



Save the Children

SERVING CHILDREN  
AND THEIR FAMILIES  
**ARMENIA ANNUAL  
REPORT 2015**





# SERVING CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

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### Message from the Country Director

Dear friends and colleagues,

At the end of each year we think back to summarize our achievements and capture lessons learned. For Save the Children in Armenia, 2015 was a year of ambitious goals and challenges, a year of successful projects and new initiatives.

This year our team worked on ten projects and initiatives with the objective of helping children left behind. In Armenia, Save the Children aimed at promoting early childhood care and development of preschool age children, development of alternative care through strengthening and expansion of foster care system, combating sex-selective abortions, increasing resilience of children and communities towards disaster risk, integration of Syrian refugee children and families, as well as fostering equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities. At the same time we carried out an unprecedented large scale analysis of child rights situation in Armenia and supported a number of advocacy initiatives aimed at reflection of child needs and rights in the national legislation.

Our programs have been implemented in close cooperation with Armenian civil society, national and local government, media, service providers and, most importantly, with children, whose participation provided an added value to our work! We are inspired by the commitment and input of Save the Children's Child and Youth Advisory Group members – children and young people whose active participation and input in our initiatives provided significant contribution to our programs. We are grateful to donors who believed in us and trusted us implementation of the programs; we appreciate professional support and technical assistance provided by Save the Children's Member Offices throughout the year. It is due to that multifunctional combined effort and synergy that we were able to reach to more than 30,000 direct beneficiaries all over Armenia.

I also thank Save the Children Armenia team for their exceptional commitment and dedicated work aimed at creating lasting change for children left behind. From Day One I joined Save the Children until today, I go to work with pride and inspiration. One of the main reasons of motivation for me is the team and organizational culture that motivates everyone to contribute their best for the children in Armenia and worldwide.

While evaluating achievements of this year, we also keep thinking about outstanding needs and issues of children and youth in Armenia. In next three years Save the Children will continue working in Armenia toward ensuring child survival, education and protection. That is an ambitious task, and it can only be accomplished if we work hand in hand with all stakeholders – including children and their families.

An important aspect of our work is accountability: Accountability to beneficiaries, donors, partners and public at large. This annual reports is one of the many forms of our accountability to you. I invite you to read the document, which provides an insight into the work we did in 2015 and shares our achievements and lessons learned.

Sincerely,

**Arsen Stepanyan**

Country Director

December 2015

**Our vision.** A world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

**Our mission.** To inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

**About us.** Save the Children is the world's leading independent organisation for children. We work in around **120 countries**. We save children's lives; we fight for their rights; we help them fulfill their potential.

## Save the Children in Armenia

Save the Children established its presence in Armenia in 1993, responding to the diverse results of the triple shock caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and centralized economy, 1991-1994 war with Azerbaijan over the disputed territory of Nagorno Karabakh and the earthquake in 1988. Since then Save the Children has delivered more than \$60 million in relief and development programs to the most vulnerable children and their families. The vital health, education and social initiatives have helped improve basic conditions of the poorest populations through community-based projects and capacity building of local partners and institutions. Save the Children actively collaborated with central and local government bodies, international and national non-governmental organizations and agencies to protect children's rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



In 2015, we worked to strengthen national child protection system, improve the protection of children without parental care, combat gender-biased abortions, enhance child participation in decision making, promote access and quality of early childhood care and education, endorse healthy lifestyle, increase resilience of children with and without special needs toward disasters, create and enabling environment for refugee integration, and promote vocational education and employment of people with disabilities.

With a commitment to create lasting change in the lives of children in Armenia, we directly reached around 30,000 beneficiaries, and we are proud to have achieved significant success in our work.



## Child Protection

### Children thrive in a family environment

Family strengthening and alternative care are one of the cornerstones of Save the Children's work in Armenia. Children who cannot be looked after by their own family have a right to special care and must be looked after properly, by people who always consider what is best for each child and respect their views, religion, culture and language. With a view to realizing the right of children to live in a supportive and caring family environment, as well as to have access to community-based social and educational services, Save the Children contributes to strengthen and diversify alternative care system in Armenia and create family strengthening support services. Our contribution aims to support a comprehensive legislative and regulatory framework based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for strengthening of family substitution service system with the diversification of types of alternative care and establishment of meaningful family assistance and professional case management system in resolving child and family cases.

