RAPID ASSESSMENT OF RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
2010

Mira Antonyan

Acknowledgement

Content

Glossary

Children left without parental care (CLWPC): Abandoned children or those children whose parents have departed, have been separated from their families by a court order, whose parents have officially rejected the child or are missing

Foundling child: Child at a child institution whose parents are unknown

Marz: Administrative region

Placement certification: Official documents required before institutions might accept temporary or permanent custody of a child

Referral order: Official document allowing placement for a child with special educational needs

Residential child care institutions: facilities where children are provided with care, food and accommodation, as a replacement to a family. The placement can be due to the absence of a family, the separation from an existing family for various reasons (mainly poverty, but also protection) or the provision of specialised services not provided in the community where the family lives (in particular for children with disabilities). They can provide education and basic health services within the institutions (and in this case they are considered 'closed' institutions, since children can spend long periods without leaving the institutions' premises, since all the necessary services are provided inside) or facilitate access to various services for children (first and foremost schools) outside their premises (and in this case they are considered 'open' institutions). Residential care institutions can be State funded or supported by the private sector. In Armenia, there are several types of residential care institutions:

- **Assessment centre:** where the educational needs of a child are assessed before referral to a special boarding school; despite the name, the centre has also residential facilities, where children are hosted for long periods of time

- **Child care and protection centre (also referred to as "night care centre" in the assessment):** 24-hour working institution except for weekends and holidays (children go home at weekends and on school holidays)

- **Charity institution:** residential child care institution which is financed through charity donations

- **Orphanage:** 24-hour working institution providing full care to children nominally deprived of parental care (even in cases where a biological family still exists)

- **Short-term shelter:** a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week temporary shelter for children in crisis situations

- **Special boarding school:** education facilities for children with disabilities, where children (aged 4-21) receive 'special' preschool, primary or higher education, according to their disability; not all children are permanently housed in these institutions

- **Specialised orphanage:** 24-hour working institution providing full care to children with disabilities and without parental care

- **Specialised socio-educational institution:** residential facility which provides regular curricular education, but with a particular focus on a specific subject (this assessment deals with 2 of such institutions which focus on military education and music respectively)

- **Training school:** a term used for an institution which hosts in residential care children with so-called "antisocial behaviour"

Abbreviations

CF	Charity Foundation
CLWPC	Children left without parental care
FAR CSCF	Fund for Armenian Relief Children's Support Centre Foundation
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoLSI	Ministry of Labour and Social Issues
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Assessment methodology

The study covers all residential child care institutions operating in Armenia, with the purpose of creating a basic baseline for further analysis required for the progressive reduction of placement of children and the development of alternative child care services (which, as part of the de-institutionalisation 'Master Plan', the Ministry of Labour intends to draft in agreement with UNICEF). The assessment includes orphanages, specialised orphanages for children with disabilities, child care and protection centres, special boarding schools, training schools for children with so-called "antisocial behaviour" and those institutions which focus on specialised education (music, military), assessment centres for children with special education needs, short-term shelters and charity institutions.

The aim of the assessment is to verify the situation of each child in relation to their families, and the respect of their entitlements related to their specific condition (whether they are orphans, temporarily separated from the family or with disability and special educational needs).Data was gathered on the gender and age of children, children's health, disability status, family circumstances and child/family relationships.

The survey was also intended to capture the views of managers and service providers of the residential care institutions on the general conditions of their facilities.

The survey was conducted through rapid assessment methodology (utilising two questionnaires reported in Appendices 1 and 2). In-depth interviews with representatives of child institutions revealed the main problems affecting these institutions and provided an opportunity to gather opinions on possible solutions and effectively analyse the quantitative data collected. Interviews were undertaken with 44 child institution directors, 3 deputy directors, 2 social workers and 1 psychologist.

During the assessment period, the media reported on the establishment of a new orphanage for boys (supposedly housing 42 boys) in the city of Echmiadzin by the Catholicos of all Armenians. An orphanage for girls will reportedly be built in the near future. No data is included in this survey on those institutions.

Constraints

Due to the limited amount of basic information collected – in relation to the specific purpose of the assessment – this is not intended as a thorough analysis of all the aspects of life of children in residential care. Other studies would be required to get a fully detailed picture of the psycho-social conditions of children.

With reference to the accuracy of the information provided, it has to be noted that the willingness of child care institution heads to provide information differed: while the majority of child institutional authorities expressed readiness to provide the required information, some of them resisted, prolonging the fieldwork process.

Main Findings

Number and type of residential care institutions operating in Armenia:

50 institutions provide children in Armenia with residential care services of different kind; the institutions are classified as follows:

- **11** orphanages, of which 7 are entirely funded by the State and 4 sustained by charity foundations. 2 orphanages are specialized for children with disabilities;
- **9** childcare and protection centres, of which 8 are entirely supported by the State and 1 sustained by a charitable foundation;
- **22** special boarding schools;
- **3** assessment centres;
- **2** specialised socio-educational institutions;
- **2** training schools for children with so-called 'antisocial behaviour';
- **1** short-term shelter for children in crisis situations.

Number of children hosted in residential care institutions (as of September 2010):

In total, **4902** children are hosted in residential care institutions in Armenia,

of which:

- **1079** children go home every day; 7 from orphanages; 51 from childcare and protection centers; 802 from special boarding schools; 67 from assessment centers; 152 from socio-educational institutions.
- **3823** live in residential care[1]; 1512 live in special boarding schools; 944 in regular and specialized orphanages; 776 in child care and protection centers; 355 in specialized socio-educational institutions (for military or musical education); 146 are cared for at training schools for children with so-called 'antisocial behavior'; 65 live in assessment centers; 25 are living in short-term shelters.

Sex and age of children:

- Out of the total number of children living in or attending residential care institutions, 57% are boys and 43% girls.
- 88.6 % of the total number children are of school age, 5.7 % are under 6 and 5.7% over 18.

School attendance:

- 4060 children regularly attend school, 17 attend irregularly, and 270 do not attend at all. The remaining 561 children are either under 6 (283) or 18 or over (278).

Children with disabilities:

- 1711 children (from the total number) have officially certified disabilities.
- 428 (1 in 4) of these children with certified disabilities receive disability benefit[2].

---

[1] There is no precise statistics provided by the institutional heads on the frequency of the number of children visiting their homes. At the same time the information on the number of children, living (sleeping) in residential care is quite clear. It is supposed, that the difference between the number of institutionalized children and the number of children living in residential care is the amount of children frequently visiting their homes.

[2] This low figure might be a result of a lack of awareness on behalf of respondents.

Certification status of children:

- 191 children do not have the placement certificates necessary to attend their special boarding schools; 84 children lack referral orders required for orphanages and 41 for and child care & protection centres. 16 children do not possess birth certificates.

Children qualifying for 'CLWPC' status and adoption:

- 842 children should have been registered in the list of children left without parental care (CLWPC), 720 children received this registration
- Out of all granted CLWPC children 601 are in orphanages, the other 119 in other institutions
- 237 were registered for adoption

Child/family relationships:

Considering the 3823 children living in residential care:

- 2148 (56%) children return home once a week. There are no official reunification programmes in place for the remaining 1675(44%) children in residential care.
- 8% of parents or relatives of children living in residential care visit their children almost every day; 32% once or twice per month; 11% once a year; 11% never visit. For the remaining 38%, no data is available.

Families receiving benefits:

- The families of 1569 children are reported as receiving poverty benefits; 203 families do not. There is no information available for the remaining 3130.

Placement and referral procedures:

- 48 of the 50 child institutions admit children based on placement certification or referral orders.
- Children are institutionalised in different marzes from those of provenience, even if relevant child care institutions exist locally.
- Clear procedures for discharge of children are not followed. Children could be cared in those institutions until the age allowed by the law, sometimes even more (due to the absence of living place)

PART I: The children residing in childcare institutions: General overview

1.1. Types of institutions, their management and supervision

50 institutions were assessed including:
- 7 orphanages and 8 care and protection centres administrated by the **Ministry of Labour and Social Issues** (hereafter MoLSI).

> *Charity Foundations (CF) finance 4 orphanages and 1 care & protection centre. The government developed resolution 13/24n on August 5th 2004, which defines the regulation criteria of children placed in all child institutions and gives the MoLSI the final placement decision. This allows for a coordinated system.*

- 4 orphanages[3], 1 child care and protection centre and 1 short-term shelter **sustained by charity organisations**[4]. These are overseen by the MoLSI only for placement/referral procedures (methodological procedures are handled by the institution itself).
- 7 special boarding schools, 3 assessment centres[5], 2 training schools[6] and 2 special socio-educational institutions are administrated by the **Ministry of Education and Science**[7] (hereafter MoES).
- 15 special boarding schools administrated by **Marz Administrations** (including the Yerevan Municipality).

