An Assessment of Armenia's
Child-Friendly School Pilot Projects and CFS Standards
for
UNICEF Armenia

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List of Acronyms

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CFS	Child-Friendly School(s)
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
EQRP	Education Quality and Relevance Programme
EU	European Union
GoA	Government of Armenia
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NIE	National Institute of Education
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
P&T	Partnership and Teaching (NGO)
RA	Republic of Armenia
SIMS	School Information Management System
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

Assessment of Child-Friendly School Pilot Projects and CFS Standards Document

Executive Summary

Context of the Consultancy. UNICEF-Armenia issued Terms of Reference (TOR) for an external consultancy to assess the Child-Friendly School (CFS) pilot projects and the Child-Friendly standards document. The results were to enable UNICEF to support the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in developing a comprehensive strategy to mainstream the Child-Friendly Schools approach in Armenia. The overall goal is to shift from CFS as pilot projects to CFS as mainstream education policy. This shift strengthens the effort to improve the quality of education in Armenia, which began immediately following independence. The Government of Armenia (GoA) and UNICEF share a common purpose. Each emphasizes the well being of the child, as promulgated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), at the center of education reform.

The CFS standards document was developed in 2006 by a national team that used the National Curriculum Framework and the Secondary Education State Standards as a template for aligning national priorities with CFS dimensions. The three core CFS principles (UNICEF, 2009) are: child-centeredness; inclusiveness; and democratic participation. The CFS standards document was intended to be the entry point for a school to become a CFS. The document would serve as a self-assessment instrument for a school to: determine the extent to which it incorporated CFS dimensions; to identify gaps; and to make necessary adjustments. In 2007-2008, an awareness campaign in Syunik marz[1] introduced the CFS approach to approximately 100 schools and communities. This campaign was followed by a competition in which 22 schools applied this self-assessment framework to become a pilot school. Seven schools won the competition. In 2008 a CFS awareness campaign was conducted in two other regions. During this overall time period, 364 schools participated in the CFS approach. Additional competitions for more pilot schools were postponed. Before proceeding, UNICEF wanted to assess CFS pilot projects and CFS standards document and provide a "snapshot" of CFS in Armenia.

Education Reform in Armenia. As presented in *Education in Armenia* (2008), the *Law on Education* (1999) formed the legislative framework for succeeding reforms at all levels of the education system. That framework has continued with the *Law on General Education (*2009) and the draft *Strategic Programme for Education Development* (2008-2015). The reform includes preschool through general secondary education (primary, basic, and high school), vocational or professional education, and post-graduate education. It addresses persons "needing special education conditions" such as children with exceptional abilities as well as those with mental or physical disabilities. The value throughout the reform is inclusiveness – no child in Armenia shall be left behind as the country moves forward to improve the quality of its education system.

Education Reform in UNICEF. UNICEF has been working globally since the 1990s to improve the quality of education by focusing on the well being of the child. This is grounded in the belief that schools should operate in a child's best interests and in

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[1] A marz is a region. There are 11 marses in Armenia.

the commitment to the CRC that all children have the right to a quality education. UNICEF's "signature school model," the Child-Friendly School, promotes an approach that addresses the social, emotional, and pedagogical needs of all children. The CFS model now functions in context-specific educational settings in more than 90 countries (*Actions for Children, Geneva,* 2009*)*. UNICEF-Armenia began working closely with the MoES in 2000 to introduce CFS dimensions in Armenia and to engage in pilot activities. Examples of collaboration include introduction and establishment of student councils at schools; integration of life skills based education into the state curriculum; promotion and piloting of inclusive school model; a CFS concept paper (2004); the CFS standards document (2006); an awareness campaign and competition in one region to become a pilot school; another awareness campaign in two more regions; and a preliminary action plan in 2009 to mainstream CFS in Armenian education reform.

Methodology. The conceptual framework for collecting data to meet the defined TOR tasks was to construct an "information needs" matrix so as to pinpoint the type of information gathered from each data source. The focus was to learn how and why stakeholders were interested in the CFS approach, what it "looked like" to be engaged in CFS, and how these experiences might inform the shift from CFS as a pilot activity to policy integration. A 10-day on-site visit (29 September – 9 October 2009) was devoted to gathering information from a diverse and purposive sample of national, regional, and local sources. The procedures included: individual interviews with key stakeholders; focus groups; school visits, including class observation; and review of national, regional, and global documents. A feedback loop (i.e., reporting back) was built into the process so that UNICEF and stakeholders were informed about the progress of the data collection and any preliminary conclusions based on those activities. Stakeholders were invited to comment on and also to clarify any misunderstandings or errors. Documents reviewed included reports and other literature relevant to the education reform in Armenia; UNICEF/Armenia and UNICEF globally; and selected literature regarding global activities and lessons learned in improving education quality worldwide. The intent was to gain a perspective of CFS in Armenia, then consider this perspective through the global lens of education reform, including UNICEF's CFS experience in other countries. The results are to inform the development of a comprehensive strategy to bring CFS to all regions in Armenia.