### Children are born irrespective of their sex

Since 1990s Armenia has witnessed a growing sex imbalance at birth, resulting in sex ratio at birth at the very high level of 114-115 of male births per 100 female births. This corresponds to one of the highest levels of birth masculinity observed anywhere in the world, surpassed only by China (118) and Azerbaijan (116). If this tendency continues, by 2060 Armenia will lose around 93,000 females which is a significant figure for the country having a population of approximately 3 million.

Save the Children's efforts towards combating gender-based discrimination aim to contribute to the reduction of gender-biased sex selection in Armenia through public education and mobilization. It has an ambitious goal of achieving at least a 10% reduction by the end of its lifetime. While improvement of policy framework aimed at prevention of gender-biased sex selection is carried out by a partner organization, Save the Children focuses on public awareness raising through development and production of information, education and communication materials, traditional and social media initiatives, mobilization of community resources and efforts, training and capacity building of various stakeholder groups including target population, media, healthcare providers, local authorities, media journalists, civil society organizations etc.

## Education

### Preschool education is accessible for children in Armenia

When children receive good quality care and learning opportunities in their earliest years, they have a better chance to grow up healthy, to do well in school, and to reach their full potential in well-being and productivity. With this in view, the Government of Armenia has prioritized improvement of quality of preschool services and increasing of number of children attending preschools. Meanwhile, the level of preschool attendance is very low, with only 27 percent of children enrolled in any type of preschool. Save the Children, faithful to its commitment to increasing access to Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) services and creating preschool education opportunities for children, continues its work on establishment of school-based inclusive ECCD centres in rural communities of Armenia and Yerevan. In 2015 more than 450 children from eight villages of Gegharqunik and Lori provinces and two schools in Yerevan benefited from quality age-relevant care and education and successfully transitioned to primary school.

Since its establishment in Armenia, Save the Children improved or established more than 100 preschools benefitting approximately 20,000 children, and trained around 210 teachers and caregivers on interactive child-centered teaching methodologies. Our efforts are consistent, however we understand that by building one preschool at a time we cannot achieve universal access. Therefore, in 2015 we started active contribution to development of new preschool national strategy. We are working to ensure that national legislation and strategies prioritize preschool education, particularly for children with disabilities, children in rural and economically disadvantaged families, and other children left behind.

### Children are More Resilient toward Disaster Risk

Armenia is located in a disaster prone area. Children - especially those with special needs - are exposed to high risk during emergencies. Paradoxically, the needs and rights of these vulnerable groups and their caregivers are often omitted from disaster risk reduction policies and projects. As a result, they are less informed about preparing for, mitigating and responding to disasters. Schools and other educational institutions are not disaster resilient, building facilities are in poor condition with non-operational emergency exit doors and collapsed stairs, lack of emergency evacuation equipment, first aid kits etc.

With this in view, Save the Children prioritizes disaster risk reduction in Armenia, aiming to increase the resilience of the most vulnerable children in the country, their families, caregivers and communities. Our inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction contributes to developing safer schools and communities for children with disabilities. We also work to ensure the voices of those children are reflected in national policies and legislation.

### Children Learn in Healthy School Environment

Another important area of our programs is the improvement of school health and nutrition services and practices through supporting the development of school health and nutrition standards and policies, establishing school hygiene facilities, promoting children's healthy lifestyle and behavior, and improving parents' and service providers' knowledge and skills.

In 2015, up to 800 children were engaged in participation and dialogue with adults, parents, teachers and decision makers. They were empowered to raise their voices and advocate for better health, hygiene and nutrition practices in their schools, families and communities through introduced 'Child to Child' approach;



### Children and Youth are Provided with Inclusive Vocational Education Opportunities

Some of the most challenging barriers in socialization of children and youth with disabilities include lack of accessible environment, stereotypic attitudes of general populations, lack of educational opportunities including vocational training programs, lack of employment-related services, and poor esteem. All of these obstacles also place persons with disabilities and their families at risk of becoming more socially vulnerable. Vocational skills training can bridge the gap between disability and future employment and disability. Save the Children's approach to promoting inclusive vocational education for children and youth with disabilities includes, inter alia:

- **Support to professional orientation of young people with disabilities** through organization of children and parents' group discussions in boarding/ special schools as well as organization of awareness raising meetings in communities;
- **Improvement of physical and cognitive learning environments of vocational institutions to integrate PWD**, through capacity building of teachers and staff and development of an adapted methodology and supporting materials.

