Executive Summary

Achievements
The midterm review of the 2010-2015 Government of Armenia-UNICEF country programme of cooperation culminated with a high-level meeting in April 2013 highlighting UNICEF’s important role in supporting social sector reforms to enhance equity for children in the country. In 2013, UNICEF Armenia continued supporting the Government by providing policy advice and technical expertise; costing policy models and national programmes; conducting evaluations; and strengthening national capacities and systems. Major milestones in the protection and promotion of Armenian children’s rights achieved during 2013 include:

- Introduction of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health as a tool for assessing and certifying disability and special education needs. This marked a critical step in shifting the model for understanding disability and planning interventions from a medical-based to a social-based one.
- Developing and launching “the First 1,000 Most Critical Days” comprehensive strategy to promote action and investment in early nutrition by leveraging resources and engaging new actors in efforts to improve maternal and child nutrition and by catalysing collaboration and partnership across sectors.
- Developing and approving of detailed plans and methodology to transform two residential care institutions, providing a model for de-institutionalization in Armenia;
- Aligning the community database with the Armenia Info system in order to allow the online tracking of all 760 first level administrative indicators including on education, health, sanitation and social protection services. This was part of the institutionalization process of community data collection as prescribed by a decree of the Minister of Territorial Administration.

Shortfalls
In 2013, UNICEF Armenia continued to provide technical support to social sector ministries in public finance management including through the Mid-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) exercise (2014-2016). This allowed UNICEF to actively influence the direction of strategic reform and related budgetary forecasts in the best interests of children. Potential positive outcomes of this initiative were marred by the unexpected decision of the Government to increase the salaries of public servants which led to the freezing of almost all new budget requests in the social sector.

There are clear impediments blocking institutional cooperation between the social sectors: health care, social protection, child protection, and education. This includes lack of application practices and gaps in legislation that limit the responsibility of the Government to ensure inter-sectoral cooperation. UNICEF will continue advocacy and technical assistance to strengthen cooperation between the social sectors so that they can provide effective support to vulnerable families.

Collaborative partnerships
Consensus around key strategic reforms in the social sector and cooperation has notably increased in the last few years. This includes cooperation: with the World Bank around Integrated Social Services (ISS) reform and promoting the expansion of pre-school education; with the EU in promoting the social protection of families affected by migration; and with USAID in improving nutrition and supporting deinstitutionalisation reform. The year 2013 also saw the strengthening strategic partnership cooperation with the EU with UNICEF effectively advocating for the inclusion of child focused areas in the EU 2014-2017 cooperation programme for Armenia.

Country Situation as Affecting Children & Women
Armenia is classified as a lower middle income country with a medium human development index value of 0.729 in 2012, positioning the country at 87 out of 187 countries and territories. In 2009, Armenia’s GDP declined by 14 per cent. It slowly recovered in 2010 to 2.1 per cent growth, and picked up to 4.6 per cent growth in 2011, before slowing down to 3.8 per cent growth in 2012. Although the country achieved remarkable development results over the past decade, it was deeply affected by the 2008 global economic crisis, which prevented a further decrease in poverty rates. Extreme poverty increased quickly during the
recession. An estimated 41.9 per cent of children live in poverty and about 5 per cent in extreme poverty. The situation is worse for children with disabilities and their families, with 65 per cent experiencing poverty and 8 per cent experiencing extreme poverty.

The 2013 Budget Law shows a decrease or no change in allocations to the social sectors. According to the 2013-2015 MTEF, budget allocations for the health sector will continue to decrease from 1.54 per cent in 2013 to 1.31 per cent in 2015. Likewise, budget allocations for the education sector will decrease from 2.3 per cent in 2013 to 2.2 per cent in 2014. 2013 also saw a decrease in the level of spending on family benefits, raising serious concerns as family benefits continue to play a crucial role for extremely poor families. The low coverage of family benefits (66 per cent in 2012) does not help reduce the level of extreme poverty and, in fact, increases inequality in the absence of alternative social services within the country.

Moreover, the 2013 budget does not adequately support the implementation of the deinstitutionalization policy in Armenia, substantially increasing budget allocations for residential child care institutions, but providing insufficient funds for the expansion of alternative community-based and family substitute care services, such as foster care and day care services. Other areas such as data collection and analysis, disaster preparedness and management - which play an important role in shaping policies for the protection of children in emergencies – continue to be underfunded. With the aim to mitigate budgetary barriers that appear across social sectors, UNICEF has continued supporting the Government in improving the developed mid-term financial frameworks and the effectiveness of respective budgetary programmes.

Since the late 2000s, Armenia has been engaged in extensive negotiations with the European Union around an Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. During this time and as a result of these negotiations, the role of the EU had significantly increased in all aspects of reform planning, including that concerning child protection. The political establishment, however, reversed course and decided instead to deepen its engagement with the Customs Union led by Russia. This move necessitated the review of the draft 2014-2020 engagement strategy and related reforms.

The economic decline has not only affected the poverty alleviation process, but also jeopardized the achievement of many of the national Millennium Development Goals targets. The latest MDG progress report showed that the country was unlikely to achieve the national targets for Goal 1 (poverty and hunger) by 2015. According to the 2010 Demographic and Health Survey in Armenia (ADHS), the nutritional status of children is deteriorating: stunting increased to 19 per cent for children below 5 during the period 2005-2010. Overall, 5 per cent of children are underweight and 15 per cent are overweight. In addition, the ADHS 2005 found that 37 per cent of preschool children and 25 per cent of women of childbearing age were anaemic [1]. The nutrition indicators mentioned show that malnutrition continues to be a serious challenge for children in Armenia, and one of the areas where inequity is starkest. In fact they show that the country is almost on the threshold of a public health emergency.

The economic decline also jeopardizes the achievement of the MDG Goal 4 (child mortality). The ADHS 2010 revealed that the infant mortality rate (IMR) stands at 13 per cent and the child mortality rate (CMR) at 16 per cent, with higher levels of infant mortality in rural areas.