An analysis of the CFS Standards document explored the relationship between the National Curriculum Framework and the State Secondary Education Standards, and the UNICEF global CFS principles. The results are briefly described in this Summary, and a companion report to the Final Report will be submitted to UNICEF and included as an annex in the Final Report.

Overall Findings. This section highlights the key findings.

1. It is "prime time" for CFS to move into the mainstream of education reform in Armenia. The political will exists. The policies and practices of the MoES and UNICEF converge around a nourishing, child-centered environment of teaching and learning. CFS brings the Government reform efforts under one umbrella to strengthen the vision of improving educational quality.

2. Implementation partners at the marz level are critical stakeholders because they functionally connect the national policy to local practice. They provided essential support in conducting the awareness campaigns and competition for pilot schools.

They continue to strengthen technical support by developing guidelines for school councils (e.g., student councils) and a school management information system.

3. Implementing the CFS approach requires time, support, and strong leadership. Stakeholders at all levels recognized that full integration of a CFS vision and practice is a work in progress that requires several years to implement at both the policy and practice levels. In addition, implementation support to fully integrate CFS is necessary as schools put decentralized mechanisms into place (e.g., shared decision-making is a new idea); educators have time to reflect on their successes and near successes in using new teaching methods (e.g., shift from didactic to active teaching is dramatic); and parents adjust to the expectation that they more fully support the school programme (e.g., parental support appears weak). *Despite these challenges, the teachers and principals in the pilot schools feel empowered by the connection to a national priority and an international movement.*

4. Systematic data on the pilot school experience do not exist. There is a lot of anecdotal evidence about the successes and challenges of engaging in CFS pilot activities and the use of the CFS standards framework. But a comprehensive description of what happened in the pilot schools after they won the competition (e.g., how they used the new materials they received, changes in classroom relationships between students and teachers, and where there were noticeable changes in student learning) would enrich an understanding of what it means to be a CFS and how CFS makes a difference in teaching and learning. Such knowledge also contributes to decision-making about school management and programme revision.

5. The CFS Standards document, as a school self-assessment instrument, was informative but challenging. It is a technically complicated document and difficult to follow. Although it draws upon many elements of the CFS principles, they are not consistently articulated within each element of the framework. Local committees (e.g., school officials and parents) worked through the framework together in applying to become a pilot school. Some principals reported that using the framework providing an organizational structure to the school programme (both pilot and non-pilot). If school self-assessment is the entry point to use the CFS approach, then this instrument will need to be revised.

6. The CFS Standards document is based on content that reflects the national curriculum and state standards but it does not use (or select) the core CFS principles or dimensions as the basis for specifying desired behaviors and outcomes. CFS characteristics <u>do</u> appear in the framework (e.g., gender; special needs; parent involvement; safe environment) but they do not appear consistently across the content areas. This presents a challenge for a school to track progress in implementing a CFS approach because desired behavioral changes that reflect CFS are not specified. The global CFS key principles recently were elaborated on in the *CFS Program Manual* (2009), which will facilitate a revision of the framework.

7. Pilot schools won the competition because they produced evidence that demonstrated their existing alignment with CFS, although one principal mentioned that no school reported having more than half of the CFS characteristics. This

appears inconsistent with the UNICEF mandate to focus on the most vulnerable children in a society. Awareness of this should be included in discussions about how and when CFS moves into all regions.

Recommendations. This section highlights suggested recommendations.

1. Prepare a five-year action plan 2010-2015 (i.e., a road map) that articulates the connections between the MoES and UNICEF priorities. Identify long-term and intermediate goals and outcomes and specify who is responsible for what tasks.

2. Create a coordinating committee whose membership represents all levels of education and all stakeholders. This will demonstrates a visible presence of CFS as a priority and will serve as a liaison to policy makers and practitioners. It will also provide a feedback mechanism for necessary revisions.