The total number of children per institution type and supervisory entity of those institutions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.*Residential care institution type, supervisory entity and total number of children hosted:*

	MoLSI	# of children	CF	# of children	MoES	# of children	Marz/Yer-evan Municipality	# of children	Total # of children
Orphanage[8]	7	812	4	139	0	0	0	0	951
Child care & protection centre	8	760	1	67	0	0	0	0	827
Special boarding school	0	0	0	0	9	1010	13	1304	2314
Assessment centre	0	0	0	0	3	132	0	0	132
Short-term shelter	0	0	1	25	0	0	0	0	25
Specialised socio-educational institution	0	0	0	0	2	507	0	0	507
Training school[9]	0	0	0	0	2	146	0	0	146
Total	**15**	**1572**	**6**	**231**	**16**	**1795**	**13**	**1304**	**4902**

---

[3] SOS Kinderdorf has two branches
[4] FAR CSCF functions within the framework of the agreement signed between the Armenian Police and FAR.
[5] The MoES regards the Assessment Centres in Yerevan, Stepanavan and Kapan as 3 branches of 1 institution. However, in this study, they are presented as 3 separate entities as they have separate budgets and strategic plans.
[6] #1 Vardashen educational complex and #17 Nubarashen educational complex are training schools (despite different names) and provide special educational care to children with so-called "antisocial behaviour".
[7] One institution, "Poqr Mher", has been established by government decree and is administered and funded by various agencies.

1.2. Geographical placement of institutions & children[10]

Chart 1 shows the geographical location (per marz) of the 50 assessed institutions. The majority of child care institutions are located in Yerevan, Shirak, and Lori and Syunik marzes.

Chart 1. *Allocation of child residential care institutions per marz:*
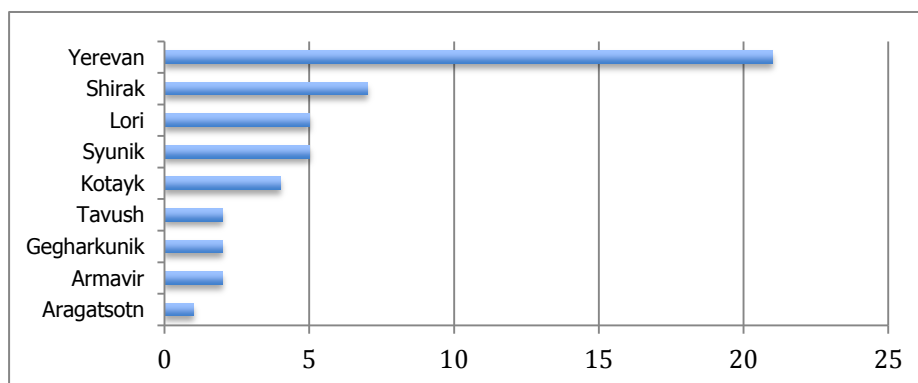

Table 2. *Correlation of the total number of children attending or living in residential care institutions and their provenience, the percentage of children from the marz over the total 'institutionalised' child population and the percentage of the total 'institutionalised' child population over the entire child population in marzes:*

Marz	Total number of children from marz living in or attending residential care institutions	% of children from marz overthe entire institutionalised child population	% of institutionalised children over the entire marz child population[11]
Yerevan	1488	30.36	0.54
Shirak	497	10.14	0.59
Lori	616	12.57	0.81
Syunik	434	8.85	1.04
Kotayk	275	5.6	0.36
Armavir	374	7.63	0.45
Tavush	173	3.53	0.46
Gegharkunik	129	2.63	0.17
Ararat	178	3.63	0.22
Aragatsotn	131	2.67	0.3
Vayots Dzor	18	0.37	0.11
Artsakh[12]	43	0.88	-
Other countries[13]	27	0.55	-
No information available	519	10.59	-

Of the total number of children living in or attending residential care institutions, 3 out of 10 are from Yerevan, 1 out of 10 from Lori and Shirak marzes, 1 out of 12 from Syunik, 1 out of 14 from Armavir, 1 out of 20 from Kotayk, 1 out of 33 from Tavush and Ararat and 1 out of

---

[8] 'Orphanage' combines both regular and specialised orphanages in all tables.
[9] An institution to which children with antisocial behavior are sent including those in conflict with law as an alternative to prison.
[10] Institutionalised children per marz/region.
[11] According to the Armenian National Statistical Service (1st January 2010) of children aged 0-19.
[12] Refers to Mountainous Karabagh.
[13] This refers to Diasporan children from Russia, the Ukraine and Moldova.

50 from Aragatsotn and Gegharkunik. Less than 1 child out of 100 is from Vayots Dzor, Artsakh or other countries, with no information available for 1 out of 10 children.

Table 3. *Number of residential care institutions per marz, the number of children staying overnight in residential care and the total number of children attending or living in residential care institutions:*

Marz	Number of residential care institutions	Number of children who stay overnight in residential care institutions	Total number of children living in or attending residential care institutions
Yerevan	21	1600	2059
Shirak	7	461	577
Lori	5	415	545
Syunik	5	257	545
Kotayk	4	353	370
Armavir	2	155	171
Tavush	2	134	134
Gegharkunik	2	141	161
Ararat	1	277	277
Aragatsotn	1	30	63
Vayots Dzor	0	0	0

Discrepancies between the number of institutionalised children in different marzes and the number of institutionalised children from the same marz (Tables 2 and 3) proves that children have been obliged to leave not only their families, but also their environments to fulfill their social, disability or special educational needs. This could be a consequence or a combination of the following circumstances:

a) Local marz services are lacking and relevant services are only available in Yerevan;

b) Referral and placement procedures are inconsistent[14];

c) Parents send their children to residential care outside of their marz in order to avoid stigmatisation. This also underlines the direct capacity of parents to make decisions, in agreement with residential institution managers, without involving public social services.

Detailed information is presented in the Appendix 4 including the lack of awareness within the residential care institutions of 519 children's provenience implying that institutions do not have the proper documentation necessary to admit children in residential care and attach little or no importance to directly working with families and/or lack relevant specialists.

> "…the poverty level and need in Gyumri is so high, that if we write "orphanage" or "boarding school" on any of the buildings here, the next day those buildings will become full of children…"
>
> ***Excerpt from interview***

1.3. Sex, age and school attendance of children

Out of the total number of children (4902) attending the 50 assessed institutions, 2793 are boys (56.98%) and 2109 girls (43.02%).

Chart 2. *Percentage of the total number of children attending or living in residential care institutions per sex:*

---

[14] A child could be institutionalised out of his/her marz, even if relevant institutions exist in that marz.
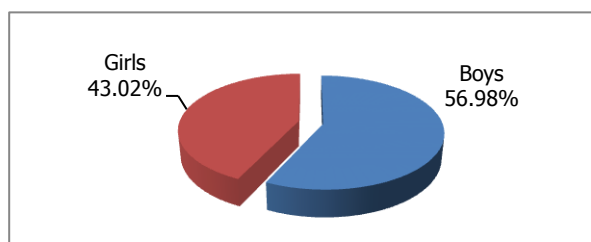
The largest age group of the total number of children is 11-15 (46.61%), whereas the smallest age group consists of children aged 0-2 (2.55%). Chart 3 shows the percentage of children per age group in all assessed institutions.

Chart 3. *Percentage of total number of children attending or living in residential care institutions per age group:*
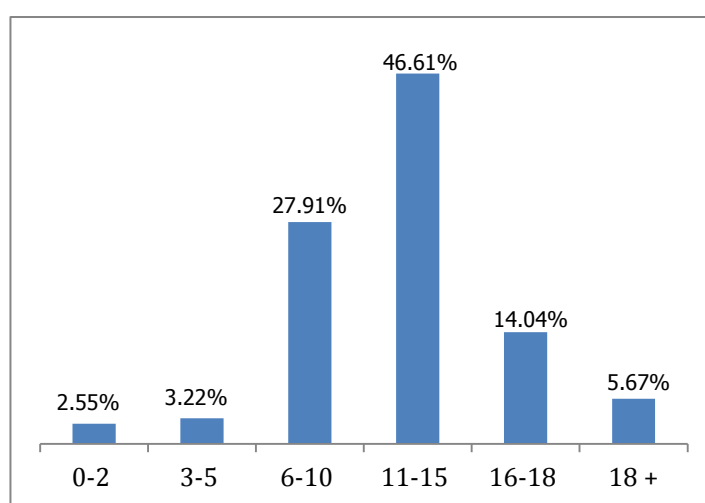

Table 4. *Total number of children attending or living in residential care institutions per age group and institution type:*

Age group	Orphanage	Child care & protection centre	Special boarding school	Assessment centre	Short-term shelter	Specialised socio-educational institution	Training school	Total
0-5	273	4	0	0	6	0	0	283
6-10	176	252	729	57	6	132	16	1368
11-15	236	466	1167	68	11	248	89	2285
16-18	115	99	300	7	2	127	38	688
18+	151[15]	9[16]	115	0	0	0	3	278

Table 4 shows that 278 children over 18 are still living in residential care[17] (9 children- care & protection centres, 115-in special schools, 3 in training schools & 151 in specialized orphanages). This is most likely the result of an absence of family or place of residence; when children stay for a long time in care, without any effort from the public services to maintain, or recreate, their ties with a family and a community, it is very difficult for them to be able to start an independent adult life: without a network of persons helping them, the

---

[15] 130 children are in Kharberd specialised orphanage, with the remaining 21 in other orphanages.
[16] The care and protection centre was recently reclassified (it was previously an orphanage). Under legislation, orphanages can house 18+-year-old children, whereas, officially, child care & protection centres can only care for children during the period of compulsory education (up to 18).
[17] Vocational training to 90 children over 18 is provided by some special boarding schools.

risk to be involved in unhealthy environments, and to adopt risky behaviours, is intuitively higher.