[1] Demographic and Health Survey in Armenia, 2005 (ADHS 2010 did not include biometric measurement for anaemia).
Country Programme Analytical Overview

The MTR concluded that the country programme of cooperation is on track and continues to contribute towards the achievement of the long-term, systemic results that were planned in the CPD. Major adjustments to the overall design of the country programme, the theory of change (a UNICEF theory for social inclusion which “defines all building blocks required to bring about a given long-term goal”), and the results were not necessary. UNICEF supports the effective coordination addressing the most evident inequities affecting children.

UNICEF continued to promote principles of social protection. The programme supported national and regional systems in reaching marginalized families and increasing their resilience. This especially included: increasing the accountability and decision making capacity of service providers; revising funding formulas to increase the effectiveness of social protection; and improving the dialogue and cooperation between local administrations and civil society regarding regional social services plans.

In 2013, UNICEF continued to support the deinstitutionalisation reform which includes: closing residential care institutions and promoting community based services instead; advocating to ban the institutionalization of children below 3 years of age; and developing alternative care services that ensure the social inclusion of children at risk of separation from their families.

The strong focus on inclusive education continues with the development of a long term strategy for the education system in Armenia; the use of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth model to assess children is all areas and ensure tailored education plans for children with special education needs; and the establishment of support services for families of children with disabilities following the transformation of residential care centres.

In the health sector, the focus was on the reduction of infant mortality, prevention of child morbidity, and improvement of neonatal care. Special focus was placed on the reduction of regional disparities related to nutrition, ratification of new laws on breastfeeding and flour fortification and the mainstreaming of counselling services for parents and caregivers on nutrition practices. The country programme also put increased focus on strategies to improve adolescents’ health and to reduce out-of-pocket payments in the health sector.

The Mid Term Review (MTR) consultations reinforced stakeholder support for the strong inter-sectoral profile of the country programme. There is growing consensus among country programme stakeholders that there is a need to further strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation in providing tailored solutions to respond to the needs of vulnerable children. All the line Ministries cooperating with UNICEF were engaged in defining a national framework to formulate protocols of cooperation between services and service professionals in order to regulate referrals, shared assessments, and team response to identified needs.

The sustainability of social sector reforms, grounded in the protection of child rights and equity-based principles, depends on the incorporation of budgetary support into the country programme planning and analysis. UNICEF continued to provide expert technical support for the capacity development of staff in the Ministries of Labour, Education and Health, and also for public finance management to present well-articulated and evidence-based programme budgets.

Humanitarian Assistance

UNICEF contributed to the support of Syrian Armenian children and teachers who had recently left Syria and were enrolled in the Syrian Armenian school. The support consisted of opening a pre-school for Syrian Armenian children as well as supporting the capacity building of teachers in psycho-social support. UNICEF also co-organized a summer camp for Syrian Armenian children. These activities reached around 300 children and 19 teachers and resulted also in an increase in the engagement of civil society organizations in the response to the arrival of Syrian Armenian families in Armenia.
Effective Advocacy

Initiating action to meet benchmarks

In 2013, UNICEF intensified its advocacy initiatives around equity issues and the protection of children’s rights. Significant policy initiatives were introduced as a direct result of UNICEF’s advocacy work over the last two years. Significant progress was also made in the dialogue with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education around child care reform, especially around deinstitutionalisation and the transformation of residential care institutions and development of alternative care services. This was demonstrated by the request of the ministers to support the development of transformation plans and the revising of funding plans for residential care institutions. The Prime Minister approved the transformation plans - which were developed with technical support from UNICEF - for two residential care institutions.

Convening national partners around a robust equity agenda related to child nutrition, UNICEF and the Government of Armenia launched “the First 1,000 Most Critical Days” comprehensive, multi-component strategy implemented in one of the provinces with the worst nutrition indicators. The initiative promotes action and investment in early nutrition by informing and advocating key stakeholders about the impact and cost-effectiveness of investing in nutrition during the critical first 1,000 day window, leveraging resources and engaging new actors in efforts to improve maternal and child nutrition, and catalysing collaboration and partnership across sectors. It provided positive resonance in political commitment in supporting strong national regulatory environments for optimal infant feeding practices and foods, including adherence to international standards and guidelines.

To accelerate and strengthen the policy discussion around the National Flour Fortification Programme, UNICEF Armenia, in collaboration with the Flour Fortification Initiative, initiated a study visit to Canada - one of the most advanced and experienced countries in flour fortification - for high level Armenian Government officials. The Canadian experience with different aspects of flour fortification, particularly, legislation, production of fortified flour, quality assurance, collaboration mechanisms between different government agencies provided strong evidence for further promotion of flour fortification legislation in Armenia. As a result, the Government approved, with agreement of all in-line ministries and agencies, a draft Law on Initiation of Flour Fortification which was submitted to the National Assembly for endorsement.

UNICEF presented a report with expert analysis and a proposal for an ICF-based alternative to the existing model determining disability (and therefore eligibility for services and benefits) at the parliamentary hearing of the new Law on Social Protection and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. The report resonated with the Minister for Social Issues and the Chair for Social Issues and UNICEF was asked for its support in revising the model. A new concept paper was developed with the technical assistance of UNICEF and was approved by the Government.

Capacity Development

Mostly met benchmarks

In 2013, UNICEF continued to engage with partners to develop the capacity of public service providers by developing their knowledge and skills in priority areas. Within the ISS programme, UNICEF helped prepare a cadre of professionals in the social protection services (case managers) by equipping them with an in-depth understanding of the fundamentals of effective service delivery and highlighting the importance of cooperation among various agencies. In 2013 only, 50 case managers started identifying, assessing and developing individual social projects for vulnerable families. In addition more than 90 professionals from sub-national authorities gained the necessary knowledge and skills to design territorial social plans of their regions.

