



# News Bulletin

April 2005

## Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC) program offers community-based alternatives



**Started:** April 2004  
**Duration:** 4 years  
**Regions:** Yerevan, Syunik, Tavush, Shirak, Gegharkunik  
**Direct beneficiaries:** 1080 children and 499 families  
**Indirect beneficiaries:** 6000 children and their families  
**Funded by:** USAID/Global Development Alliance (50%), Development Cooperation Ireland and World Vision offices in the US, UK, Canada and Germany

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A new community-based children center has opened recently in Ani district in Gyumri, as a part of World Vision's program focused on the protection of the rights and well-being of children with special needs and in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC). This center is one of the 11 community-based children centers established in four regions of Armenia during the first year of the program implementation.

The major components of the CEDC program include prevention of child abandonment and institutionalization through the provision of family and community-based alternatives for families in crisis, protection of the rights and well-being of children in residential institutions, reintegration of vulnerable children into mainstream education, integration of institutionalized children back into the mainstream of normal life.

The community-based children centers offer psychological assistance, legal counseling and social work services, as well as special education courses for children with special needs, vulnerable children and their families.

children receive essential physical, emotional and psychological/psychiatric support at the centers.

Roaming street teams were established in Yerevan and Gyumri, helping to identify street children and vulnerable families.

*"Some of the children have development delay, lack of communication and social skills, as a result of the difficult situation in their families. At the center they receive psychological assistance, learn to communicate with other children," says Azatuhi Faradyan, a psychologist.*



*"During surprise street visits we often find children begging or digging in garbage dumps., World Vision's social workers visit their homes, talk to the parents and invite them to the community center," says Gayane Galoyan, a social worker, Gyumri*



World Vision provided furniture, equipment, developmental games, toys and methodological materials to the centers. Multidisciplinary teams perform assessment and monitoring of the children, and, presently, 440

Over 650 home visits were conducted by social workers to provide consultations and necessary material support to the families, such as food, clothing, medicine, as well as limited payment for electricity and wood for heating during winter months.

Nearly 500 families received assistance and continue to benefit from various services provided by child protection specialists.

World Vision actively collaborates with local authorities in implementing the CEDC program. As a result of this cooperation, at present 38% of the salary of the centers' specialists is being paid by the Government.

In partnership with the "League for Democratic Development" NGO, World Vision provides vocational training on hairdressing, cooking, computer science and car repair for 60 people from vulnerable families to increase their competitiveness in the labor market. World

Vision also collaborates with regional employment centers to help these people find employment and boost household income.

With the aim to protect the rights of children in residential care and to provide a basis for their de-institutionalization, three residential institutions - Special school #18, Special Educational Complex #1 and Yerevan Special Orphanage - have been selected for the CEDC program.

Protecting the rights of children in institutions has started through a combination of increased engagement with institutions and advocacy for government policy change.



*"Hurry up, boys, the party is about to start," the children at the Special schools # 18 are arranging tables for the birthday party.*

In addition to the provision of limited supplies and minor renovations that have a direct impact on well-being of 350 children, the CEDC program provides staff training and monitoring of the situation in institutions.

In partnership with "Step by Step" Benevolent Foundation training on child-oriented approach is provided to the educators in all three institutions. Social workers, psychological and legal counseling are available in all three institutions. The assessment of 254 children in institutions was carried out and individual development plans were created for every child. World Vision also initiated the process of revision of institutional charters and admission criteria.

With the aim to promote integration of vulnerable children into mainstream education, 19 inclusive kindergartens and 8 primary schools became a part of the CEDC program.

The kindergartens and schools received furniture and educational materials and 200 kindergarten teachers and 500 parents participated in seminars and workshops on the basics of inclusive education and child growth and development. Teaching guides, methodological materials and booklets for specialists, parents and children were developed as well.

The children from the three institutions attend clubs and classes and participate in social events and activities outside of the institutions.

Fourteen children from the Yerevan Special Orphanage started attending a community school.

Last summer, 70 children from Special Educational Complex #1 and 40 children from vulnerable families participated in World Vision's summer camps. Over 1400 children involved in the program participated in more than 50 recreational activities and field trips.

To promote the integration of institutionalized children back into the mainstream of regular life, World Vision provides vocational training for 40 children in institutions and organizes activities, such as birthday celebrations and social events, to teach them life skills and promote healthy behavior.

World Vision also works to restore communication between children in institutions and their families through mail, and provides transportation for weekly home visits, working to create conditions to promote the children's return to their families.

6000 children and their parents participated in various public events aimed at increasing community integration and raising public awareness of children's rights and child protection issues. World Vision also encourages involvement of youth in child protection activities.

Agreements and memoranda of understanding were signed with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture and Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare local and international NGOs, to strengthen collaboration around child protection issues.

*"For many children with disabilities this is the first opportunity to go out and participate in the celebration, to show their talents and prove that they are important members of the society." Yeranuhi Ohanyan, the leader of "Lusastegh" NGO, during the Child Protection Day (June 1<sup>st</sup>) celebration in Yerevan*



World Vision became a member of the civic working group responsible for the development of the National Child Protection System in Armenia, created at the initiative of the European Commission.

With the aim to provide relevant knowledge and improve capacity of local NGOs, World Vision plans to organize regular meetings for all interested NGOs with a particular focus on four topics: work in special institutions, community-based alternative services, children with special needs and educational activities in the child protection sector.