Table 5.*Percentage and number of school-age children attending or living in residential care institutions per school type:*

	Regular school	Inclusive school	Special school
Number	1346	55	2862
%	32	1	67

6 out of 10 school-age children attend special boarding schools; 3 out of 10 attend regular schools; 1 out of 100 attend inclusive schools[18].

Table 6 shows that around half of school-age children attend middle schools; a third attend elementary schools; just over an eighth attend high schools. Therefore, only one child out of 10 children who grow up in or attend residential care continues on to high school.

Table 6. *Number and percentage of total number of school-age children attending or living in residential care institutions per age group:*

	Elementary school (aged 6-10)	Middle school (aged 11-15)	High school (aged 16-18)
Number	1392	2286	585
%	33	54	13

1.4. Ratio of caregivers per child

3675 employees organise the care and protection of 4902 children. Care staff (caregivers) make up 29% of staff; administrative staff 27%; support staff 10%; miscellaneous staff 34%. Table 7 below shows the ratio of the number of children and institutional staff.

Table 7. *Total number of the institutional staff and the children cared in those institutions.*

Type of institution	Number of staff (in average)	Number of children (in average)
Specialized orphanage	128	140
General orphanage	67	67
Child care & protection centre	75	92
Special boarding school	64	97
Specialized socio-educational institution	90	155
Assessment centre	73	254
Training school	58	73

There is a disbalance of the ratio in the number of professional staff (social worker, psychologist, pedagogue, doctor, lawyer, etc.) and the number of children (Table 8). Allocation of the staff gender issue is also unbalanced (Chart 4).

The correlation of the number of some staff groups (caregiver, teacher, pedagogue, pediatrician) to the number of children is encouraging (also refer to in Appendix 5), but more social workers and psychologists are needed. In particular, one caregiver works with three institutionalized children, whereas one social worker and/or psychologist-with around 80

---

[18] Inclusive schools are regular schools which accept all kind of children, not depending on their abilities or disabilities, and with different education needs.

children. Such "rarity" of specialists working with institutionalized damaged/injured children is not based on the best interests of the child.

Table 8. *Total number of children attending or living in residential care institutions and care staff per residential care institution type:*

Type of institution	# of institutions	# of children	Social worker	Psychologist	Pedagogue	Medical staff	Lawyer
Orphanage	11	951	12	12	21	136	3
Child care & protection centre	9	827	12	9	7	55	4
Special boarding school	22	2314	13	24	450	74	2
Assessment centre	3	132	8	10	56	15	1
Specialised socio-educational institution	2	507	2	1	0	1	1
Training school	2	146	1	2	104	6	0
Short-term shelter	1	25	5	4	31	6	0

Chart 4. *Percentage of residential child care institutions' staff sex:*

Female: 2959, 81%

Male: 716, 19%
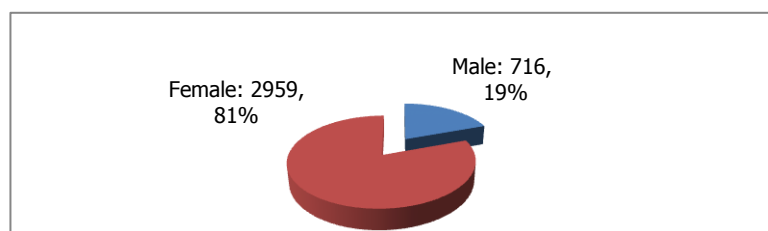
Chart 4 exposes the issue of unbalanced sex share in child care institutions. The majority of children cared for in institutions are boys (around 57%) yet the majority of care personnel are female (around 81%). This unbalanced situation affects on the socialization of the children.

1.5   Children with disabilities[19]

1711 (out of a total of 4902) children living in or attending residential care institutions have certified disabilities. Of these children, 28% have physical disabilities, 31% learning disabilities and 41% combined disabilities (both physical and learning).

Chart 5. *Disability type of children attending or living in residential care institutions with certified disabilities:*

---

[19] According to Armenian Law, it is not necessary for children with special educational needs to be classified as having a disability

Table 9. *Number of both parentless and certifiably disabled children per institution type:*

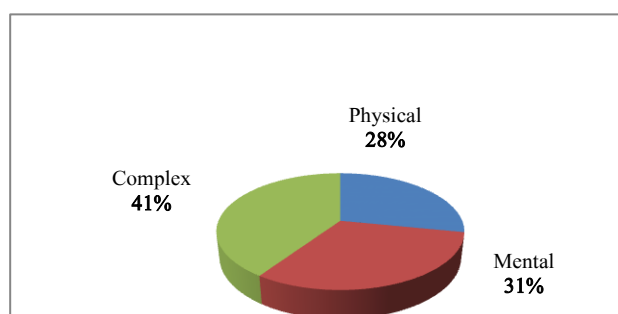| Orphanage	Child care & protection centre	Special boarding school
18	6	11

There are 35 children who are both parentless and have a certified disability including half of them out of orphanages (Table 9). The 17 children in the childcare and protection centre and special schools should, in fact, be in orphanages, as they probably have no formal person to take care of them (though it may well be so that they have official guardians, otherwise they won't be in that institution). The children could potentially lose their right to benefit from state social guarantees, as it is difficult to prove parentless status when a child is not in an orphanage.

Certainly, the issue requires evaluation that is more detailed; however, this could mean that the children deprive of state social guarantees fit for his/her status.

"I have supported two parentless children from my institution, but if not for my friends and acquaintances, I probably couldn't manage. Benefits require an official court document on the parents' rejection of his/her child. I have explained, that this is impossible, as I have never met their parents... Very often a missing parent creates problems, asthis affects child benefits...Children go to school from an orphanage, he/she is then told to find their parents to submit an offical rejection. Without the assistance [the extensive network] of 'Armenian in-laws, acquaintances and friends' the situation would be impossible".

"Today, child benefits are a very complicated issue from a legal point of view. The child could have hearing problems and hold relevant medical prognoses, but when he/she moves to an institution from the marz, it becomes impossible to provide all the additional required documents. Such a [long] list of documents is required that no parent of those children can [possibly] provide them…

Excerpt from interviews

Table 10.*Number of children attending or living in residential care institutions with certified disability per institution type*

Disability	Orphanage	Child care & protection centre	Special boarding school	Assessment centre	Short-term shelter	Special socio-educational institution	Training school	TOTAL
Physical	53	8	420	0	0	0	0	481
Mental	18	0	518	1	0	0	0	537
Complex	382	0	281	30	0	0	0	693
Total	**453**	**8**	1219	**31**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1711**

As the Table 10 shows 1219 children with certified disabilities are places in special boarding schools (the total number of children in those institutions equals 2314 of which no information is available for 223 children).

This could be the result of 3 reasons: a) parents did not apply for socio-medical expertise to diagnose a disability; b) incorrect placement/referral by an assessment centre; c) the child's problems were not serious enough to be regarded as a disability.

This issue requires a more detailed evaluation. If children suffer from minor or unnoticeable physical disabilities, then it could be possible for them to attend inclusive or regular schools where relevant conditions exist, as it is illogical for them to be institutionalized purely on a physical disability basis.

Taking into account the obvious problems in today's inclusive general schools, the issue of replacement of children cared in special boarding schools without certified disabilities should be carefully reviewed to ensure the satisfaction of their special educational needs at least on the level prior to their replacement (without any regress).

In other words, it is not desirable to replace children with special educational needs at the cost of falling educational quality. The best interests of the child suppose to invest rather flexible mechanisms allowing replacing the rich & good experience of the special boarding schools into inclusive schools.

Eight children in night care centres have physical disabilities. The rapid nature of this assessment did not allow sufficient time to discern whether the special needs of these children are met in those institutions, but this should be taken into account for future study.

453 children in orphanages are with complex disabilities, yet 450 children in the rest of institutions are institutionalized due to physical disabilities (Table 10). A more detailed evaluation could be of help to clarify the ratio of children with hearing and visual disorders for whom the special education is most likely justified in nowadays conditions.

Table 11 shows that the number of children with certified disabilities does not correspond with the number of children **receiving disability benefit**. This might be a consequence of inaccurate information from respondents or of disabled children's difficulties in receiving disability benefits, as they cannot obtain the required documents.[20]

Table 11. *Number of children receiving disability benefit per institution type:*

Orphanage	Child care & protection centre	Special boarding school	Assessment centre	Short-term shelter	Special socio-educational institution	Training school	TOTAL
21	12	389	6	0	0	0	428

1.6. Family circumstances

Almost half of institutionalised children have both parents (49 %); almost one third of them have one parent (34%); only 2% are left without parental care and 1% is parentless[21] whereas 3% are foundling or abandoned. No information is available on the families and place of residence for 11 % of children.