In 2013, a model was developed to strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation between the Ministries of Health, Education, and Labour and Social Issues on the delivery of health services to school-age children and adolescents in three pilot sites. The model combines innovative approaches to delivering services directly in
schools and mechanisms of joining the efforts of health, education and social support services in responding to the needs of the most vulnerable children and adolescents. The current system of routine screenings and check-ups has been revised to ensure its effectiveness in terms of early detection of health and psychosocial problems among children and adolescents. Overall, being based on the existing infrastructures and considering the available resources, the pilot model brings health services closer to beneficiaries and ensures their universal coverage and accessibility.

Within the DIPECHO project on Supporting Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) amongst Vulnerable Communities, UNICEF supported the capacity development of national institutions within two flagship DRR programmes: (i) the comprehensive DRR teaching and learning programme, which addresses DRR issues and includes units on designing effective DRR approaches, gender in DRR, and psychosocial support to children in emergencies and (ii) comprehensive school disaster management, with schools establishing DRR teams. UNICEF also supported the development, piloting and dissemination of 12 child-focused and gender-sensitive DRR teaching and learning materials for preschool and school students, teachers, head teachers, administrators, parents and community members.

UNICEF continued to provide a year-round training and mentoring curriculum for pre-school teachers in 70 more communities where new preschools were established or expanded, covering child-friendly and inclusive teaching, and parental involvement.

The CO also invested in e-learning as a possible mode of teaching and learning. A set of four training modules will be transformed into e-courses as part of a pilot initiative. Two of them, on - "ArmeniaInfo“ and “Case Management“ - will be available for end users in early 2014. Modules on "Territorial Social Planning" and "Infant and Child Feeding" are in the process of being developed. These e-courses are being specifically designed for decision makers, public professionals at various levels, service providers, researchers and academia.

**Communication for Development**

*Partially met benchmarks*

The institutionalization of C4D principles and values contributed to the adoption of audience-centred and evidence-based approaches in communication about social inclusion and nutrition.

Following the results of the UNICEF "It’s About Inclusion" survey (2012), UNICEF supported formative research on the perceptions, attitudes and practices towards children with disabilities in Armenia. The qualitative findings from the research were used to develop the communication strategy for the 2013-2016 nationwide campaign on social inclusion of children with disabilities in Armenia. The aim of the campaign is to raise public awareness on the abilities of children with disabilities, demonstrating their skills and potential to overcome discriminatory and stereotypical attitudes and to promote their full inclusion into society. As part of the preparatory activities, a national coalition of NGOs was established that will work together under the umbrella of the campaign to promote the rights of children with disabilities in Armenia.

C4D is also strongly embedded in "The First 1,000 Most Critical Days“ child nutrition strategy launched by the Government of Armenia and UNICEF aimed at raising awareness and behavioural changes among parents and public at large about optimal infant feeding practices and foods during the critical 1,000 days to address emerging nutrition issues in the country.

**Service Delivery**

*Mostly met benchmarks*

With financial support from the EC and in partnership with Project Harmony International, UNICEF continued to support a very important initiative aimed at mobilizing community resources to deal with juvenile delinquency and creating resources for the reintegation of children in contact and in conflict with the law.
Since 2011, UNICEF has been supporting 11 Community Justice Centres (CJC) hosted and operated by local NGOs. These centres pursue programming that is deeply rooted in alternative justice theory and bring together victims, offenders, families, and other key stakeholders in a variety of settings, help offenders understand the implications of their actions and provide opportunities for them to establish a positive reconnection to the community. The CJC specialists, law enforcement officers and community members constitute a Restorative Board which develops rehabilitation plans for children referred to the centres by the community and law enforcement officers on local level. The CJC have proven to be a successful and constructive strategy for preventing juvenile delinquency and enabling rehabilitation/reintegration. UNICEF, in collaboration with other partners, continued to advocate for the recognition of the CJC in the state legislation and direct funding from the community/state budgets.

UNICEF continued to address existing regional inequities in the access to lifesaving services for newborns (70 per cent of infant mortality cases in Armenia happen during the first 28 days of life). Intensive Neonatal Care (INC) units established in regional facilities have improved the access of the rural and disadvantaged population to newborn emergency interventions by reducing the referral of cases from remote areas to the capital, thereby increasing the survival of children. To ensuring continuity of neonatal services at hospital and PHC levels, the neonatal component of Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses has been introduced in PHC facilities linked to the INC units.

To mitigate the social needs of vulnerable families of labour migrants, a critical mass of case managers started working in four target regions as part of the Integrated Social Services reform. Working with the most poor and vulnerable migrant families, the case managers assesses the situation of each family based on the specific vulnerability factors and needs of each family member. From April 2013 to date, 1,000 such families were identified; 630 had their needs assessed; and 239 individual social projects were developed by case managers.

**Strategic Partnerships**

*Mostly met benchmarks*

The tradition of strong cooperation with key national and international partners engaged in the social sector continued throughout 2013. In particular, UNICEF continued its strategic partnership with The World Bank to provide technical advice to the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Territorial Administration on the development of the Integrated Social Services reform, especially the infrastructural component of the reform, the integration of databases as well as on Case Management practices and territorial social planning.

In 2013, UNICEF also strengthened its relationship with USAID which resulted in the mobilization of additional resources to support the strategic developments in the areas of child nutrition and de-institutionalization reforms.

