked to the Governments' Poverty Reduction Strategy and are directed to the improved accessibility of social services for excluded and poor children. Through the NPA the commitment and responsibilities towards children in Armenia are being implemented. This program identifies child protection issues and different programs' designs, which should be implemented by state institutions, local governments, NGOs and by other actors.

All the children in the world have equal rights. According to article 2 of CRC, Armenia as a signatory, agrees that parties shall respect and ensure the rights of each child within its jurisdiction without any discrimination as well as ensure that that child is protected against all kinds of "discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members" (CRC 1992, part 1, Article 2). According to Article 2 of LCR, child rights in the Republic of Armenia (RA) are defined by the Constitution of the RA, its International Agreements, the LCR and other legal enactments adopted by RA and according to this article the Agreements are to be considered and implemented as primary regulating norms (LCR 1996).

In Article 3 of the CRC it is stated that the child's best interests shall be a primary consideration by all kinds of public and private institutions, administrative authorities or legislative

bodies, courts of law when they take actions concerning children. In the same article it is stated that the states parties shall take appropriate legislative and administrative measures when ensuring child protection at the same time taking into account the child's parents and other legally responsible individuals' rights and duties. Article 3 of LCR clearly stipulates the bodies that are responsible to protect the child's rights and they are the authorized corresponding state bodies. In the same article of LCR it is stated that the GoA advocates the child's rights protection through its corresponding bodies by cooperating with citizens' associations, non-governmental organizations and private individuals.

CHAPTER IV

Data Analysis

Guardianship and Trusteeship Bodies and Committees

To briefly introduce the first pillar and its functions in the child protection system the following information is provided. According to the RA Family Code Chapter 17, Article 109, paragraph 2 the GTCs are local-governance bodies. According to the same Article paragraph 1 child protection "in case of parents' death, their deprivation of parental rights, restriction of parental rights, recognition of parents incapable, avoidance of parents of rearing of children and protection of their rights and interests as well as the absence of parental care and other cases is put on the departments of" Guardianship and Trusteeship (Family Code, Article 109, 2004).

The Guardianship and Trusteeship Bodies implement child protection at the local community level. The GTBs are the heads of the communities. The GTBs shall ensure the implementation of the child's rights protection when child's rights were violated, when something is threatening the child's life and health, when the child's left without parental care, when the child left out of the education or implemented it improperly or when the parents do not implement their parental responsibilities towards the child as stipulated by the RA law. GTB also implements other responsibilities stipulated by RA Legislation (RA Decree, N 164, 2011, cited in Shatvoryan 2011). The GTC is established adjacent to the GTBs comprising from 5 to 9 members (Chart 1).

Each community in Armenia has GTBs (heads of the communities) and GTCs adjacent to each GTB. The members of the GTC are being appointed by the Community Council. Both GTB and GTC represent the community/ local level of the child protection system in Armenia.

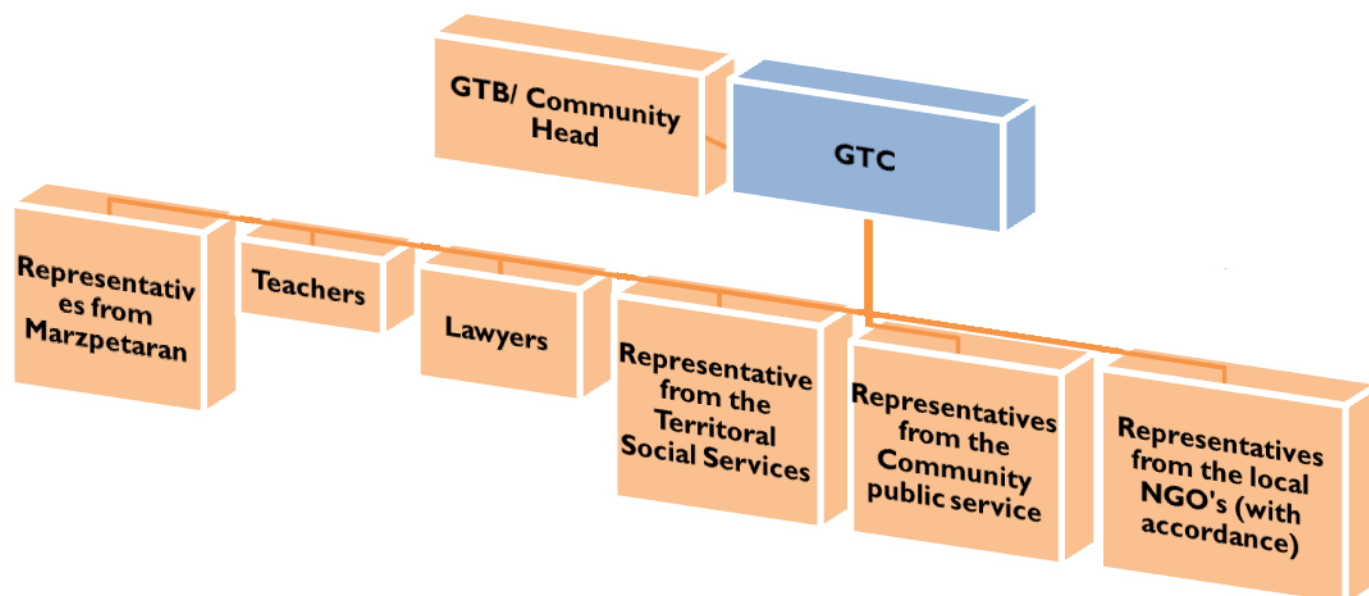


Chart 1: The structure of the Guardianship and Trusteeship Bodies and Committees

Guardianship and Trusteeship Committees Records Review and Community Mobilisers' Group Discussion

In this study one city in Aragatsotn marz was chosen with its 19 communities and in accordance to research ethics and the small size of the communities they are identified alphabetically from A to T. The studies for this part were conducted during the meeting with all the chosen communities GTCs members. 20 Case Records Books of the selected GTCs have been reviewed. Together with GTCs records review a group discussion was also conducted with those 20 communities' mobilizers who work within local NGO World Vision Armenia (WVA) and are not government employees.