## Child Rights Governance

### Analysis to Better Address Children's Needs

Children face many problems in Armenia. In order to be able to better respond to children's needs, for the first time in Armenia a comprehensive Child Rights Situation Analysis (CRSA) was carried out. A CRSA is an in-depth description of the extent to which children's rights are being exercised and an analysis of the obstacles to, and enablers of, their realization. The aim of CRSA is to gather sufficient information to produce a 'good enough' analysis to inform strategic decision-making. The Child Rights Situation Analysis is a valuable tool for the government, donors, civil society and all the stakeholders who strive to ensure child rights fulfilment in Armenia.

### Effective Inclusion of Child Rights in the National Constitution

Constitutionalization of child rights is an important national mechanism to regulate the protection of those rights. Meanwhile, constitutionalization of such rights should be implemented through key principles and be based on the best interests of the child. Thus all the possible efforts should be made both to amend the respective legislation and revise the existing practices, to ensure that the best interests of children (as autonomous rights-holders) are a primary consideration in any public and private action aimed at children's protection and development.

With this in view, and given the government's initiative to improve the Constitution of Armenia, Save the Children submitted a list of observations and proposals in connection with the proper reflection of child rights in Armenia in the draft constitutional amendments.

### Child Participation as a Guarantee for Rights Protection

Save the Children prioritizes participation of children in issues concerning them and makes every effort to make their voices heard. Unfortunately, societal stereotypes that children's opinions are irrelevant are still strong in Armenia. Lack of opportunities to practice forming and voicing opinions reflects children's limited self-perceptions as rights' holders and underdeveloped participation abilities as well.

Save the Children takes every opportunity to advocate for and ensure child participation in discussing and making decisions. We have established an advisory group of bright and talented children and youth who actively participate in planning, implementation and evaluation of our initiatives. The Global Day of Citizen Action, discussion of constitutionalisation of child rights, presentation of child rights situation analysis, organization of photo exhibition on the World Refugee Day, to name just a few, are among the events carried out with immediate involvement and contributed efforts of members of this advisory group and other children mobilized by them.

One of the important areas of our work is out of school work with children and youth to promote their participation and build their capacity, knowledge, attitude, behavior and practices in various areas including hygiene, healthy lifestyle, children's rights and participation, self-protection against violence, tolerance etc. Participatory methodologies - including 'Child to Child' approach - have been applied involving children from 8 to 16 year old. Teachers, parents and caregivers have been included to reinforce the obtained knowledge and skills. Our projects included children from numerous communities throughout the country bringing together refugees, locals, disabled, and other vulnerable or marginalized children.

Save the Children's Internship Academy provides technical assistance to learning and professional orientation for youth entering job market. In 2015 we had eight volunteers from Armenian, Myanmar, UK and the United States. Overall during the year they made 1000 hour contribution to our volunteer programs.

## Livelihood Improvement through Enforcement of Job and Vocational Education Opportunities

Save the Children is giving high importance to livelihood development as a cross-cutting theme and a foundation to ensure well-being of children and their families. Short and long-term income generation, business development and social partnership models represent the type of interventions that we have been applying to support vulnerable populations including refugees and people with disabilities.

**Our refugee initiatives** aimed to contribute to the well-being of displaced Syrian population through skills development as well as their engagement in activities that promote their participation, integration and empowerment. Development of displaced people’s marketable skills is one of the most important strategic objectives of the project. In addition, the project is prioritizing the opportunities for the displaced families’ income increase and their active participation in local-level advocacy.