UNICEF Armenia and the Non-Government Organization (NGO), Bridge of Hope, which is the key civil society organization promoting inclusive education, partnered on revising the special education needs assessment in accordance with ICF-CY and international standards. UNICEF also provided technical support to Bridge of Hope in developing a model for a resource centre for inclusion. The DIPECHO Steering Committee, involving different partners and stakeholders in the area of Disaster Risk Reduction in Education and Community Development, ensured the coordination and monitoring of the disaster risk reduction actions. In addition, the Education Thematic Group functioning within the Government established the DRR National Platform which, co-led by UNICEF, serves as both a national coordination mechanism for promoting DRR in education and a platform for advocating relevant policies, strategies and models addressing the needs and concerns of children, including the most vulnerable ones. The CO has established a strategic partnership with the MoES, MES, Ministry of Urban Development (MUD), WB, ADB, UNDP and OCHA around developing a common ground and methodology for school safety assessment to identify and address the needs of the “most at risk” schools in the “most at risk” areas.
As co-chair together with OSCE and the Ministry of Labour of the expanded thematic group on Gender (GTG), UNICEF continued to facilitate debates on the major aspects of gender related reforms including relevant legislation and policies. The GTG platform was also instrumental in reacting to a major anti-gender campaign aimed primarily at revisiting the draft law on gender equality and eliminating gender as a concept from all pieces of legislation.

**Knowledge Management**

*Partially met benchmarks*

In 2013, UNICEF reinforced its knowledge management support, including strengthened resident capacity for technical assistance and the implementation of a knowledge management strategy for the country programme. Various aspects of knowledge management have been promoted in different programmes. More specifically:

- A nationwide phone based survey was conducted to measure the social norms and public opinion towards children with disabilities. The survey revealed that the public opinion is quite favourable towards persons with physical disabilities but there are strong prejudices against children with intellectual disabilities. The tolerance level is higher among younger participants;
- A baseline survey was initiated to assess the level of access to, use of and satisfaction with social services delivery among vulnerable groups, socially vulnerable families and children, including migrant families, as well as the impact of social services delivery on the socio-economic situation of these families. The final presentation and publication is expected by February 2014;
- Within the framework of “Support the Set-up of a Monitoring and Evaluation System for Integrated "Social Service in Armenia" project a concept paper on Setting up a monitoring and evaluation system and an evaluation report on Integrated Social Services were produced. These documents generated a new round of policy consultations around monitoring systems in the context of ISS reform.

To facilitate access of national partners to external knowledge sources and networks, a sub-regional workshop on “Strengthening National Strategies for Effective Reduction of Child Stunting” was organized by UNICEF HQ and Regional Office in Yerevan in May 2013. It brought together stakeholders in the area of child nutrition from all over Armenia. Georgia and Albania to review national strategies and programmes, highlight existing systemic gaps and re-energize the national commitment to child rights and welfare, e.g. through developing Plans of Action that would best fit the local circumstances. The event played an instrumental role in acquiring knowledge; advocating and promoting the nutrition issue in the country and resulted in reinforced political commitment at different levels.

**Human Rights Based Approach to Cooperation**

*Mostly met benchmarks*

The human rights based approach (HRBA) was used to design the education programme with a particular focus on reaching the group with the least access to education - children with disabilities. The programme addressed the bottlenecks that impeded inclusive education at different system levels. It includes a campaign promoting inclusion to address social stigma; providing technical advice on relevant legislation; promoting inter-sectoral cooperation in identifying and referring out of school children; transforming special schools into resource centres for inclusion and community based services; and –strengthening the special education needs assessment and individual education planning processes.

**Gender Equality**

*Mostly met benchmarks*

Armenia ranked 60\textsuperscript{th} out of 187 countries on the gender inequality index (GII) in 2011 and 51\textsuperscript{st} among 155 countries on the gender development index (DGI) and 93\textsuperscript{rd} out of 109 countries in the gender empowerment
measure (GEM) in 2009. Inequality can be seen in almost all sectors and aspects of life including political representation, economic activities and the social sector. In 2013, UNICEF Armenia significantly expanded its scope of involvement in promoting gender equality. In 2013, with Swiss National Committee support, the CO initiated a major capacity building initiative at the sub-national level involving more than 100 professionals from Permanent Commissions on Gender Issues from all ten regions and the capital, Yerevan.

Following the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action that calls on countries, including Armenia, to set up a gender equality mechanism in the Government bureaucracy, and in response to the Prime Minister’s request, UNICEF took the leadership in developing a policy paper analysing the options for creating national mechanism for gender equality in Armenia and recommended one of the options to the Government. The policy paper was submitted to the Government to inform public discussion and debate with multiple stakeholders in February 2014.

In recognition of UNICEF’s important role in gender-related issues, the CO was invited to participate in the activities of the National Women’s Council chaired by the Prime Minister. This enabled UNICEF to bring the attention of the highest-level policy makers to various problems facing women and girls.

Prenatal sex selection was highlighted as emerging issue on the agendas of different UN agencies. As part of the Swiss National Committee supported project, and in cooperation with Zurich University, UNICEF started developing robust research that would inform a tailored campaign aimed at strengthening the role and value of girls in the Armenian society.

UNICEF continued its efforts to mainstream gender in programmatic interventions. The most remarkable case relates to mainstreaming gender in DRR materials that are not only addressing risk reduction and preparedness, but also challenging gender stereotypes in relation to safety and rescue.

**Environmental Sustainability**

*Initiating action to meet benchmarks*

UNICEF advocated that cooperation between the environmental educational organizations and experts in the field should be an important element of national discussions on the development of environmental education policies which will ensure an environment fit for all children. Ten network member-organizations developed a common approach towards strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations to advocate for environmental education programmes and activities the implementation and reinforcement of policy for environmental education in order to further the goals of the UN Decade “Education for Sustainable Development” in Armenia.

**South-South and Triangular Cooperation**

Using Brazil’s “Zero Hunger” strategy as an example, the Government of Armenia and UNICEF launched the “critical first 1,000-day window” comprehensive nutrition strategy and initiated the development and introduction of mechanisms which combine health, education and social protection efforts with local food production.
Narrative Analysis by Programme Component Results and Intermediate Results

Armenia - 0260

PC 1 - Child rights monitoring and social policies

On-track

PCR 0260/A0/04/001 The Government at national and local level systematically identifies and addresses the needs of vulnerable children based on data produced by national and regional networks.