Chart 6. Percentage of total children's parental circumstances:

---

[20] Additionally, according to Armenian law, when a child receives state guarantees in government-administrated residential care institutions, he/she does not then qualify for benefits.
[21] "Parentless" here specifically means those children whose parents are deceased. Parentless, foundling and abandoned children could all potentially be classed under the CLWPC category.
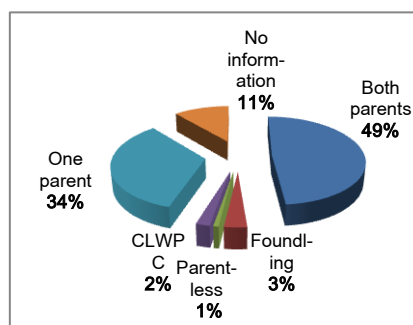
366 of 2384 children with both parents have been placed in orphanages. According to orphanage directors, "*new regulations adopted by the [Armenian] Government in 2006 hardened admission criteria and [orphanages] try to admit children whose parents were deprived of parental rights, recognized as incapable, avoid catering for their children or protection their rights, recognized as perished or unknown[22]; however, there are many* force majeure *situations where parents do not abandon their children, but where it is dangerous for the child to be with his/her family*". The research also found that there are abandoned, foundling and parentless children who are not placed in orphanages (see Table 12).

Only 43 out of "164" foundling and 21 out of 38 parentless children are placed in orphanages. As for "abandoned/rejected" children, most have been correctly placed in orphanages, but 2 of them have appeared in child care and protection centers.

Table 12. *Total number of children per parental circumstances and institution type:*

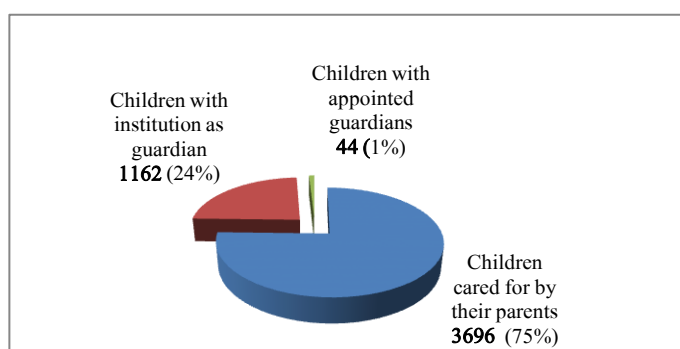|	Orphanage	Child care & protection centre	Special boarding school	Assessment centre	Short-term shelter	Specialised socio-educational institution	Training school	Total
Single Parent	447	396	660	20	21	50	71	1665
Both parents	366	344	1110	58	5	452	49	2384
Parentless	34	14	15	0	0	0	26	89
Abandoned	48	2	0	0	0	0	0	50
Foundling	43	21	95	0	0	5	0	164
No information	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	550

* Most likely the there is a complicated and disorganized situation in the families of children cared in orphanages with one or two parents which caused to child institutionalization; however the issue requires more detailed evaluation from the legal standpoint. In particular, it is worth to pay attention on the contradictory number of children granted CLWPC status and the number of potential adoptive children.

Chart 7. *Percentage guardian circumstances for the total number of children:*

---

[22] Law on Social Assistance Regarding Children deprived of parental care.

The study raised some conflicting and irregular data regarding official guardianship. For example, 66 children institutionalised in orphanages are technically under the care of their parents, whereas there are parentless children in other institutions (who should be in orphanages) who are under the guardianship of the institutions themselves (see Table 13).

Table 13. *Guardians for the total number of children living in or attending residential care institutions:*

	Orphanage	Child care & protection centre	Special boarding school	Assessment centre	Short-term shelter	Special socio-educational institution	Training school
Parents	66	672	2156	132	25	502	143
Institution	884	136	142	0	0	0	0
Appointed guardians	1	19	16	0	0	5	3

This contrast shows that institutional/parental guardianship roles are unclear and require more attention. This issue is of vital importance from a children's rights standpoint: those children without clear guardians could be left in institutions for an uncertain period of time with unclear social status and lose his/her chance to grow up in an alternative type of family care[23].

Social guarantees for children based on family circumstances are also unclear. For example, regarding family poverty benefits, the families of 1569 children receive benefits, 203 families are not involved in the family benefit system, and no data is available for the families of 3130 children. Therefore, for the majority of cases, data is not available, which again shows that more attention is required for this situation.

The relation between institutionalisation of children and families applying for poverty benefits is "in limbo". Children can be placed in institutions due to poverty, but their families are then not eligible for benefits. Some parents take their children home temporarily in order to qualify for benefits and return them to institutions once they have received the funds. Poverty is a key reason for institutionalisation which can have a negative influence on reuniting children with families. Family benefits in themselves are insufficient to solve existing problems of family reunification, but reunification is also impossible without them[24]. Only carefully designed support packages, including special services and financial support, could create the opportunity for children to be successfully reunited with their families.

More detailed research is necessary to establish more concrete links between child institutionalisation and poverty. However, child institutionalisation is generally more complicated than one single contributing factor and is more likely the result of a combination of unfavourable family conditions, such as unfit parents, abuse, and homelessness, imprisonment of parent or divorce proceedings.

1.7. Child/family relationships

According to respondents, parents agree to place their children in institutions due to the following: a) institutional staff promise to cover transportation costs to maintain child/family relationships; b) more

---

[23] This refers to adoption in particular. According to Armenian law, even foster care requires parent permission or CWPLC status.
[24] Reunification assumes the provision of a complete package of services based on the child's needs.

Respondents faced difficulties when answering questions on child/family relationships, especially children's visits to their families and vice versa. This arguably proves that little or no importance is attached to relationships between those children attending or living in residential care institutions and their families.

Chart 8. *Frequency of visits of the total number of children to their families:*
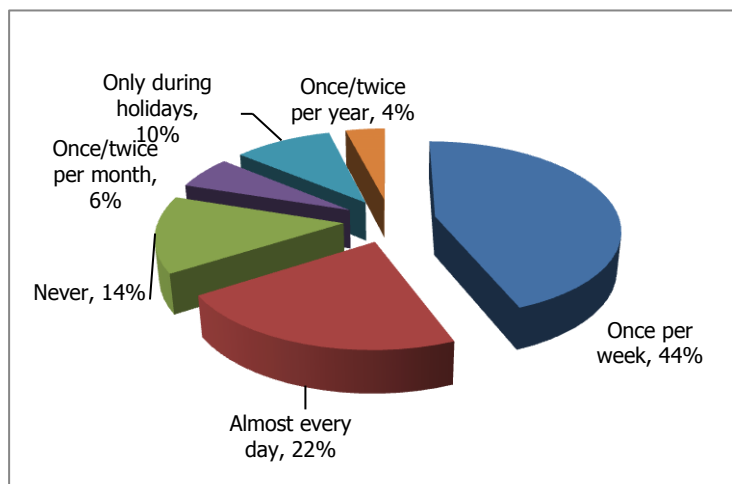
1 out of 5 children return home every day and 2 out of 5 once per week. This group of children probably has the necessary preconditions to permanently reunite with their families irrelevant assistance were provided. The majority of these children "use" their institutions to fulfill special educational needs or the after-school[25] service.

1 out of 10 children only return home during school holidays and under 1 out of 20 visit their families once or twice a year. This group comprises those children whose families are from faraway marzes or who have weak relations with their families. For those children who could find similar services in their marz, deprivation of family relations is not justified by transportation and other costs.

More than 1 out of 10 children never visit their families. According to respondents, 152 children with CWPLC status (who never visit their families) are not institutionalised in orphanages (see Table 13). This fact is a cause for, as their rights are violated not only by the lack of a family environment for their development, but also by not being in an orphanage to receive the relevant social status for state guarantees. This group of children arguably requires alternative care and detailed analysis should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. It is worth to clarify the social status of these 152 children.

842 children had applications sent by their institutions to gain CLWPC social status, of which 720 children received it[26]. Incorrect institutionalization is arguably the most likely reason for the 122 children who did not receive CLWPC status, but the lack of relevant social workers to deal with procedural documentation and the fact that the charters of many institutions do not

---

[25] This includes dinner, help with homework and other such activities.
[26] According to the law, children in orphanages should automatically receive CLWPC status, but this does not always occur in practice.

regard CLWPC status as a priority also play a part. Only 237 (32.9%) of the 720 children who qualified for CLWPC status have been officially registered as candidates for adoption.

> *Children who receive CLWPC status should automatically qualify for adoption. However, this is not the case, meaning that the state focuses more on the rights of parents than of children.*

Table 14. *Number of certified CWLPC children per institution type*

Orphanage	Child care & protection centre	Special boarding school	Assessment centre	Short-term shelter	Specialised socio-educational institution	Training school
547	34	79	0	0	0	39

Only 547 (little over half) of children with CWLPC in orphanages never visit their families, meaning that not all orphanage children's family relations are irrevocably lost. This could mean that a sizeable proportion of children placed in orphanages could recover regular family contactor finally return to their biological or guardian families if relevant assistance were provided. Despite this possibility, however, no recovery project is in place for a large proportion of children in residential care*.*

Chart 9. *Percentage of frequency of parents' visits for the total number of children:*
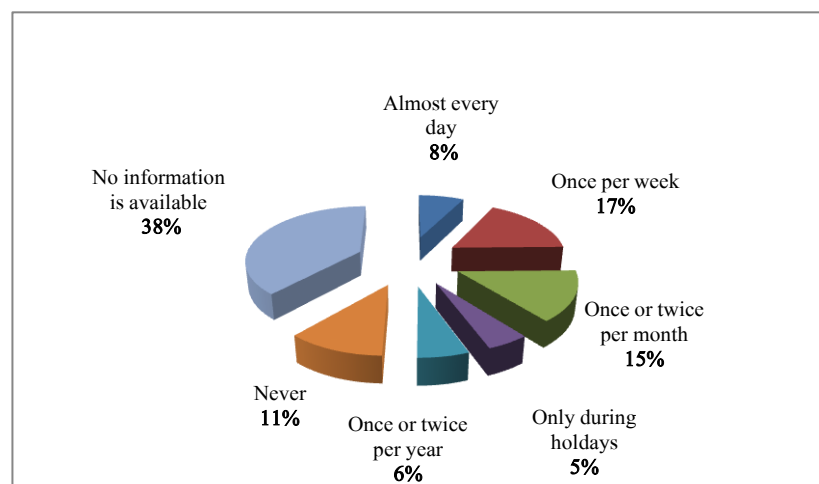
Of the total number of children living in or attending residential care institutions, parents or relatives of 1 out of 12 children visit them almost every day; almost 1 out of 5 once a week; over 1 out of 6 once or twice a month; 1 out of 20 only during holidays; 1 out of 16 once or twice a year; just over 1 out of 10 never visit. No information exists for almost 2 out of 5 children (see table 14).