**Employment of people with disabilities** was another important direction of Save the Children work in 2015. Establishment of an effective model for provision of employment and vocational education services to PWD in Armenia through:



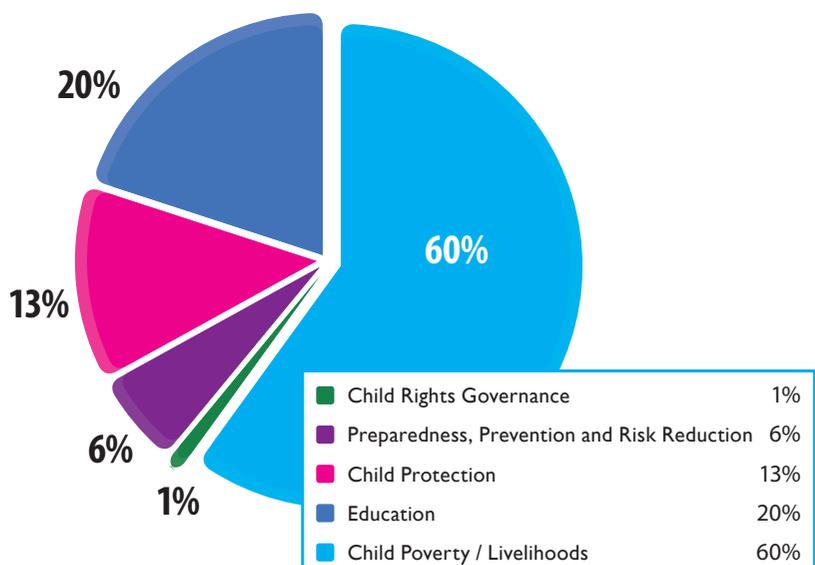
1. Personal development of PWDs through assessments, skill enhancement and job placement;
2. Capacity building of service providers, disabled people’s organizations, public/private employers, and vocational education institutions to meet the needs of PWDs;
3. Use of mass media, internet and conferences to increase public awareness and outreach to PWDs; and
4. External technical support to the GoA in developing, implementing and monitoring employment services for PWDs and related strategies and policies.

## Finance

2015 was another successful year for Save the Children, leveraging funds for continuous programming for children and their families in Armenia. During the year we had eleven international and foreign donors who contributed to our programs. The overall support to Save the Children annual budget constituted more than USD 1.425.000.

In addition to international support local and national government agencies, business and other partners provided match contributions to our efforts of over USD 180.000.

Below is a pie chart demonstrating the percentage of our funds on each of our thematic work area.



## Donors

The grants provided by government agencies, multilateral institutions and organizations enabled Save the Children to operate projects and initiatives that significantly improved the lives of children in 2015. On behalf of children in need, we extend our gratefulness for making this change possible. We also acknowledge the trust towards Save the Children to enhance that change.

We at the Armenia Country Office also feel thankful for the support of Save the Children Member organizations provided for promoting positive changes in the lives of children in Armenia.

On a separate note, we would like to thank our local governments for their continuous partnership and contribution to achieving tangible results.

### Donors:

United States Agency for International Development  
 U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration  
 European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO)  
 UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)  
 UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
 European Union

### Save the Children Members Organizations:

Save the Children USA  
 Save the Children Netherlands  
 Save the Children Switzerland

## Partners

SCI Armenia acknowledges that Partners and Partnerships have a big role to play to ensure successful implementation of the country programs. Partnership is essential for maximizing our strengths and delivering more for children. In Armenia we are committed to build partnerships through collaboration with children, civil society organisations, communities, governments and the private sector to share knowledge, influence others and build capacity to ensure children's rights are met as per the Theory of Change.

In 2015 we have had over 50 partner organizations with whom we look forward to fruitful partnership also in coming years.