Progress:

The intermediate results in this programme component aim to increase the capacity of the Armenian social protection system to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of the population, and to enable it to effectively respond to their needs. The IRs promote systemic changes for vulnerable people such as the progressive improvement of knowledge generation mechanisms and the promotion of case management and democratic local planning, in response to specific needs identified.

Data published in December by the National Statistical Service show that, in 2012, the decrease in poverty levels (from 35 per cent to 32.4 per cent), was accompanied by a decrease in the extreme poverty rate (from 3.7 per cent to 2.8 per cent). The rate of child poverty is even higher (child poverty rate: 36.2 per cent; extreme poverty rate: 3.3 per cent). The coverage of economic contributions to poor and extremely poor families has decreased (24.4 per cent for poor families and 66 per cent for extremely poor families), generating concern among development partners - including UNICEF - on the effectiveness of social protection interventions in the country. This notwithstanding, the progressive focus on principles of transformative social protection - reflected in the reform of Integrated Social Services approved by a Government decree in July 2012 - signals a wider understanding of the need to expand the provision of social protection services through outreach and professional support to families. Continuous UNICEF advocacy and technical assistance resulted in 2012 in strengthening of the cooperation among all social services (health, education, social protection and care) in providing effective support to vulnerable families; and in increased attention to inequities affecting the population. Special attention - reflected in revised indicators - will be given to reaching out to extremely poor families, and to reducing the poverty level of children with disabilities, which remain the most vulnerable group in Armenia (with a poverty rate of 35.4 per cent).

Engagement with international organizations resulted also in the promotion, with ILO and IMF, of the Social Protection Floor initiative, a platform for negotiating a long-term social protection plan with the Government that will be appointed in March 2014 after the Presidential elections.

The analysis of the bottlenecks restricting the right to social protection for Armenian children and families - conducted by UNICEF in a fully participatory way with key stakeholders - allowed the identification of strategic priorities for next year, in particular around the formalization of inter-sectoral cooperation, and the consideration of the recently approved reform in the new budget planning exercises (MTEF).

IR 0260/A0/04/001/003 By end 2015, national and regional authorities use reliable data, social policy and budget analysis to allocate resources for vulnerable children.

Progress:

In 2013, UNICEF, in close cooperation with the World Bank and USAID, continued to support the Government in rolling out the Integrated Social Services reform by helping to expand the pool of trained professionals-case managers and providing technical expertise. In 2013 only, 50 case managers started identifying, assessing and developing individual social projects for vulnerable families. To mitigate the social needs of vulnerable families of labour migrants, a critical mass of case managers started working in four target regions as part of the Integrated Social Services reform. Working with the most poor and vulnerable migrant families, the case managers assesses the situation of each family based on the specific vulnerability factors and needs of each family member. In nine months of the year, 1,000 such families were identified; 630 had their needs assessed; and 239 individual social projects were developed by case managers.

As part of the technical support provided to the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues and through set aside funds provided by RKLA social protection, UNICEF supported the development of the Monitoring and Evaluation system for Integrated Social Services. The report proposed various models and described their possible application. This resulted in the development of a social outcomes model which creates the link between the work of case managers and outcomes of vulnerable individuals. The model was submitted to the Government in 2013.

In 2013, UNICEF commissioned a major client-level baseline survey of Integrate Social Services. The report is being finalized and the findings will be presented to the Government and other stakeholders in early 2014. Institutionalization of the process of community data collection via correspondent decree of the Minister of Territorial Administration continued with alignment of the community database with ArmeniaInfo technology that will allow online ranking of all 760 first level administrative information including education, health, sanitation and social protection. The regional offices of the National Statistical Service are using the ArmeniaInfo database to monitor MDG and socio-economic indicators at the regional and community levels.

The 2010 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) noted great improvements in several maternal and child health indicators. The report...
revealed large disparities in the nutrition indicators among wealth quintiles, between the urban and rural population, and in regional distribution. The nutritional status of children in Armenia has deteriorated between 2005 and 2010, with the main nutritional problems reflected in the levels of stunting and chronic malnutrition. The stunting level increased to 19 per cent in 2010. UNICEF agreed with the National Statistical Service that support will be given to the Government of Armenia in monitoring of trends in child nutrition and growth that would allow developing evidence-based policies and specific actions addressing the identified problems. Therefore, child nutrition indicators will be incorporated into the Integrated Living Conditions Survey in 2014.

**IR 0260/A0/04/001/004** By end 2015, the Government provides institutional resources for the implementation of social action plan (LAP) methodology nationwide.

**Progress:**

In 2013, UNICEF initiated the drafting of a policy paper outlining possible sources of funding for Territorial Social Plans which would allow the set –up of community and inter-community social services to meet the needs of vulnerable children and women. The recommendations of the paper are being validated by major partners in the field - the World Bank and the EU-who are also supporting the process of Territorial Social Plan development.

In 2013, the legal ground for Territorial Social Planning was further strengthened by having relevant provisions reflected in the major piece of legislation regulating the field-The Law on Social Assistance. At the same time, the scope and the frame of the model has been enlarged thanks to EU funding. Three more regions were involved in the planning, also with funds allocated for social projects. This means that almost half of the country - 5 out of 10 regions excluding the capital city - is now covered.

Enhancing institutional cooperation among social sector services remains critical. In order to address the systemic hurdles impeding institutional cooperation at the national level, UNICEF set up a group of professionals to develop relevant policy alternatives. Some of the recommendations are reflected in the draft law on social assistance. Four issues/social groups - out of school children, institutionalized children, families affected by migration and children with disabilities- and have been identified as priority topics for the planning. However, the debates over the general model of cooperation (horizontal, vertical or mixed) and its application continue at the national level. UNICEF support in 2013 helped institutionalize the Community Database and its collection process and the Ministry of Territorial Administration took full ownership of the data collection and management process. All this contributed to the strengthening of data systems informing social planning.