Table 15. *Number of children with no visitors (parent or relative) per institution type*

Orphanage	Child care & protection centre	Special boarding school	Assessment centre	Short-term shelter	Special socio-educational institution	Training school	Total
307	114	123	0	0	0	11	555

Regarding documentation, 16 children do not hold birth certificates. Intensive work has been undertaken in some institutions regarding this matter; however, not all institutions consider this issue relevant.

No information is available about the condition of families for 82% of children at the time of institutionalisation. Little or no research is undertaken into the family's access to benefits or their property, meaning that parents can institutionalise their child, retaining their parental rights, but that their children lose their right to grow up in a family environment. There is currently no obligation in residential care institutions' charters to provide such monitoring, but this is arguably a necessary addition.

Interviews with the directors suggest that institutions are only able to enter children into care and protect them from suffering or a lack of parental care. Institutions are able to carry out this responsibility until children reach maturity or complete compulsory education, but cannot after this point as they have to be discharged.

This is what society "expects": to keep children safe in child care institutions until the end of childhood but not show any concern about children's links with their families or rehabilitation or integration into society once they exit such institutions.

1.8. Placement procedures

As Table 15 shows, relevant documentation is lacking for 84 children[27] in charity orphanages; for 41 children from childcare and protection centres; for 191 children from certain special boarding schools. Admission requirements in the remaining institutions are assessed on parents' applications, not placement certification or referral orders.

Table 15. *Total number of children against total number with placement certification/referral orders per institution type:*

	Orphanage	Child care & protection centre	Special boarding school	Assessment centre	Special socio-educational institution	Training school	Short-term shelter
# of children	951	827	2314	132	507	146[28]	25
# of children holding placement certification/ referral order	867	786	2123	132	0	146	0
Difference	84	41[29]	191	0	507	0	25

In charity orphanages, no children hold placement certification or referral orders (39 in *Tiramayr Hayastan* and 45 in *SOS Kinderdorf* in Kotayk). This could be the result of very recent regulation of charity organisations by the state: children who were in these orphanages before the new regulation was implemented do not have any documentation. All other referrals to state orphanages are based on placement certification or referral orders.

The data show that some children are being accepted to residential care institutions without relevant documentation. One practice described during the study was that some schools

---

[27] No requirement on this issue was presented to the charity orphanages
[28] According to the MoES, this figure is inaccurate as 1 training school has not apparently received any placement certification or referral orders.
[29] This figure refers to the former charity orphanage in Gyumri, which was recently reclassified as a child care protection & care centre. That institution used to function without placement certification or referral orders and the children there are currently awaiting new certification.

make their own original assessments then request confirmation from assessment centres. Generally requests are approved, as these institutions have experience in choosing the right "kind" of beneficiary and are, consequently, familiar with admission criteria and which personnel in assessment centres to approach to receive a successful request. This does not follow correct procedure and creates the risk of incorrectly placing children in institutions.

The fact that not all placements are done following official procedures and that some institutions have not adopted official supervision requirements proves that referral/placement tools are weak in regulating accurate placement of children. Additional requirements and regulation mechanisms are required to improve this process, to lower the number of inaccurate placements and, especially, to combat the "social network[30]" which exists between certain residential care institutions.

---

[30] Despite expecting that there would be competition between residential care institutions, very often directors agree to "exchange" beneficiaries for budgetary reasons. Data collected in some interviews suggest that assistance is provided to this "network" by higher Armenian administrative bodies.

PART II   Residential child care institutions: Problems and Solutions

2.1. Special educational institutions (including special boarding schools, specialised socio-educational institutions and training schools):

Objective: To "*provide education to children with special needs so that they can occupy a full position in future society*".

Services provided: "Special" refers to the provision of additional services, which allow children with special needs to receive education in more favourable conditions or through specialised educational curricula. Therefore, according to respondents, the primary task of a specialised educational institution is to provide education and care to children according to their special needs, including clothes, food, textbooks and also to "*solve social problems*".

For example, the activities of special boarding school #17 for children with mobility problems are based on two main approaches: "*the regular school curriculum is taught to children with 'normal intellect' (general education), whereas children with 'intellectual damage[31]' receive a special educational programme (auxiliary education). The approach for children with 'normal intellect' is as follows: the advantage for the child placed in this institution is the special approach and the attitude of staff towards children with mobility problems. Integration into regular schools for children of this age group is difficult. The situation in higher education institutions [is different, as] students are conscious [and more understanding]…of people with mobility disabilities.*"

Sometimes children with minor disabilities are unnecessarily placed in special institutions. Parents sometimes apply to special schools so their children a) avoid prejudice in regular schools and b) receive better educational services, food and clothes.

However, this view is arguably misguided: the issue of integration for children with mobility disabilities will not suddenly disappear when/if they continue on to higher education, as if "regular" children are not exposed to disability at a young age then their attitudes are unlikely to instantly change once they reach higher education.

Medical services for children with special needs are accessible in specialised educational institutions: "*…we cooperate with medical centres. Relevant medical treatment is provided to our children by the specialists of those centres, moreover, surgical procedures are performed on children if needed within the framework of school services*".

Unique educational conditions are created for children in some institutions: "*class groups consist of 7-10 children, therefore, the quality of the education is quite high*".Other institutions supplement regular curricula with specially developed programmes to meet special needs, for example special boarding schools for children with hearing disabilities. Higher education in all specialised educational institutions is mostly geared towards vocational training rather than university study.

Many children have to be permanently placed in institutions based on their need for special services, particularly when those services are only located in the capital.

Therefore, one might conclude that uninstitutionalised children with special needs could miss out on a variety of vital services, as it is unlikely their guardians or families could arrange them without relevant assistance.

---

[31] This term was, worryingly, used by the director of this special school instead of 'learning disabilities'.

Beneficiaries: Children (mostly aged 6-16, but a couple of institutions have children aged 6-21)with special needs or disabilities, where "children" receive special preschool, primary or higher education, according to their educational needs and/or disability. Most children at special educational institutions still have one or both of their parents.

Almost all interviewees mentioned that there are still many children in special educational institutions who have no special needs butare from socially vulnerable families. "...[Today] there are [still] numerous cases where a child needs to be placed in our school despite no special needs[due to the environment and lack of special attention in regular schools]."Additionally, the survey discovered that some children have been placed by their families in theseinstitutions not for educational needs but rather the material conditions of being fed and clothed.

Difficulties with care: Specialised educational institutions face certain difficulties, particularly a lack of staff to deal with children with a wide range of different difficulties: "it is very hard to deal with children suffering from epilepsy and bed-wetting as it is difficult to get medicine, nappies, etc. We only have a part-time working psychiatrist, although he/she is constantly needed". This does not relate only to care, but also education: "We do not have special programmes (for instance mathematics, literature, etc.) specifically developed for these children [as] we do not have a [desperately needed] social worker...we [only] have volunteers. We have teachers [who are]permanently being trained, but [they need to] become special paedagogues."

Directors highlighted that some children have difficulty adjusting as they had already been incorrectly placed in 2-3 different institutions prior to joining their special educational institution.

Discrimination from "regular" chidren was mentioned as an issue:"When children go out wearing uniforms, they are laughed at. I've noticed that children like wearing uniforms here, but when they go home, they have to find a place to change [before they go]."

Lack of means of transportation would seem to be an major problem: "it is very hard for both parents and staff to organise the attendance of children with mobility disabilities to special boarding school[s] due to the lack of means for transportation". Some institutions even have to raise money among staff members for children's transportation. Others have been able to build capacity to identify and transport more children with special needs from different marzes due to cooperation with international organisations, but no local support is available. This issue is actual not only for children with mobility difficulties: the long distance, transportation means were mentioned as core reasons which do not allow children regularly return their homes.

While being able to identify more children is a positive step, directors of specialised educational institutions also warned that having too large a number of children and having to specially tailor eduation to a large variety of different special needs can be counterproductive for a single institution. In fact, some children with learning difficulties are simply assimilated into a specialised educational institution's educational framework, with no attempt made to assess and work with those children on an individual or small group basis.