We are thankful to all of our partners and particularly to

### Government Structures

- Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations
- Ministry of Diaspora
- Ministry of Education and Science
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Labor and Social Issues
- National Institute of Education
- Police of the Republic of Armenia
- Regional Authorities
- Republic of Armenia Human Rights Defender
- Republic of Armenia Investigative committee
- State Crisis Management Academy
- State Employment Agency
- State Migration Agency

### Local self-governance bodies/communities

- boyan municipality
- Spitak municipality
- Vanadzor municipality
- Yerevan municipality
- Local Communities in Gegharkunik and Lori Marzes

### International and foreign organizations

- Activa International Foundation
- Council of Europe Office in Yerevan
- Counterpart International
- DVV International
- GIZ
- KASA Swiss Humanitarian Foundation
- OCHA
- OSF
- OXFAM
- UNDP
- UNFPA
- UNHCR
- UNICEF
- UNISDR
- World Bank
- World Vision

### Local organisations

- Aleppo NGO
- Apella Institute for Policy Analysis and Dialogue
- Armavir Development Center NGO
- Armenian Red Cross Society NGO
- Armenian State Pedagogical University
- Astghatsolq NGO
- Bridge of Hope NGO
- Caritas NGO
- Center for Coordination of Syrian Armenians Issues NGO
- Child protection Network
- Children's Support Centre Foundation DRR National Platform
- Education Technologies Support Center
- Full Life NGO
- Health facilities
- Helsinki Committee of Armenia
- Hope, Life, Belief, Future Youth NGO
- Human Dignity and Peace Foundation NGO
- Huysi Metsamor NGO
- International Center for Human Development NGO
- Khariskh NGO
- Khoran Ard Intellectual Center NGO
- Martuni Women Community Council NGO
- Maternal and Child Health Alliance
- Miasin NGO
- Mission Armenia NGO
- Mountainous Flowers NGO
- Partnership and Teaching NGO
- Prkutyun NGO
- Professional Education Reforms NGO
- Pyunik NGO
- Regional Development and Research Center NGO
- Round Table of Churches Foundation
- Scarp NGO
- Schools and kindergartens
- Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center
- Spitak farmer NGO
- Tsiatsan NGO
- TVETs
- Unison NGO for Support of People with Special Needs

### Business structures

- Ordfilm LLC
- Zartprint LLC
- Babajanyan IE
- Lentex LLC
- Hranush Sargsyan LLC
- Instigate Mobile LLC

## Overview of our Strategy 2016-2018

### GOAL:

To inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

### Child Poverty

Both female and male caregivers of very poor families including refugees and PWDs are equipped with necessary knowledge and skills, have increased disposable income through entrepreneurship and employment, and are capable to care for their children's survival, learning and protection during disasters and economic hardship.

Refugee adolescent girls and boys, youth with disabilities, children in/from residential care institutions and young mothers, benefit from promoted and adopted evidence-based models of inclusive vocational education and life skills development.

Child poverty indicators are reflected in national government programmes and action plans.

Assessed root causes of child poverty; advocacy in partnership with Civil Society Organizations (CSO) for actions to reduce child poverty.

### Education

Deprived girls and boys in Armenia have improved access to quality inclusive ECCD services.

Children in Armenia, including most deprived, learn in healthy, safe and inclusive school environment.

Save the Children contributes to effective governance systems promoting child-centred and inclusive schools and pre-schools.

Educational institutions supported by Save the Children in Armenia have the capacity to provide continuous education services during humanitarian crises.

Continuous access to basic and ECCD education learning process is ensured from the first days of humanitarian crisis.

### Protection

Alternative care services are available throughout the country and application of various Foster Care models is adopted by the State government and used for foster care placement of children without appropriate care.

Children are protected from PHP in the home and in school through parenting trainings, anti-bullying programs, and legal mechanisms.

Boys and girls including those with disabilities are protected from sexual violence through child sexual abuse avoidance training and Internet safety promotion measures to prevent child on-line sexual abuse and other forms of on-line violence.

Staff and partners are prepared to protect children from violence in emergency situations including disasters and conflicts.

Collected evidence on children's harmful work practices.

Children are protected by a stronger child protection system with adequate human and financial resources, clear policies and clear roles and responsibilities of state bodies.

Gender-biased harmful practices are decreased.

### Child Rights Governance

Systematic evidence on child rights implementation is available through improvement of monitoring systems and advocating for achieving greater accountability with child participation.

Children are engaged in systematic child rights monitoring at local and central level.

National and local governance institutions have the capacity and allocate the necessary resources to deliver child rights.

Assessed state budget allocation and public spending on essential services for children and make data available for duty bearers.



**Save the Children**

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