**PC 2 - Systems strengthening in social sectors**

**On-track**

**PCR 0260/A0/04/002** The social sector system reduces disparities in access to quality social services for girls and boys.

**Progress:**

By addressing unequal distribution of social services, shortfalls in applying effective and efficient approaches and capacity gaps, the programme aims to sustain the efforts of the Government of Armenia in protecting and promoting the rights of children, with particular attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Geographical disparities are evident in the distribution of all the social services, in particular neonatal and rehabilitation services in the health sector, preschools and inclusive schools, and day care services.

In 2013, the UNICEF Armenia Office in 2013 continued the work initiated in previous years, increasing the focus on equity through extensive consultations and programme analysis using the MORES framework. The Country Programme has continued to: (a) sustain the increased access to quality neonatal services for children in regions, to promote actions and investments in addressing nutrition issues, to model an integrated health services to school-age children and adolescents; (b) to expand preschool education to more rural areas, reducing the bottlenecks to inclusive education by changing social norms, revising disability certification, special education needs assessment, individual education planning processes based on ICF; (c) to increase the access of children in contact with the law to the supportive and preventive services of community justice centres (11 in total, serving 150 children) and transforming special schools and night care institutions into alternative care services.

The MORES analysis revealed a strong link between the sustainability of social sector reforms and budgetary support. This link has been taken into account in the country programme planning and analysis. It was agreed that UNICEF will support the social system reform by providing expert technical advice on public finance management, including through the MTEF exercise which will allow UNICEF to actively influence the direction of strategic reform and related budgetary forecasts.
Progress:

Progress has been achieved in the dialogue with the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Territorial Administration around child care system reform and in particular around replacing residential child care institutions with alternative care services for children with special needs and their families. The implications of the reform on Integrated Social Services for the child protection system were also considered. Continued advocacy solidified UNICEF’s place as a trusted technical advisor to the Ministry of Labour. This was demonstrated by the request of the Minister for support in revising the funding plans for residential care institutions and alternative care services, transforming residential institutions, and public finance management in the inclusion of state funded programmes on alternative care in the MTEF. Transformation plans for two residential special schools developed with the UNICEF technical support have been approved by the Prime Minister work has already started to close down the two institutions and replace them with alternative care services by September 2014. Key stakeholders have been engaged in the analysis of the bottlenecks hindering the right of children to grow up in a family; the exercise allowed UNICEF to further increase the equity focus of the child protection programme, and to lead the inter-agency cooperation around the deinstitutionalisation reform. The analysis underlined the need to pay more attention to children with disabilities, strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation, and promote the expansion of foster care.

There have been improvements in the institutional response to the protection needs of children, in particular of those in conflict with the law, through the engagement of NGOs and the Human Rights Defender’s Office, the inclusion of UNICEF’s recommendations in the revised draft of the Criminal Procedure Code, Civil Procedure Code, concept of Criminal Code and the increased awareness on the need to eliminate torture and ill-treatment practices denounced in a report recently published by UNICEF. Furthermore, UNICEF has been developing strategic partnership with major donors to support the legal reforms in the country.

Progress:

In 2013, the education programme focused on policies targeting the most disadvantaged groups in the population - primarily children with disabilities. The programme specifically targeted different determinants where bottlenecks were identified.

Social Norms – A campaign was prepared to change public attitudes to children with disabilities.

Management and Coordination – Protocols of cooperation to establish a cooperation framework for education, social protection and health to identify and refer out-of-school children and children at the risk of drop-out are in the process of being developed by an inter-ministerial group.

Availability of adequately staffed services – The transformation process of two special schools into alternative community-based services, was kick-started in Syunik region. In partnership with the World Bank and the Government, UNICEF continued to promote a year-round training and mentoring curriculum for pre-school teachers, covering child-friendly and inclusive teaching, gender and parental involvement in order to promote access to preschool for children of disadvantaged communities (especially in rural areas, where enrolment is significantly lower).

Quality – The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, Children and Youth version (ICF-CY) framework was used to revise special education needs assessment process and tools. Individual education planning was used in this process. UNICEF advocacy also resulted in the ICF-based model being introduced in a new policy regulating certification for disability.

As a result of the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in education programme, children and education staff are better protected from death and injury in schools and preschools, educational continuity is ensured in the face of expected hazards, education sector investments are better safeguarded, and a disaster resilient citizenry is strengthened through formal and non-formal education at all levels.

Progress:

In 2013, UNICEF continued to support address existing regional inequities in the access to lifesaving services for newborns (70 per cent of infant mortality cases in Armenia happen during the first 28 days of life). Intensive Neonatal Care (INC) units established in regional facilities have improved the access of the rural and disadvantaged population to newborn emergency interventions by reducing the referral of cases from remote areas to the capital, and increasing the survival of children. To ensuring continuity of neonatal services at
hospital and PHC levels, the neonatal component of Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses has been introduced in PHC facilities linked to INC units.

Deteriorating nutrition indicators in Armenia (with stunting level reaching 19 per cent in 2010) show that malnutrition continues to be a serious challenge for children in Armenia, and one of the areas where inequities are starkest, calling for UNICEF’s reinforced support in addressing the issue.

By convening national partners around a robust equity agenda related to child nutrition, UNICEF and the Government of Armenia launched "the First 1,000 Most Critical Days" multi-component strategy implemented in one of the provinces with the worst nutrition indicators. The initiative promotes action and investment in early nutrition by informing and advocating key stakeholders about the impact and cost-effectiveness of investing in nutrition during the critical 1,000 day window; leveraging resources and engaging new actors in efforts to improve maternal and child nutrition; and catalysing collaboration and partnership across sectors.