In accordance with the child rights to express his/her opinion the GTCs are authorized to reveal the child's opinion on his/her rights and interests when resolving any case. They are also

authorized to solve the problems between parents on protection children right to name. Regarding the child's rights to have access to cultural values and rights to have rest and leisure GTCs are authorized to support the children to organize their leisure such as participating in different events, camps etc (Shatvoryan 2011).

As was mentioned above the data was gathered from both state system (GTCs) and non-governmental organization (Community Mobilisers). The data taken from both sources are representing the 2013 and they are the records on child rights violations in 2013. But as it is shown in the Table 3 there were some communities which did not have a case records book.

Child Rights Violation Cases, 2013

Communities	# of Cases Recorded by GTCs	# of Cases Recorded by CMs
A	6	3
B	1	3
C	No case recorded in 2013	No case
D	No case recorded in 2013	1
E	No case recorded in 2013	1
F	No case recorded in 2013	2
G	3	No case
H	No case recorded in 2013	No case
I	1	No case
J	No case recorded in 2013	2
K	No case recorded in 2013	No case
L	No case recorded in 2013	1
M	No case recorded in 2013	1
N	No case recorded in 2013	No case
O	N/A No Record Book	No case
P	N/A No Record Book	1
Q	No case recorded in 2013	1
R	No case recorded in 2013	No case
S	N/A No Record Book	No case
T	No case recorded in 2013	2
Total 20	11	18

Table 4: Number of Child Protection Cases recorded by GTCs and CMs in 2013

In the **Community A** 6 cases are recorded by the GTC. All of these cases involve making the grandparents the guardians or trustees of the children whose parents are living abroad. The parents left the community because of unsatisfactory living conditions.

In the **Community A** the CMs recorded 3 cases of child rights violations. One of the cases is about a family where there are 4 children. The father of those children is living abroad and mother is a woman with deviant behavior (see note 1). The mother of these 4 children is indifferent towards them and the children often stay alone at home. According to the teacher at school the eldest girl in this family also manifests some deviant behavior and the risk is high that this child will follow her mother's example. This family is considered to be poor, but the mother of the children also lacks parental skills.

A second case is about a violation of a child who lives in a family where all the family members are illiterate. This is an indicator which makes the family and the child living in that family vulnerable. The family is in extremely poor condition. The mother of this child leaves the home for many days very often. The child lives without enough food, care and clean living conditions and no one in the family takes care of him. The child is neglected by his mother which is a passive form of abuse. This family lives in extremely poor conditions, but at the same time the parents lack parental and household management skills.

The third case is about one child who is often exposed to physical violence by his parents. This family is not poor, but there is again lack of parental skills in child rearing.

According to the discussion of the cases in the **Community A**, in these communities the recorded *eight* cases both by the GTC and by the CM are due to poverty and unsatisfactory living conditions and among them the *three* cases are due to not having enough parental and households skills.

In **Community B** the GTC recorded a case related to the child's right to name. Since her birth (2004) the child was not registered and did not have a birth certificate because mother of the child gave him birth at home. This case contains a number of child rights violation regarding several articles of the LCR such as rights to citizenship, right to maintain health and get health services (regular screening and immunization). The family is considered to be extremely poor.

The case recorded by the CM in the same community is about a child living in a family where the child's father suffers from extreme alcoholism. This has its negative impact on children living in the house. The children are exposed to mental violence. In this case the alcoholism is a serious disease although the family is not among the poor ones in the community. Thus this case is not related with poverty but due to lack of parental skills and indifference.

In **Community C** there were no cases recorded by the GTC and there was no case given by the CM. According to the community CM there is no family living in extremely poor conditions in this community. The children in this community are also involved in the daily household work to help their families, but the work is being done without interfering on the usual school life and interaction with peers.

In the **Community D** no case was recorded by the GTC. There was a case recorded by the CM and the case is about a child who misses classes because of the need to work. The child is almost 14 years old and helps his father to make their living. He is missing the opportunities to have rest and leisure and to interact with his peers and these rights are always violated by his father. Four children are living in this family. According to the NSS (2013) children in larger families, with two or more siblings are more likely to be imposed to a higher risk of poverty (43.2% of children in Armenia with three or more children are poor) (NSS 2013).

In the **Community E** there is no case recorded by the GTC, but still there is a case recorded by the CM. The case is about a family where father periodically applies physical violence towards

his wife. This family is not poor. In this family four children are living and they are exposed to mental violence. Here poverty is not related to the child's rights violation in this family but rather the lack of the parental skills.

In the **Community F** there is no case recorded by the GTC during 2013. The CM recorded two cases. The first case is about a child who is in the fifth grade and periodically misses the classes. This child's family lives in extreme poverty and the child works to help his father to make their living. Besides the father is also suffers from alcoholism and lacks parental skills and neglect his child's right to education. The difference of missing classes in this case is in that the school in this community supports father's steps and closes eyes before this child's absences and does not record the absences because of the "connections" between the school directorate and the family.