Some directors feel undervalued and underappreciated: "Families see and value our work[but our work is not appreciated by society]". They also claim that institutions are "misunderstood": "all complicated cases, such as children with behavioural problems, are referred to our institution. People should understand that we do not have a magic wand and that it is hard to be effective with [too] big a number of children and current resources. I know from international experience that similar children in other countries are placed in small

institutions with alarge number of staff, so that it would be possible to [more effectively] deal with the problem".

Most likely, the admission, placement and discharge procedure of the children in these types of institutions is based on the requirements with compulsory education. This requirement is illogical for the abovementioned children with complicated complex issues.

Specialised educational institutions which require special equipment face difficulties obtaining the necessary documents. Institutions lack relevant specialists to deal with complex documentation and individual children's parents give up as they cannot afford the necessary invoices.

> *Some institutions need more space due to the increasing number of children in them (Poqr Mher), whereas others have more space than the number of children cared for. Lack of appropriate physical conditions have been mentioned in almost a third of institutions: "for instance, the heating system is a big issue as it is based on electricity and not guaranteed for children...there is a draught coming through the windows..."*
>
> ***Excerpt from interview***

Respondents from all institutions also recorded problems in acquiring stationery, clothes and other items.

> *Even for a hearing aid, a huge list of documents is required by the Ministry. Sometimes I tell them [the Ministry] "you [yourselves] are sick...and need medical treatment..."*
>
> ***Excerpt from interview***

The majority of special educational institutions hosting 6-18-year old children would support reclassification of their institutions to be able to admit children from elementary schools and educate them until they were 21 years old, as this would allow the earlier identification of children and providethem with vocational training after the age of 18.

Currently, few programmes exist to help graduates of these institutions successfully integrate into society: "*Reclassification of our institution would mean that children could study to high school [and beyond, providing a comprehensive learning experience]. Many parents are worried about their children aged 2-4...if we had an elementary school department, the child could then study at [our institutions] from the very beginning [of their academic life]."*

Directors bemoaned the lack of specialised institutions and branches of Yerevan-based instutions in the marzes: "*I suggest creating branches [of specialised educational institutions] in the marzes as well, so that children can continue to live with their families [and not have to come alone to the capital]."*

Results: Naturally,different directors interpreted their results differently. One interpretation concerned the success of integrating children into regular schools as a result of the correctional work undertaken. Others concerned children's admission to higher educational institutions: "*We achieve perfection in our work when our beneficiaries graduate from higher education institutions."*This interpretation would seem to coincide with the public expectation that educational qualifications are the most important personal achievements.

Other (but sadly few) directorsexpressed pride in maintaining family ties. Regarding the working status of alumni, directors gave more modest information as Armenia's job market is unstable and unemployment is high throughout society.

2.2. Assessment centres:

Objective: To"*assess of educational needs and mental and physical disabilities of children prior to placement in child care instutions."*

Services provided: Over the last 3 years these centres assessed the special needs[32] of around 5200children[33] in Armenian educational institutions. The centres also provide planned assistance and recovery services for children who have dropped out of the educational process.

There are special aspects to educational recovery, particularly in the centre in Stepanavan, which uses former beneficiaries to help deal with children who have dropped out of school in order to encourage them attend regular schools.

Nevertherless, the directors of the centres were insisting that "the internal goal of assessment centres is the selection of children for their inclusive education".

Beneficiaries: The Yerevan assessment centre mainly deals with children with complicated learningdifficulties; the Stepanavan centre with children with minor learning difficulties and socially vulnerable children; the Kapan centre with children with average and complicated mental disorders and those from vulnerable families.

Difficulties with care: Assessment is only undertaken in the Yerevan and Kapan centres despite the recruitment of new specialists in Stepanavan (such as social workers, psychologists, speech and art therapists). As a rule, the assessments are done by the assistance of specialists employed at Yerevan assessment centre: *"Currently specialists can look after children with hearing disorders, find children with special needs, [but cannot do assessment]".*

Directors also said that it is difficult to offer regular methodological assistance to other types of child care institutions, as assessment centres only opened recently (they were established in 2007) and staff of these institutions have only recently been trained and lack experience. The centre in Kapan, however,did provide a methodological seminar for assessment centre staff from all Armenia in 2009.

One director said that "*institutions [assessment centres] have been established [by the State] to provide people with jobs"* , rather than the specific needs of children. Directors of the centres insisted, however, that, within assessment centres themselves, "*[our] 'internal' aim is the assessment and selection of children to provide inclusive education [and nothing else]."*

Assessment centres may have innovative approaches to child care, but their focus is on correcting defects rather than encouraging integration into society:"*here children receive education [and] specialists try to correct their defects*" .

Results: Assessment centres provide services to their 'alumni' based on innovative methodologies: *"Individual educational plans are developed and given to each child; work with parents is also undertaken".*
According to some of institutional heads the works of the assessment centres caused to the discharge of many children institutionalized due to the social needs. As for the children with complex problems (children with special educatioanal needs, family problems, poverty, etc) continue to remain in institutions due to the absence of solutions for them.

---

[32] The average number of assessed children per year is 1700-1900
[33] Taking into account the fact that there around 5000 children placed in all institutions, it could be assumed, that there were at least 2000 irrelevant placements in boarding schools prior to reforms.

2.3. Orphanages (including regular and specialised):

Objective: To"*providetwenty-four hour care and education [to children] through the creation of family-like conditions[34]"*.

The perception of orphanages' roles in the lives of institutionalised children by their staff differs, with some suggesting gradual specialisation (such as therapy and establishing future and integration programmes for children) and others suggestingcomplete replacement of families.

Many people visiting our orphanage come to the conclusion that, in some ways, orphanages are better than homes. However, it is impossible to provide a mother's love. We can provide care and warmth, but cannot replace a mother's love."

Services provided: Children are provided with physical, medical, paedagogical, psychological and social care. Complete medical rehabilitation projects are undertaken in some orphanages: individual donors and/or organisations mainly support emergency operations or rehabilitation treatment for children. It seems that donors are more sensitive to the problems of institutionalised children (donors seem to be more unwilling to divulge funds directly to families for children's emergency medical procedures).

A series of leisure activities are carried out at orphanages in the form of group work, musical/sport activities and dress-making courses. Sometimes even vocational and further education are also provided by the orphanage in cooperation with charity organizations.

The majority of responses show that orphanages "are able to implement most required tasks[35]", as they have allmany relevant preconditions: physical conditions and highnumbers of staff. Some also think that care should not only be provided to children, but also additional activities to prepare them for independent life. However, qualified staff to reach the overall goal is currently insufficient in this field.

"... If we had more specialists to provide individual approaches to these children we could be more effective. The meeting of children and specialists once per week is insufficient to ensure quality. It takes a lot of time to reach our goals due to insufficient opportunities to work. There is only 1 speech therapist for 121 children when there should be at least 5. A rehabilitation centre is needed for children with physical problems. It would be possible to establish such an institution though the support of sponsors, but then we'd face another problem – a lack of specialists."

Excerpts from interview

Beneficiaries: Orphanages have been reclassified many times, with the type and age of beneficiaries reviewed repeatedly. According to directors, *child beneficiaries "mainly come from socially vulnerable families, very often with disabilities as well[36]. These children include children of arrested and/or single parents, parentless and/or abandoned children, abused children, children suffering from mental trauma, former beggars and vagrants...younger children are placed in orphanages because single parents cannot both work and care for the child and/or have been put in psychiatric clinics."*

It is quite easy now to supervise the placements in orphanages due to the developed clear procedure. A rather strong justification is needed to place the child in an orphanage.

As the interviews with respondents show the method in these institutions continue to remain correction "recovery of disadvantages" and group approaches.

"Sometimes we work with the child for a year at the centre; he/she becomes more manageable and

---

[34] According to some directors, orphanages provide care and protection rather than assistance to reunite families: "*There is nothing to be done with unlucky children from hopeless families – we replace their families at least till the age of 18.*"

[35] According to directors, lack of resources in post-soviet times has created certain difficulties working with these children. However, individual, Diaspora and international organisation donations have gradually improved the physical conditions of orphanages and state support is slowly increasing.

[36] "*There are children with minor and serious disabilities in our institution including children with physical, mental and complex disabilities*".

Difficulties with care: According to directors a core problem is poverty.However, there is an issue which is apllies to all of the children in child care and protection centres: before coming to the centre they attended special boarding schools, where they received special educational programmes. Those children now attend regular schools, but are not properly integrated there and face difficulties during the educational process.

The 'handbag' comment in the box below is a cause for concern, as it shows a lack of understanding and shows will on behalf of the director to discourage individuality or integration.The issue of reformand integration was also a cause for uncertainty among interviewees: "*...What is the meaning of thesereforms or 'integration'? We complicate the lives of children [through institutional reform]....for what benefit?*" This shows that institutional staff are not ready to deal with reforms or the challenge of reforms to improve integration of institutionalised children into regular schools and their interaction with other children. Respondents were more interestedn in "catch-up" methods and group approaches through a collective approach in their own institution rather than helping their children in regular schools.

Children visit their families at weekends as well as during summer and winter holidays, but thereare cases when the family is in distant marzes and unable to take the child home, so children are forced to stay at the centre at weekends.