To accelerate and strengthen the policy discussion around the National Flour Fortification (FF) Programme, UNICEF Armenia in collaboration with FFI organized a study visit to Canada - one of the most advanced and experienced countries on FF - for high level Government officials. The Canadian experience on different aspects of FF provided strong evidence for further promotion of FF legislation in Armenia. As a result of the visit, the Government of Armenia approved, with agreement of all in-line ministries and agencies, the draft law on FF for submission to the National Assembly for endorsement. Together with the law on the adoption of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes (in support of breast-feeding), this law represents key milestones for the improvement of nutrition indicators.

In 2013, a model was developed to strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation between the Ministries of Health, Education, and Labour and Social Issues in the delivery of health services to school-age children and adolescents in three pilot sites. The model combines innovative approaches to delivering services directly in schools and mechanisms of joining the efforts of health, education and social support services in responding to the needs of the most vulnerable children and adolescents. The model will be continued in 2014 and will bring health services closer to beneficiaries and ensures their universal coverage.

**PC 3 - Programme Support**

**PCR 0260/A0/04/800 Effective and efficient programme management and operations support to programme delivery**

**Progress:** UNICEF Armenia was successful in realizing the Programme Management and Operations Support Strategy. This resulted in:

- Maintaining an effective and results-oriented governance system with functioning office committees, strategic planning, analysis, monitoring and regular review; promoting participatory decision-making; efficient realization of the risk management function, resulting in the reduction of existing risks and timely identification of new ones as well as the development of effective mitigation strategies;
- Shaping a potential CO team with qualifications which reflect the needs of the new CP, having earlier addressed existing HR gaps; including post establishment, a review of CO consultancies to assess the available resources and plan the required workforce;
- Promoting recognition of human resources as a key valuable asset for the organization, with a focus on staff development, regular performance review and identification of improvement areas and training courses needed; supervisor coaching; encouragement of maintaining the life-work balance using the flexible workplace opportunities and working on own time management (retreat training was conducted to practice it);

**IR 0260/A0/04/800/002 Financial Management and Administrative Management**

**Progress:**

The Country Office was audited in 2013 and found all audited areas to be satisfactory. The Office is in the process of implementing the action plan agreed-upon with the auditors. Staff continued to get support on VISION in all areas whenever any changes were made (including on administrative instructions, policies and procedures).

The office successfully continued the cash forecasting on a monthly and quarterly basis, providing the managers with an opportunity to additionally revise and adjust the payment plans.

The planning and utilization of resources aimed at reaching the maximum efficiency of the performed activities. Taking into account the Office capacity and resource constraints, the CO applied a cost-effective approach. Strategic planning and evaluation of ICT resources ensured long-term usage and prospective savings in this area.
IR 0260/A0/04/800/003 Human Resources Management and Staff Security

Progress: The Peer Support Volunteer function was duly and actively performed in 2013.

The Local Training Committee diligently pursued Staff Learning, continued to play a role in ensuring the development and implementation of the Local Training Plan.

Apart from developing and improving management skills in the Office, the CO has also focused on developing competencies identified during the performance discussions on individual basis.
Effective Governance Structure

Country Programme objectives and priorities were respectively illustrated in the Office Management Plan (OMP) and regularly communicated to staff through the Country Management Team (CMT) and extended weekly all-staff meeting. In 2013, nine CMT meetings were held and the Management Indicators were reviewed. CMT decisions were properly communicated to all staff and necessary actions were taken to ensure that decisions were implemented. The OMP was updated at the two day Office retreat to reflect the Office priorities and directions and to ensure alignment with Office environment (in consideration of all the changes taking place).

The Office committees functioned effectively and ensured the functioning of key processes and mitigation of risks. During the year, fourteen PCARC and one CRC meetings were held.

Weekly Monday morning all-staff meetings were used for information sharing and priority setting for each staff member and programme area. Proposed topics were duly considered by both Programme and the Country Management Team. An informal group of colleagues from other international organizations (e.g. World Bank and OSCE), responsible for administration and procurement, continued to operate effectively.

The Office of Internal Audit and Investigations conducted an audit of the Armenia Country Office during the period 26 August to 19 September 2013. The audit covered governance, programme management, and operations support during the period from 1 January 2012 to 26 August 2013. The Office received ‘satisfactory’ audit rating in governance.

Strategic Risk Management

The Office reviewed the risk assessment library during the office retreat in February 2013 and updated the library based on active discussions with the participation of all staff. As per audit recommendation, the Office will refine the key management priorities and results which will be developed in consideration of the Risk Control Self-Assessment review and will be added and documented in the Office Management Plan.

Evaluation

The Office developed the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) 2013 based on the multiyear IMEP 2010-2015. All activities were linked to the CEE CIS Regional Knowledge Leadership Areas. The monitoring requirements generated by the Determinant Analysis (Survey on Attitudes in Relation to Inclusion of Children with Disabilities”, Monitoring of DAs indicators through Integrated Living Conditions Survey) were included in the IMEP. The Office also participated in three retrospective multi-country regional evaluations on inclusive education, early childhood development and juvenile justice. The evaluation on inclusive education was completed in 2013 and the report with the recommendations is in the process of being finalized. Two other evaluations will be completed in 2014. Furthermore, the management response to all the evaluations will be discussed and agreed upon with the CEE CIS RO and all other stakeholders.

In the context of evolving corporate priorities, the RO developed the M&E strategy with the aim to strengthen the M&E capacities in the region. The strategy has the following main elements: regional facility of high level experts; peer support; strengthening of CO and RO M&E capacities. The support of high-level national and international expertise will be useful for the development of a child rights monitoring system which will be used when the Office carries out surveys/evaluations in 2014-15 to inform the next CP.

Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

Support for ICT networks, systems, data, resources and user support continued throughout 2013, as per prescribed ICT practices and policies. There were no incidents related to ICT and IT assets or access to UNICEF servers and sites.