The second case in this community is about four children who live in a family where the father suffers from alcoholism and beats his wife before the children's eyes inflicting mental violence. The family lives in poverty and lacks parental and household management skills.

In the **Community G** there were 3 cases recorded by the GTC during 2013. Two cases are related to the children with special needs. They were sent to Yerevan for special education based on the diagnosis of the local ambulatory and the parents' decision. According to the GTC member the families were well aware of the GTC and they turned to the Head of the community to find a solution to the problem. Neither of the cases is due to poverty. They show that the families are well aware of the GTC and the families turn to it for support respecting the children's right to education. The third case of the same community was related to one female child kidnapped by three male minors. This case is not related with poverty either.

No case was recorded in the **Community J** by the GTC. The CMs of the same community mentioned two cases. In one case the child of the family was taken to a boarding school. The family is in extremely poor condition. The mother of this child mentioned that the child has a diagnosis of

being mentally backward. According to the CM the child is good at drawing and was still in the first grade when he was taken to boarding school. The CM said that the case may be that the mother wanted to get rid of the child, that's why she sent him to boarding school. Once the child even mentioned that he was beaten in the boarding school, but his mother did not allow him to tell anyone about it. In this case several rights are violated such as physical violence, neglect and violation of the child's right to live in a family.

The second family is also classed as extremely poor. The family has five children and four of them are school age children. The children do not want to study and they do not stay at school. If they stay it is for eating during the lunch time at school which is given by state in elementary classes. In this case the child's right to education is violated and the parents do not do anything to handle the issue. Two of those children also go to Yerevan to work and the money earned is used by father for buying drinks. Thus the children are also being exploited and neglected.

In general this community has many cases when children leave the school early during a day in order to get home and to help parents with household. Here it is seen violations of the child's rights to education, to rest and leisure. The parents of those children are aware about children's rights and not classified as being poor, which makes it clear that poverty is not related much to child's rights violation in this community.

In the **Community L** no cases were recorded by the GTC. However there is a case reported by the CM about a severe violation of rights. In this family there are six children, four of whom are schoolchildren. This family is not poor. The parents do not want to work and they force their children to work. The children do different types of work and hardly manage to go to school. They are forced to do hard agricultural works. Here we see a case of exploitation, and violation of children's right to education. The severe point in this family is that once (at least only this and another case is known to the MC) the 8-year old child was evicted from home and left outside for

one week. The parents think that children are their property and they are extremely indifferent to them and often punish them and inflict violence. In this family there are many cases of physical exploitation and violence, but as it was said not due to poverty.

In the **Community P** the GTC does not have a case records book. The case recorded by the CM is about a child who does not attend school regularly because she has to take care of her ill mother, grandmother and four siblings as well as to manage the household. The family is extremely poor and does not have appropriate living conditions, food to eat and clothes to wear. Here we see violation of the child's right to education, appropriate living conditions, right to rest and leisure. All of these violations are deriving from poverty.

In the **Community Q** the case recorded by the CM is about children in a family who live in very poor conditions. The mother of those children has deviant behavior. The children are neglected in terms of always being in dirty clothes and without care. Together with poverty there is also lack of parental skills in this family which violate the children rights to proper living conditions for mental, physical, moral, spiritual and social development.

The **Community T** GTC was not recorded any case in 2013. The CM's records tell about a case where the family is in the extreme poverty due to the father's unwillingness to work. As a result the three children in this family have no proper clothes to wear and go to school. Their right for protection of honor and dignity is violated here, because the children feel shame and do not want to attend school not dressed properly due to poverty but which can be reduced if the father acquire parental skills and make a use of the property he has (tractor-vehicle to do agricultural work) as well as due to their parent who lacks of parental and household management skills.

The other case in this community is a health-poverty related case. The family is considered to be poor. There are three children in this family, where one of them has Mediterranean Fever (see *note 2*) and the parents think that the second child also has the symptoms of this disease. However

the family cannot afford paying for the regular medical treatment for the first child and for the medical examination of the second child. Here the case shows that the child's right to health protection and get health services was violated due to poverty.

In the above illustrated table it is obvious that there are some discrepancies between the GTCs and CMs records on child rights violation cases in 2013. Speaking separately about each community records by both representatives, the study shows not only the difference in the number of the cases recorded but also differences among the cases as well. This explains that the detection of child's right violation by the GTC is very low and in the most of the communities it is absent and this explains the difference of the cases recorded. The GTC recorded mainly the cases related with the children's guardians and trustees as this is the main way to legally address the issue and the parents themselves turn to the GTCs to solve this kind of issues. The recorded cases by the CMs became known as a result of their work with each of those families during the periodic work or monitoring of the WVA.

Bringing together all the cases discussed above there are 18 cases of child rights violations (rights to education, rest and leisure, exploitation, physical and mental violence, health protection, child honor and dignity) caused by poverty. The eleven cases of child's rights violations were caused due to the parents' indifference, lack of parental and household skills. Among those eleven cases some are due to poverty as well. Concluding the analysis based on the data of GTCs and CMs there appears to be a strong relationship between poverty and child rights violations. Nonetheless, poverty is not the only factor as the absence of parental skills with regard to rearing the children and managing the household also caused child's rights violations.

Interview Analysis

The interviews were conducted with three experts representing three different sectors in the child protection system. They are the representatives from the state, an NGO and independent constitutional agency. The state representative was an expert from regional level of the child protection system. The representative from the NGO was an expert in child protection system. The representative from independent constitutional agency was an advisor on child's rights in Armenia. The interviewees were asked questions which answered our research questions directly (see *appendix 1*).