In some cases, the specialists have to apply to the "relatives' network" when the child's social network is not there to help.

Frequently institutional staff has to deal with children from families who are members of sects... this is very complicated work which staff are not ready to handle.

PART III   Summary

Methodology: Methodology was not the principal focus of the study, but certain worrying trends emerged.

Institutional methodology principally concerns 'correcting defects' rather than developing skills and the institutionalisation of children rather than directly working with families. Hardly any institutions work with families or cannot as human and material resources are insufficient. The lack of regulation and seeming legal 'preference' towards families do not help in this regard. An increase in funding and specialists would solve this problem. However, institutions are already expensive to run and an increase in personnel would increase costs further.

A decrease in the number of institutionalised children through rejections does not mean that children's needs are satisfied in their families. Children/families who have applied for support face difficulties and instead of being purely rejected, they should be offered alternative service packages, for which residential care institutions could take responsibility.

In recent years, the proportion of correct child placements has increased due to recent reforms and assessment centres' work. However, more analysis is needed to further improve placement mechanisms. Nevertheless, the majority of unnecessary placements in residential care institutions are due to the insufficiency of family support and a lack of alternative options.

> *The state spends a lot of money to keep children in institutions, but this amount could be used to support families.*

Some directors put forward an interesting idea of individualising of child services. This would be achieved through smaller care 'homes', which would be more similar to a family environment. While sound in principle, this would require a radical restructuring of the current financial model and extra funding. Nonetheless, this is a field for further research.

Constraints: Not all children placed in orphanages have relevant CLWPC status, which can create many problems, especially in terms of adoption and free medical care: "*Very often children placed in orphanages lack personal documents and we need to recover the child's identity.*" Lack of access to certain medical services and surgery can be an issue for orphanages due to high prices.

> *...an individual development plan is given to each child. Special attention, a safe evironment and care is provided here to each child...sometimes much efforts, pursuance, involvement of volunteers, sponsors and authorities is required to completely solve the child's problems.*
>
> ***Excerpt from interview***

According to directors, the psychological problems of many institutionalised children in orphanages remain unresolved. Problems are either only partially solved or until obvious manifestations of problematic behaviour are no longer demonstrated. Abused children, according to respondents, "...*do not recover. This is most apparent when they leave the orphanage and start to live independently but with psychological issues and a lack of life skills*".

Sometimes the long-term institutionalization of children is the only possible solution as there are no alternatives in place.

Some directors stated that institutionalised children should stay in orphanages until the age of 23 to prepare them for independent life (after 18), to find shelter or a job: "*according to the law, 'parentless' status covers children/young people to [the age of] 23. Therefore, I suggest keeping children in institutions [to that age]*".

Specialised personnel are not always sufficiently trained to deal with orphanage children's difficulties and/or disabilities, or are lacking. Interviewees said this was a particular problem in specialised orphanages with 0-3-year-old children and with orphanage leavers: "*...It is necessary to review care standards in our institutions and increase the number of staff to ensure individual approaches*". Despite the minimum standards for food, cloth and staff adopted by the Governments' decree 815-N, on 31.05.2007, however the child's individualization is not taken into consideration.

Results: The majority of orphanage directors use these criteria to assess their activities: "*lifestyle of orphanage alumni; number of marriages[37]; occupation; satisfaction/dissatisfaction with institutional staff [while they were at the orphanage]*".The assessment criteria for activities for specialised orphanages is focused on the improvement of health, medical care and the development of physical and mental capacities of their beneficiaries, which indicates how successfully children are "socialised".

Children in orphanages have good access to special medical services.All directors verbally attach some importance to children's care and development in a family environment, however, not all of them encourage direct work with families and maintaining child/family relations. An explanantion of institutions' limits was given by one director: "*deinstitutionalisation is considered one of our goals, but no specific programme exists...it is 'spontaneous'. We encourage the reunification of children with their families, although institutions do not bear any direct responsibility in this matter.*"

Regarding finances, orphanage directors, unlike their counterparts at special boarding schools, mentioned a range of sources: the State, the Diaspora, private donors, organisations,individuals, to name but a few. With the assistance of the aforementioned sponsors, water supplies, heating systems and the buildings were fixed and renovated and clothes, shoes and other other items were provided to children.

Some external organisations are running successful programmes in orphanages in the form of entertainment activities and the teaching of various skills. Sometimes children can also earn their own pocket money: "*children make carpets, which we then sell [for them]*".

2.4 Child care& protection centres

The former boarding schools were reorganized into nightcare centres since 2007. As opposed to the former type of institution, today the children attend general schools. The concept of this institution is designed to give importance to the separation of care and education.

Objective: To "*support socially vulnerable children[38] and their families and provide relevant long-term assistance to vulnerable children and their families to reunite*".

Beneficiaries: Children of families which receive benefits or families which are registered in the family benefit system[39] and/or those with certain familial problems. "*There are children whose parents are deceased, arrested or single. There are also cases where both parents or relatives do not care for the children and the children are parentless but not adopted or lack*

---

[37] "*Only 13 institutionalised girls were married over 4-5 years*", said one orphanage director.
[38] It should be noted that children in child care and protection centres attend regular schools.
[39] Government's decree 1735-N on 09.11.2006

guardians".

Services provided: Care, pocket money (for transportation), stationery, clothes and extra study lessons to ensure progress at school. Various courses are launched at care centres: children receive either initial professional skills and relevant certificates "*which can be used [in the future]*".

> *"Many structures support us. We really value leisure activities like bicycle racing. We have a close relationship with an orphanage in France. Bicycle races are arranged between the orphanages, ensuring a healthy lifestyle, new skills and relationships with children of other nationalities and improvement of abilities. We continue to supervise our beneficiaries even when they leave our institution until we are convinced that he/she is completely safe from harm.*
>
> ***Excerpt from interview***

Care centres also try to arrange summer camps for children.

Difficulties with care: Limitation of financial resources, lack of relevant training or seminars for specialists[40], lack of business/field trips and study exchanges, lack of skills-building programmes for professional development, a lack of specialists[41] (but a high number of administrative staff) and large numbers of children.

Standards of care, changes in placement certification/referral orders, assessment centres' work and new regulations can make residential care institutions feel pressured. New regulations, in particular, do not always seem convincing to staff. Provision of funding, focused on the number of children, creates difficulties: dependence on the number of children forces them to "obtain" children rather than work with them in a specialised fashion: "*If the number of children in the institution is decreasing, I have to send my employees to find children*". Permanent monitoring by various supervisory governmental bodies (which, according to directors, "*do not provide any practical assistance*") further increases tension. Little benefit would seem to be gained from this monitoring as no advice is given, merely punitive action or even nothing at all.[42]

Higher competency of services could help restructure and reclassify institutions and ease financial pressure. If institutional heads took a more comprehensive approach towards children's problems instead of those of the institution and financial and regulatory limits were externally reviewed, individualised case-by-case management with a realistic number of children would be possible.

Relations with parents: Unclear child/parent relationships and the consequently unclear social status of children seriously affect possibilities for children to be adopted and spend their childhood in a second family environment. Based on the difficulty of clarifying child/parent legal relations, one might conclude that **the courts show preference to the protection of parent's rights rather than children's.**

Absence of methodology for "case management" Child institutionalisation from families in difficulties (including *force majeure* situations) is an easy process. However, returning children depends on the family's ability to recover, which happens very rarely in practice. Frequently parents take children back without creating any "healthy" conditions.

---

[40] Although seminars and study tours are internally conducted in institutions, they are insufficient, lacking in quality or irrelevant.

[41] For example, three psychologists, one social worker and one speech therapist work with 277 children in Kharberd orphanage.

[42] One of the directors said: "*I turn [the monitors] out of my room as, very often, the supervisor himself/herself is not competent and is only trying to find mistakes to punish rather than to properly understand institutional life*".

This means that referral mechanisms are unilateral: extremely few reunification programmes with families exist after child institutionalisation.

In other words, **"case management" is** not in place.

The existing services are not accessible for children with special needs and at risk situations due to the absence of methodology in place, whereas the institutions become more "attractive".

There are a series of issues in legislation and procedural aspects (coming out from the concept):

   a) The peculiarities of children with mental disorders placed in orphanages are not taken into account;

   b) The mechanisms to define child's legal status are not based on the best interest of the child

   c) All children's problems in special educational institutions are adjusted to the requirements of compulsory education (no preference is given to the remaining needs of children and it turns out that the social needs of the child is "adjusted" to the educational framework)

Despite directors bemoaning a dearth of specialists to fulfill necessary services, they seem to place more emphasis on the provision of food, clothes and discipline to children in residential care institutions than hiring specialists.

Lack of specialists involvement and skills: Almost in all institutions, with minor exceptions, 'support specialists' were recently hired (social pedagogues, social workers and psychologists), but were, in fact, former employees of the same institutions without specific training and specialisations. These 'specialists' conduct "mundane" functions (mainly concerning pedagogical correction). The coverage of care staff is quite small and even current vacancies are unfilled.

Attitudes to alternatives: The majority of institutions feels under unfair pressure and undervalued. Some directors of them are resentful and even ready to fight reform.

> *"Children are better protected in our current [institutional] model than in proposed changes".*
>
> *"I won't let them completely destroy this country. We are the only and the last hope for these children."*
>
> ***Excerpt from interview***

It is worth to mention that the institutions "adopted" the social order offered by the society through years, that's why the new order is psychologically hard to accept.