The Office installed a CAT 6 Local Area Network with the IP Phone system, to ensure security, availability and
integrity of access to UNICEF LAN. It also procured a new server for the virtual host and backup driver in order to implement backup capacity as per UNICEF ICT guide.

In 2013, the Country Office fully moved to laptops for all staff members in order to fully support remote access to networks and facilitate work from remote locations, including work from home. The guiding principle for ICT procurement was the period of equipment usage. The ICT Assistant supported the Monitoring & Evaluation, Local Planning and Health and Nutrition programme components by installing, configuring and distributing ICT equipment to help them accomplish their objectives. The ICT Assistant also supported development of the www.unicef.am website by a local ICT company and its launch. In addition, the ICT Assistant provided technical expertise during the VISION training and conducted on-the- job training for staff on VISION, Windows, MS Office, Lotus Notes and the Internet.

In 2013, the Country Office managed to get more Internet bandwidth for the same price from two local ISP companies for the upcoming year, and acquired 3G back-up connectivity for the Internet.

**Fund-raising and Donor Relations**

The fundraising strategy was developed in January 2013. The Office actively worked to identify potential partners in the private sector. In 2013, the Office also managed to secure OR grants and requested approval for an additional ceiling for Other Resources to accommodate substantial fundraising activities. Thus, the total approved budget for Regular and Other Resources increased from US $8.7 million to US$ 11.9 million. All expiring PBAs were fully utilized by the expiration date. The Office actively used the Manager’s Dashboard and Management reports as well as the CMT and Programme Coordination meetings to monitor spending.

The M&E Officer regularly checked and disseminated alerts from the Manager’s Dashboard to staff members and contacted New York Headquarters with issues related to budget utilization.

**Management of Financial and Other Assets**

The audit found that controls were functioning well in a number of areas of the country office. The audit found that the Office had adequate procedures for payment of direct cash transfers (DCTs). Bank reconciliations were also fulfilled on and in accordance with procedure.

The flexible budget planning included in the rolling work plans gave appropriate flexibility for its implementation within a broader allocation scheme and was very effective, allowing the planned activities to be in line with set budgets. The expenditure rate of RR was 96.35 per cent at the end of 2013.

As per the HACT assurance plan, all implementing partners were assessed through financial spot checks to ensure sound financial practices. Sessions were organized for implementing partners to explain observations and requirements of funds disbursement. Field monitoring visits were also a part of the monitoring.

The Office had zero per cent outstanding DCTs over 9 and 6 months.

In 2013, the Office procured assets with the total value of USD $74,046.

The Office continued to save during the year by using VoIP and external COIP for international calls, and a cellular GSM Gateway. The Office continued to enjoy a favourable exchange rate on foreign currency.
Supply Management

Programmatic and office supplies/hardware were directly ordered from the local market as well as through offshore procurement with the Supply Division. In total US $379,079 was spent on supplies (US $172,590 through offshore procurement and the rest (including design and printing) through local procurement).

Overall, the Office spent US $89,258 procuring ICT related program supplies.

The Office conducted two CRC and 14 PC ARC (PC A review committee) meetings during the year. It also continued to be an active part of the Operations Management Team (OMT) and lead agency for the organization of the common services.

The Office ensured timely preparation and submission of the supply plan to the CMT. As part of the MoU signed with the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Office successfully assisted partners with the procurement of all the vaccines and other non-vaccine supplies requested by the Government through the UNICEF Supply Division.

The Office continued to benefit from free warehouse space provided by the Ministry of Emergency Situations. UNDP continued to administer the common UN services and premises.

Human Resources

Four recruitment processes took place in 2013. These were for the posts of Communication Officer NOB, Disaster Risk Reduction Programme Assistant GS 5 (Temporary Appointment), Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist (Child Rights Systems Monitoring Specialist) NOC, and Child Protection Officer NOC. The post of Communication Officer became vacant because the incumbent was promoted to an IP post and moved to another duty station. The two NOC posts were established after the abolishment of NOB posts through the PBR in April 2013.

The development of individual work plans and PAS (paper-based performance evaluation system for all NO and GS holding fixed term, continuing and permanent appointments, and for all staff with Temporary Appointments (TAs)) was monitored by the Country Management Team (CMT) and the completion rate showed delays for 59 per cent of cases. These delays were caused the changes in Direct Supervisors.

The annual training and learning plan was prepared with significant support of the Human Resources Development Team (HRDT) and approved based on the Office’s priorities. It ensured that training plans were relevant to staff members’ roles, and kept within the foreseen budget.

Nine staff members were trained on CBI by the Regional Human Resource Specialist on 26-27 November 2013. The office invited two UNICEF staff members for short-term assignments in UNICEF Armenia to assist with the implementation of “It’s About Ability” campaign and invited another UNICEF staff member to fulfil the vacant post of Deputy Representative.

As a response to the results of the global staff survey, in July 2013, the Office invited the Regional Office HR Specialist to conduct management performance and career development training for supervisors and supervisees (these two areas were highlighted in the survey as areas in need of improvement).

The Office continued to have one UNV Child Protection Assistant and expects a JPO Child Protection Specialist to join the team in early 2014.

One staff member returning from maternity leave benefited from the flexi hours arrangement.
Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

In general the UN Common building provides a significant opportunity for cost savings on shared services, especially in security. The use of free warehouse space provided by the Ministry of Emergency Situations has resulted in a cost saving of about US $2,700 each year. Additional funds were saved through the use of the local VoIP and GSM Gateway for calls, and an upgrade in Internet services, both of which came without additional cost and at a very favourable exchange rate.

The Office continues to save money by using a special package for mobile phones which allows free calls between the group members (all UNICEF staff).

Changes in AMP & CPMP

The Office has to revise OMP to reflect the recent audit recommendation and make it a living document. This will be done during the Office retreat in February 2014.
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1 Contribute to UNICEF’s draft Theory of Change for Social Inclusion on UNICEF’s Intranet.