Respondents indicated that there are no statistical data on child rights violation cases. They mentioned that there were cases where children were exposed to violence both directly and indirectly. The respondents mentioned child's rights violation cases such as children deprived of parental care, child's begging, right to education and proper conditions to develop, birth registration, health protection.

As the most common case of child's rights violations the respondents listed child beggary. But they also mentioned that cooperation between the actors responsible in resolving these issues is weak, these kinds of cases are still present in Armenia and especially in the capital city, Yerevan. Another common case involved physical and mental violence and sometimes also sexual abuse. As mental violence, slapping the child was mentioned which is considered to be a method of rearing in the Armenian culture. As for causes of such rights violations the respondents listed child poverty, social conditions as being major cause, but they also mentioned about parents' careless attitude towards the children, state agencies carelessness, and lack of knowledge how to handle the issues

that later being categorized as violations. Low level of awareness and the absence of psychological support in Marzes were also mentioned as child’s rights violations causes.

The interviews showed that the poverty is considered a major cause of child’s rights violation in Armenia. The table 5 shows the major violations due to poverty. There were responses that indicated although the family is not poor there are still may be child abuse cases or child neglect cases which are due to the parents’ indifference, awareness level and lack of parental skills (Table 6-8).

CATEGORIES AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CODED INFORMATION OF THE INTERVIEWS:

The cases of violations and their causes in 2013 (Tables 5-

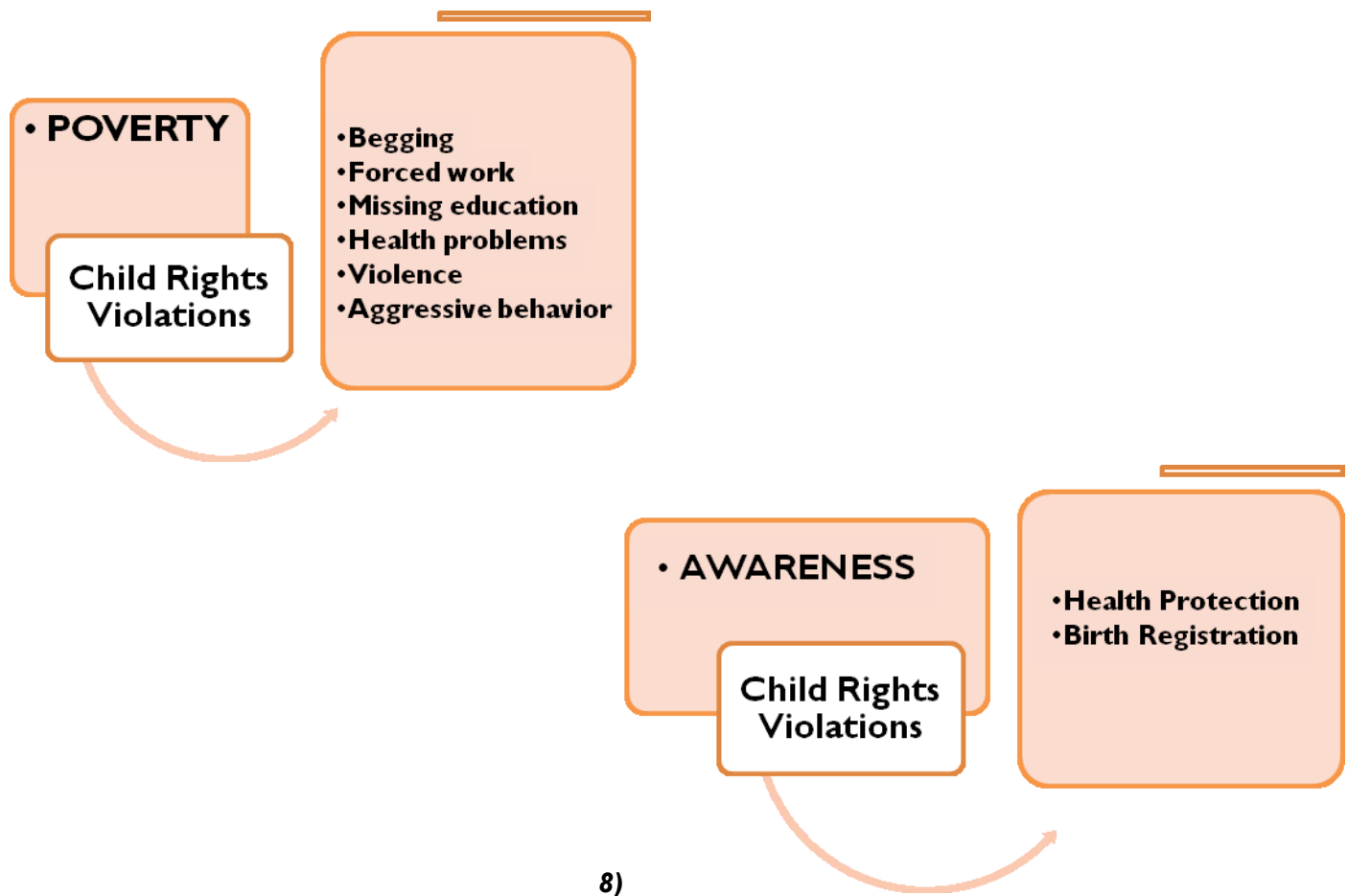


Table 5: Poverty as a cause of Child Rights Violation

Table 6: Awareness as a cause of Child Rights Violation

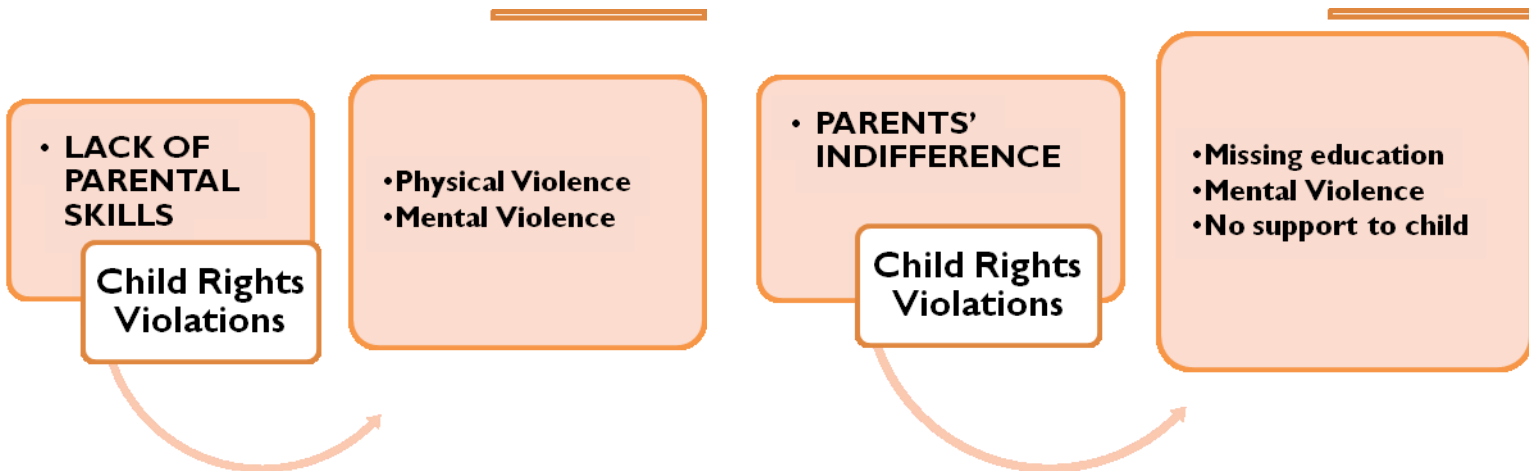


Table 7: Parental Skills as cause of Child Rights Violation

Table 8: Parental Indifference as a cause of Child Rights Violation

During the interview the respondents were also asked about the changes in child protection system as well as in public regarding child protection they saw and as a result both positive and negative changes were indentified. Among the positive changes the respondents mentioned reforms adoption in the system, improvements in legal field (e.g. simplifying the process of giving birth certificate to the child whose mother gets married at the age not stipulated by RA law for the girls to marry) and family awareness level increase in public sector.

As a positive change the GoA has adopted a program to unload or empty the orphanages, although the respondents mentioned that it is still difficult to say that the program is being fully implemented. The issue was described that the families mainly adopt children with no special needs. The respondents mentioned that this is often happening because those families are not encouraged by state and they lack parental skills how to bring up children with special needs. Another positive change which was mentioned was the increase of parents' awareness level although it was still mentioned as a gap as well.

The other example is the foster care institution program. This was also mentioned by the respondents as a positive change. It is a way to reduce children's entry into orphanages as well as

to prevent it but as there has been no encouragement by the state the foster families did not increase. In its first two years the foster family placement program was funded and administered by UNICEF, which placed 25 children with 23 foster families. Since 2008, the Armenian government has run the program directly and funded it from the state budget. But, according to the respondents, after the state started to fund the program there was no money allocated to this program nor was there an increase in the number of foster families. Rather those families returned the children to orphanages or their families because they were receiving no support and encouragement from the state.

The positive changes in legal field were highlighted by the experts although there is still need to have further improvements. The experts mentioned that there is a change in the awareness level of parents who were previously indifferent to many issues such as birth registration, education and health problems.

Speaking about the positive changes the respondents also mentioned about the cooperation between state and NGOs. They claimed that the state and NGOs working in child protection system have a good and open working relationship and this makes it easier to discuss the cases and support each other to improve some aspects in the child protection system. The state agencies get knowledge and skills provided by different NGOs. The NGOs also work actively in the child protection sphere conducting advocacy, awareness raising events for parents and children, different debate clubs and forum theatres etc. During the interviews there also were recommendations to improve the child protection system (Table 9), which mainly consisted of a need to have strong cooperation between the CPS levels, legal fields' improvement and one paid social worker idea.

According to the interviews the GoA has implemented different programs to improve the system, although there are programs which have many shortcomings and do not serve their real aim: improving the child protection system and preventing children's rights violation cases (Table

9). Interviewees identified several of these programs including the “Single Window” or Integrated Social Service (ISS). As shortcomings in this reform the respondents mentioned the lack of specialists in this service. This service is not strong with specialists, so that they can be present in all the communities. The respondents made a recommendation of an idea to have a social worker in communities who can detect cases and direct the families to the ISS where the case manager can make a decision in solving the problem and still keep the social worker revealing problems in the communities. They also recommended conducting different trainings on parental skills. They mentioned that there is a need of enforcement in the local level of child protection system and setting clear responsibilities starting from the detection of child rights violation cases to those cases management (Table 9).