In conclusion, the study showed that people do not seem to think about alternative services to child care institutions and are instead of the opinion that stable services can only be possibly funded and provided through institutions by the state, as they regard alternatives as 'charity-funded' activities, which are neither 'stable' nor 'constant'. People do not yet understand that these same alternative services could be transferred to charities or NGOs, yet organized, funded and supervised by the state.

As a result, there exist no clear ideas about how to provide special services without simply institutionalizing children, how to make more flexible services available and how to reunite families.

Appendices for
RAPID ASSESSMENT OF RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

1.   Date of assessment: (DD/MM/YY)
2.   Name of interviewer_____
3.   Name of respondent _____
4.   Name of the director of the institution_____
5.   Name of the institution _____
6.   Address (village/marz) _____
7.   Contact details_____
8.   Type of institution

1	Orphanage
2	Child care & protection centre
3	Special boarding school
4	Assessment centre
5	Other (specify)

9.   Number of children hosted

Total	
Male	
Female	

10.   Number of children per marz

Yerevan	
Marzes (specify)	

11.   Number of children holding placement/referral order

Total	
Male	
Female	

12.   Number of children for each of the following age groups

0-2	
3-5	
6-10	
11-15	
16-18	
18+	

13.   Number of children

With two parents	
With no parents	
Foundling	
With one parent	
Child of single mother	
Child of divorced parents	
Child of missing parents	

14.   Number of children

Still under guardianship of their parents	
Under guardianship of institution	
Are under guardian's care	
With appointed guardians	

15.   Number of children's families receiving benefits _____
16.   Number of children receiving benefits as the child:

Has lost his/her bread-winner	
has a disability	

17.   Number of children with a certified disability

Total	
Male	
Female	

18. Type of disability according to certification

Physical	
Mental	
Combined	

19. Number of children with property (specify)_____

20. Number of children with written recommendation for a special education programme

Inclusive school	
Special boarding school	
Home educated	

21. Number of staff employed

Total	
Male	
Female	

22. Of which:

Support staff	
Carers	
Cook/assistant	
Driver	
Launderer	
Janitor	
Gardener	
Guard	
Other (specify)	

Professional staff	
Social worker	
Psychologist	
Paedagogue	
Teacher	
Paediatrician	
Lawyer	
Other (specify)	

Administrative staff	
Director	
Deputy director	
Manager	
Secretary	
Accountant	
IT manager	
Other (specify)	

23. Are there any vacancies announced?

1	Yes
2	No (skip to question 26)

24. Number of vacancies _____

25. Types of vacancies _____

26. Ratio of carers, teachers and paedagogues to children

Age	0-2	3-5	6-10	11-15	16-18	18 and above
Carer						
Teacher						

27. Are care plans (file) for each child available and accessible (individual educational plan for special school)?

1	Yes
2	No
3	Some of them (specify how many of them don't have)
4	No precise information is available (Don't know)

28. Do all children have birth certificates?

1	Yes
2	No
3	Some of them (specify)
4	Not known

29. Have the children been immunised?

1	Yes, all of them

2	No one
3	Some of them (specify)
4	Not known (specify)

30. Did immunised children have all relevant immunisations?

1	Yes
2	No
3	Some of them (specify)
4	Not known (specify)

31. Do children receive regular medical services?

1	Yes, all of them
2	None of them
3	Some of them (specify)
4	No precise information is available (Not known)

32. Do all school-age children regularly attend school?

1	All of them
2	None of them
3	Some of them (specify)
4	Not known

33. Number of children per school type:

Regular	
Inclusive	
Special	

34. Number of school-age children per following schools:

10-12 Class	High	
5-9 Class	Middle	
0-4 Class	Pimary	

35. Number of institutionalised children staying overnight in the child care institution: _____

36. Number of children visited by parents/relatives:

Almost every day	
Once a week	
Once/twice a month	
Only during holidays	
Once/twice a year	
Never	
Not known	

37. How often do children visit their families?

Almost every day	
Once a week	
Once/twice a month	
Only during holidays	
Once/twice a year	
Never	
Not known	

38. How often do children contact their families over the phone?

Almost every day	

Once a week	
Once/twice a month	
Only during holidays	
Once/twice a year	
Never	

39. For how many children exists a plan for reunification with their family?

1	Each child
2	No child
3	Some of them (specify)
4	Not known

40. How many children visit their families at weekends?

1	All of them
2	None of them
3	Some of them (specify)
4	Not known

41. How many children go home during the holidays?

1	All of them
2	None of them
3	Some of them (specify)
4	Not known

42. How many children have had applications sent for CLWPC social status?

1	All of them
2	None of them
3	Some of them (specify)
4	Not known

43. How many children received CLWPC status?

1	All of them
2	None of them
3	Some of them (specify)
4	Not known

44. How many children with CLWPC status applied for adoption?

1	All of them
2	None of them
3	Some of them (specify)
4	Not known

45. Access to the facilities of the child institution and to children's data has been:

1	Denied
2	Partially allowed
3	Fully allowed

46. Notes

_____
_____
_____
_____

Apendix 2. In-depth interview questions for the representatives of the residential child care institutions

1. Date of the establishment of the institution and its conception?

2. What was the purpose of its establishment?

3. How effective is the institution in fullfilling its tasks?

4. For whom was the institution envisaged?

5. What are the basic issues of children that are dealt with in this institution?

6. From which families do those children come?

7. What are the problems of families and how have these problems affected the institutionalised children concerned?

8. Are parents involved in the educational/institutional lives of children? How effective is that involvement?

9. Which basic problems does the institution regularly face?

10. What impact have recent reforms in the sphere of child protection had on the institution?

11. Do you require any changes to the institution regarding:
   - ✓ Organisation?
   - ✓ Children/families?
   - ✓ Goals, objectives, tasks?

Appendix 3. Allocation of children per marz

	Yerevan	Shirak	Lori	Tavush	Syunik	Ararat	Gegharkunik	Armavir	Kotayk	Aragatsotn	Vayots Dzor	Total
Place of origin												
Yerevan	1159	70	2	0	23	97	36	2	99	0	0	1488
Shirak	38	428	4	0	0	21	5	1	0	0	0	497
Aragatsotn	21	22	516	21	0	23	2	0	11	0	0	616
Armavir	31	4	7	112	0	11	6	0	2	0	0	173
Tavush	19	8	0	0	389	18	0	0	0	0	0	434
Syunik	123	10	10	0	0	26	3	0	6	0	0	178
Vayots Dzor	22	4	0	0	0	5	95	0	3	0	0	129
Lori	181	4	0	1	0	17	1	167	2	1	0	374
Gegharkunik	76	21	0	0	0	17	8	0	153	0	0	275
Ararat	44	4	6	0	0	9	0	1	5	62	0	131
Kotayk	7	1	0	0	0	4	3	0	3	0	0	18
Artsakh	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	0	0	27
Other countries	8	4	0	0	0	29	2	0	0	0	0	43
Yerevan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	519
Overall	1734	581	545	134	412	277	161	171	305	63	0	4902

For isntance there are 1488 children from Yerevan in all institutions including 70 in Shirak marz, 2 in Lori, 23 in Syunik, 97 in Ararat, 36 in Gegharkunik, 2 in Armavir and 99 in Kotayk. No child from Yerevan has been placed in Aragatsotn, Tavush or Vayots Dzor.

Appendix 4. Number of children per place of residence (Marz, absolute number)

	Place	Number of institutions	Number of children
1	Yerevan	21	1488
2	Shirak	7	497
3	Aragatsotn	1	131
4	Armavir	2	374
5	Tavush	2	173
6	Syunik	5	434
7	Vayots Dzor	0	18
8	Lori	5	616
9	Gegharkunik	2	129
10	Ararat	1	178
11	Kotayk	4	275
12	Artsakh	-	27
13	Other countries	-	43
14	No information is available	-	519

Appendix 5. Ratio of the number of institutionalised children to care staff per institution type (absolute number)

Type of institution	# children	# of carers	Correlati-on/ratio	# of Support staff	Correlati-on/ratio	# Admini-strative staff	Correlati-on/ratio	# of prof-essi-onal staff	Correlat-ion/ratio
Orphanage	951	368	3	236	4	84	11	211	5
Child care & protection centre	827	220	4	242	3	94	9	118	7
Special boarding school	2314	358	6	413	5	147	15	566	4
Assessment centre	132	17	8	59	2	26	5	94	1
Specialised socio-educational institution	507	69	7	44	12	18	28	115	4
Training school for children with so-called "antisocial behaviour"	146	28	5	31	5	15	10	46	3
Short-term shelter	25	8	3	10	3	5	5	9	3

Appendix 6. Assessed institutions per type

N	Type of Institution	MoLSI	CI (charity institution)	MoES	Marz	Yerevan municipality
1.	Orphanage	7	4			
2.	Child Care & protection centre	8	1			
3.	Special boarding school			7	12	3
4.	Assessment centre			3		
5.	Short-term shelter		1			
6.	Specialised socio-educational institution			2		
7.	Training school for children with 'antisocial behaviour'			2		
	Overall 7 types	**15**	**6**	**14**	**12**	**3**