CATEGORIES AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CODED INFORMATION OF THE INTERVIEWS

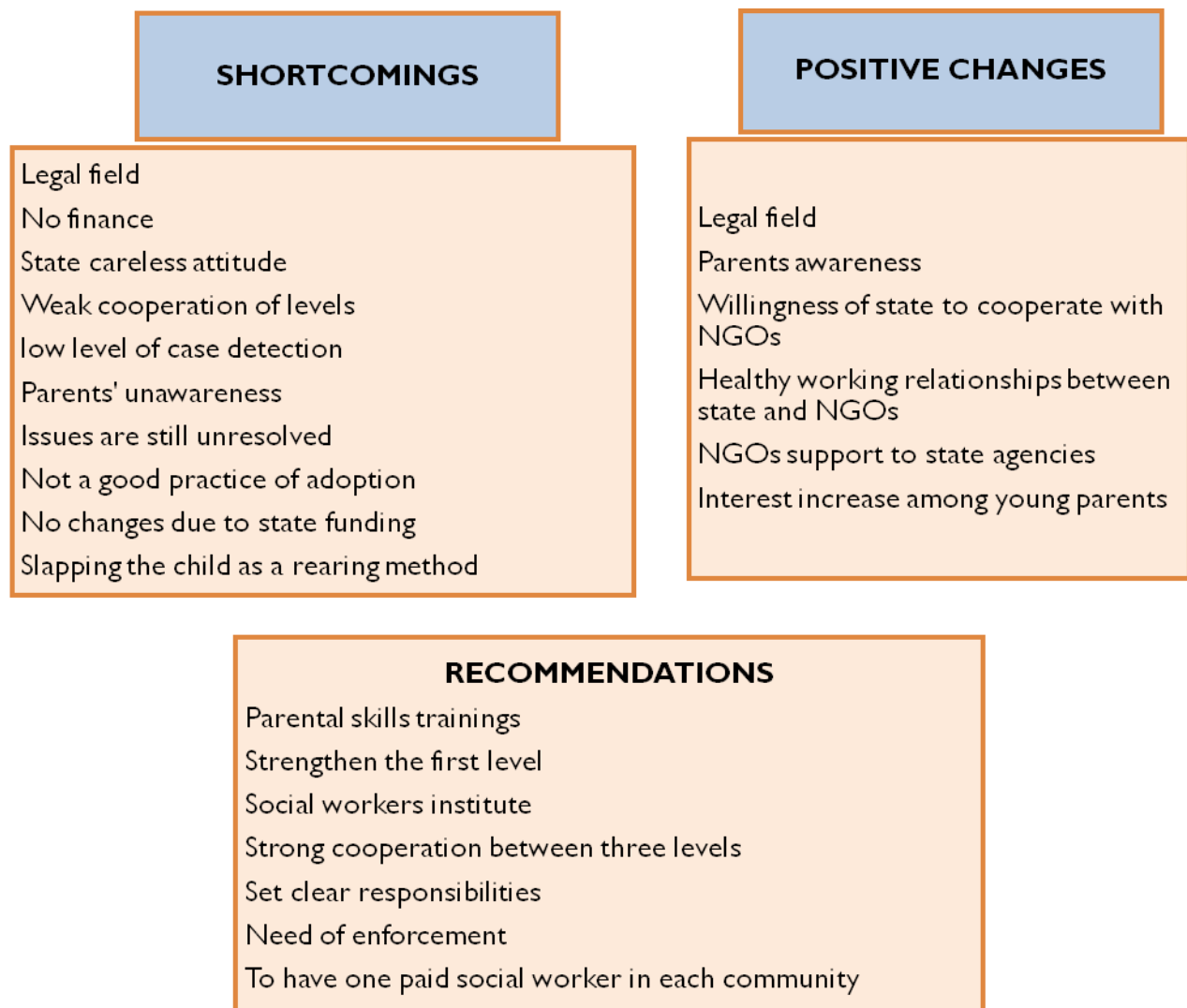


Table 9: Child Protection in Armenia: Shortcomings, Changes and Recommendations

The analyses of the data collected through three interviews can be generalized for the whole country, because the two experts work in almost all regions of Armenia and gave the data regarding the Armenia in general. Only one of them representing the Aragatsotn region gave data addressing our main questions regarding only that region.

Analysis of the Question Asked the **Guardianship and Trusteeship Committees** in 20 communities

(If you witness, suspect or a child discloses abuse how do you maintain confidentiality when reporting the concerns of abuse of children?)

Respondents indicated that in almost all the communities the people know about all the cases that have occurred. This is because the communities are small and it almost impossible to keep the privacy of any given case. It is possible that there are some families that are able to keep secret what has happened (e. g. issues related with child dignity). Sometimes they do not ask for the help from an agency from within or outside of the community. As a result of this, many cases will be hidden not allowing the corresponding bodies to protect the children.

Bringing together the Interviews, GTCs and CMs data analysis it appears that most cases in the study indicate that poverty is a major cause of child rights violations. But this is not the only cause.

There are also other factors which have their portion in contributing child's rights violations. Table 10 illustrates all the rights violations caused by poverty in Armenia based on the analyses. As it is illustrated in Figure 1 the violations due to poverty are more compared to the other causes.

CATEGORIES AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CODED INFORMATION OF THE GTCs, CMs AND INTERVIEWS



*Table 10: Poverty as a
of Child Rights Violation*

major cause

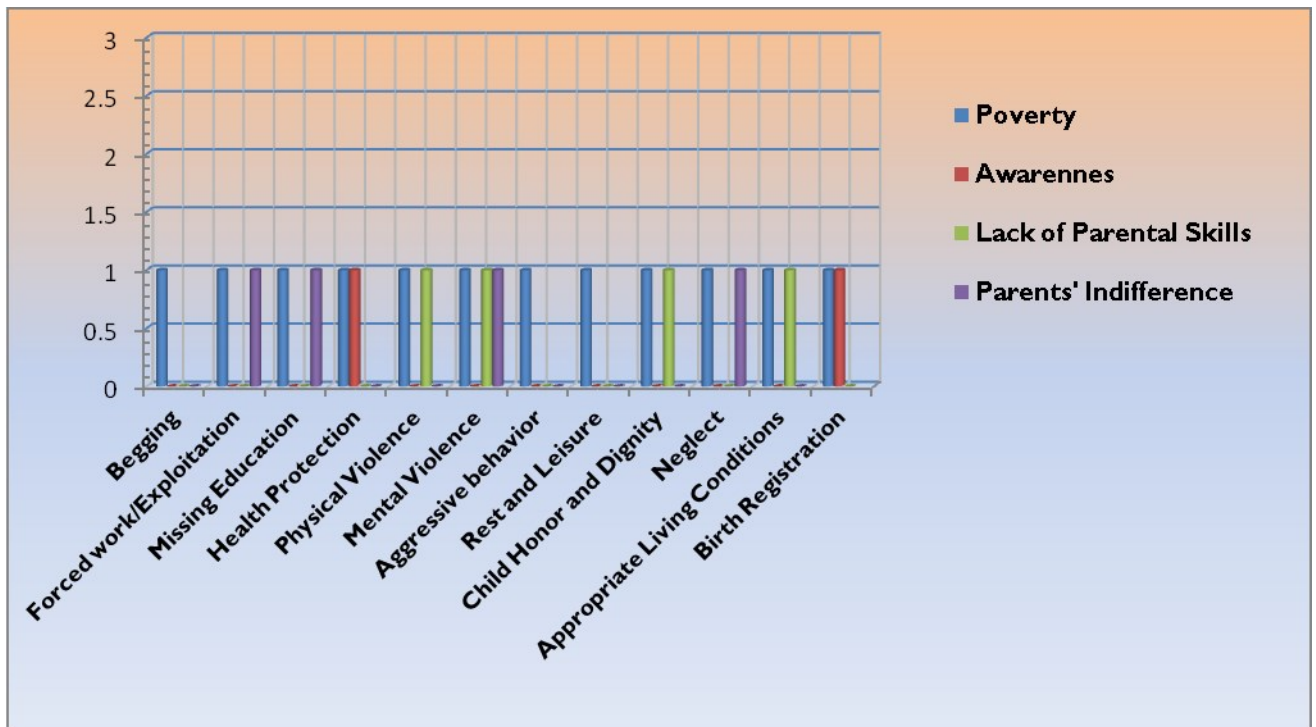


Figure 1: Child Rights Violations and Causes (1 indicates the cause of the violation)

Conclusion

The study has revealed evidence of improvement in the child protection system in Armenia, such as reforms in legal field, implementation of new programs, and cooperation between different actors in child protection sphere. But the major change seen as a result of the study was the three tiered system, which, although, needs to pass a long way in order to reach its full and effective operation. Along with positive changes there were also observed problems that inhibit the effective implementation of the LCR and the other relevant child-related instruments. For instance the recommendation was made in a written form by different NGOs to have a social worker involved among the members of GTCs in 2011. But unfortunately no clear steps towards implementing this suggestion have been taken. The study also showed that one of the main problems in the system is

the low level of the detection of children's rights violation cases in the communities. There are many cases which remain hidden. One reason might be the parents fear that if they turn to some agencies for help their confidentiality will be violated.

Based on the analysis conducted and the cases detected from the certain communities the conclusion of this study is that it appears the children in our country continue facing rights violations mostly because of poverty. There are both positive changes and shortcomings in the child protection system. But a strong commitment by all the actors working in the child protection system will help fight poverty, raise the families' awareness and empower them with the necessary skills to manage their household, create a protected environment for their children and improve and have one of the strongest child protection systems in the world.

After having considered all the results from the interview analysis, GTCs' case records review and CMs' group discussion we are inclined to partially accept our hypothesis which says that the higher the poverty rate the higher the number of child's rights violations in Armenia. The data collected showed that the number of child's rights violation mentioned both by interviewees and by the CMs is greater than the number of violations caused by other factors such as parents' awareness level and lack of knowledge to treat the children.

Recommendations

Recommendation for further research

As the study was chosen for a city which was the representative of a Marz a relatively low poverty rate, the study suggests to conduct a research using the same data collection tools, in the poorest Marz in Armenia, which is the Shirak Marz according to the statistics showed above and

compare the results to see more clearly the correlation between the child's rights violation cases and poverty and then compare the picture with the results showed in this study. This research study can be also conducted country-wide. This will give a comparative look at child rights violations with variations in poverty among all the marzes in Armenia.

Limitations

The study has some limitations which prevent to conduct deeper analysis. Time was limited and this prohibited conducting a door-to-door survey with a large sample size having such a study which would help to detect, analyze and better understand existing child rights violations in families. The time was also limited to examine each case deeply in order to understand the steps or contribution of each actor in child protection system in case management.

The research could get only a limited number of data/cases of child's rights violations because there are cases which are hidden due to different reasons (e.g. family does not want anyone to know about the case). The other reason for the study's limited data was that the communities' GTCs did not have case records documents.

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Explanatory Notes

1. *Deviant behavior* is used in the study in the context of sociology and describes the behavior that violate the social norms (here, rejecting folkways, mores)
2. *Mediterranean Fever* is an inherited disease and characterized by recurrent episodes of painful inflammation in the chest, abdomen, or joints.

Appendix

Appendix I: A certificate of the training on “*Protecting Human Research Participants*” which was taken following the advice of the study’s supervisor Dr. Douglas Shumavon



Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Lusine Shahinyan** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 04/02/2014

Certification Number: 1416581

Appendix 2:

Interview Questionnaire

This interview is for my project on Child Protection in Armenia at the American University of Armenia. Your answers will be used to understand the causes of child rights violation in Armenia and the ways to decrease the violation cases.

The interview will be recorded as this makes it easier for me to document what is said during the interview and also help in the continuing work with the project. After finishing the project, all records will be destroyed. The data I intend to collect will only be used in this project.

Participation in the project is voluntary and therefore you have the right to decline answering any questions, or terminate the interview without giving an explanation.

The interview will demand 20-25 minutes of your time. Please, also be noted that your answers will be kept confidential in accordance with the rights of confidentiality and research ethics.

Your contribution is highly appreciated!

1. Tell me about child protection level in Armenia when your organization first started its work in this sphere.
2. Did you record any child rights violations in Armenia in 2013?
3. What is the most common type of violation?
4. What is your organization's experience in keeping children safe from abuse and harm?
5. What do you think are the most common causes of child rights violations in Armenia?
6. What place do you think poverty has among the causes of child rights violations in Armenia?
7. What role do you think government agencies should have in addressing child rights violation?
8. Can you tell me about your cooperation with Government when trying to solve child rights violation cases?
9. What will be your recommendations to improve child protection system in Armenia regarding all the possible actors?

Appendix 3: Question Asked the Guardianship and Trusteeship Bodies in 20 communities

If you witness, suspect or a child discloses abuse how do you maintain confidentiality when reporting the concerns of abuse of children?

Appendix 4:

The Basic Rights of Children

(UN Convention on the Rights of the Children and the RA Law on the Rights of the Children)

- Right to life
- Right to birth registration
- Right to name and citizenship
- Right to maintain health and get health care services
- Right to a standard of living necessary for the child's mental, physical, moral, spiritual and social development
- Right to be protected from abuse
- Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Right to education
- Right to live in a family
- Right to be protected in family
- Right to privacy
- Right to belong to ethnic, religious or linguistic minority groups
- Right to rest, leisure and recreational activities
- Right to be protected from economic exploitation

The Child's Right to life

Each child has a right to life and the state and all the actors in child protection shall create appropriate conditions for the child to live and grow up (CRC 1992, Article 6).

The Child's Right to birth registration, name and citizenship

Each child has a right to be registered immediately after birth, to have a name, to acquire a nationality and right to know and to be cared for by his/her parents (CRC 1992, Articles 7, 8; LCR 1996, Article 7)

The Child's Right to live in a family and not to be separated from his/her parents against his/her will

Each child has a right to live in a family, recognize parents and not be separated from parents against his/her will, except that it is proven with laws and procedures that the separation is for the child's best interest (CRC 1992, Article 9; LCR 1996, Article 12)

The Child's Right to be protected in family

Each child has a right to be protected in the family and be cared. Child care and upbringing shall be accomplished in the family. The implementation of those actions is under the parents' or other legal representatives' and corresponding authorized state bodies' responsibility (LCR 1996, Article 13).

The Child's Right to health protection

Each child has a right to health protection. According to this preamble the corresponding state bodies provide the child with health care services free of charge (LCR 1996, Article 7). Currently the children from 0-7 year age in Armenia are involved in free of charge health service. The same article stipulates that the corresponding bodies also provide assistance to the families to improve their living conditions.

The Child's Right to be protected from violence

Each child has a right to be protected from physical, mental and other types of violence. Any person is forbidden to exercise violence or any punishment against children, which will humiliate their dignity. The state and the responsible bodies shall protect children from any kind of violation, exploitation, engagement in criminal activities (using drugs, beggary, prostitution, gambling etc) (CRC 1992, Article 34; LCR 1996, Article 9).

The Child's Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Each child has a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and they shall be respected in accordance with the child's age and maturity with some restrictions stipulated by law (CRC 1992, Article 14; LCR 1996, Article 9).

The Child's Right to education

Each child has a right to education and right to select educational institution. The state and the responsible actors shall create conditions necessary for the child's development mentally, physically. According to this preamble the state secondary schools are free of charge. The state shall establish public vocational, sporting, cultural and other centers for children (CRC 1992, Article 28; LCR 1996, Article 11).

The Child's Right to labor

Each child has a right to acquire profession taking into consideration the age, physical abilities, as well as health conditions, with some restrictions stipulated by law on the labor activities prohibited by law (LCR 1996, Article 19).

The Child's Right to rest and leisure

Each child has a right to rest and leisure and to participate in different games and events freely regarding the age. The creation of institutions which target extracurricular, cultural, sporting, health strengthening and other events and initiative are encouraged by the state and the responsible actors (LCR 1996, Article 19).

The Child's Right for protection honor and dignity

In accordance with the article 22 stipulated by the RA LCR, the child also has rights for protection of honor and dignity and they cannot be subject to violation of rights for dignity and honor. The relationships at educational institutions shall be built with mutual respect (LCR 1996, Article 22).

The GoA also makes reforms and policies aiming mainly at reducing the number of children in orphanages and boarding schools. They aim at preventing the children's inflow into those institutions (NSS 2013).

There are also other legislative acts adopted by GoA which are having some provisions related to child protection. They are:

- National Plan of Action (NPA) on Protection of the Rights of the Child for 2004-2015
- Annual Plan on Protection of the Rights of Child (2005)
- RA Family Code
- RA Labor Code
- RA Civic Code
- RA Civic Procedure Code
- Law of the RA on Police
- RA Criminal Code
- RA Criminal Procedure Code
- RA Administrative Violations Code
- RA Administrative Procedure Code
- Law of the RA on Child Rights
- Law of the RA on Social Protection of Child without Parental Care
- Law of the RA on Social Support