3. Revise the CFS Standards document. Prior to a revision, clarify the intended users and intended purpose of this document (e.g., Is this document to be <u>the</u> school self-assessment tool or is it to be used as the basis for creating a school self-assessment tool?). The CFS core principles should be developed more thoroughly and used to set school-based performance indicators. For example, in each section, define a specific theme and develop all ideas, criteria, and benchmarks within that theme. Such consistency will strengthen the usefulness of the framework. Define all terms such as dimension, theme, benchmark, and indicator.

4. Develop a methodology for expanding CFS in Armenia. If the goal is to reach each of the 11 regions, then one way to proceed is to develop a "readiness" list of preconditions for becoming a CFS. Schools may be selected based on a range of "readiness" factors so that participation may include schools that are the least ready (i.e., most vulnerable), the most ready (i.e., meet some of the conditions), and those in between. Tracking progress for each type of school would provide evidence-based experience for continued expansion.

5. Track progress and performance. School data need to be routinely gathered, analyzed, and used to learn what is working and not working in the implementation. It is essential to gather information about student academic performance since this is critical for monitoring the effectiveness of the CFS approach.

6. Other suggestions are presented in the Final Report. Examples include: using small grants to local educators to fund school improvement activities; leveraging CFS participation to engage public and private stakeholders to support schools; engaging post-secondary institutions to contribute to the documentation of CFS in Armenian schools; developing guidelines to facilitate some of the new concepts (e.g., democratic participation); and targeting parents and communities to engage in the school programme.

The Child-Friendly School concept is an evolving and flexible model that each country uses to meet national education priorities. By incorporating CFS into its systematic education reform policy, Armenia accelerates its path to improving teaching and learning so that no child is left behind.

An Assessment of Armenia's Child-Friendly School Pilot Projects and Standards

> *Every citizen has the right for education; education is free of charge in the state secondary educational institutions; every citizen has the right to receive professional education free of charge on competitive basis, in state professional educational institutions.*
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> *Article 35. First Constitution of the Republic of Armenia 1995*
> *Education in Armenia* (2008)

1. Background

The Terms of Reference (TOR)[2] for this study state that it is an "Assessment of Child-Friendly School (CFS) Pilot Projects and CFS Standards Document." The purpose of this assessment is to use the findings to support the Ministry of Science and Education (MoES) in developing a comprehensive strategy to implement the CFS approach in all regions of the Republic of Armenia (RA). While focusing on the specific efforts within Armenia, this assessment also considered the next steps for the country within the larger context of UNICEF's focus on CFS and education quality both globally and within the region. The Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) Regional Office is in the process of developing a conceptual framework and a roadmap for standards revision according to research-based, CFS principles. UNICEF/Armenia can continue to draw on both the documents cited in this report and on other documents produced by UNICEF Headquarters as it moves forward in its own standards development process; it can also continue to interact with the Regional Office in order to ensure that a participatory process is used to refine Armenia's CFS standards as well as take into account the various evidence-based suggestions offered in the longer document developed for this consultancy.

The report begins with the context to provide the overall perspective of education reform efforts in Armenia as they relate to global initiatives. The methodology section describes the approach to information gathering from stakeholders at all levels of the education system and from a sample of pilot schools. The next section presents specific findings among the types and organizational levels of stakeholders, highlighting some key issues for consideration and specific observations on CFS using UNICEF criteria. The report concludes with suggested actions that use the results of this assessment to develop a comprehensive strategy for implementing CFS in all regions of Armenia. A companion report focuses specifically on an *Analysis of Armenia's Child-Friendly Schools: Rationale, Criteria, Indicators and*

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[2] See Annex 1 for the Terms of Reference.

Benchmarks, also known as the "CFS Standards Framework." (This companion report also appears in this report as Annex 2.)[3]

2. Context

2.1 The Republic of Armenia

The Republic of Armenia's independence in 1991 began a dramatic and difficult transition for a country with a remarkable history, marked by a tradition of literacy dating more than 1,000 years. The education system began to falter in the early years of the republic, as Armenia battled the effects of social and economic decline. The immediate priority in education was to regain the structural strength of previous years and maintain the educational achievements of the Soviet era. *Education in Armenia* (2008) describes the flow of reform efforts in Armenia that were launched in the early 1990s, beginning with the structural needs of finance and management. A shift to programme needs began in 1999 when the National Assembly adopted a "Law on Education," which provides the cornerstone for systematic efforts to raise the quality of education in Armenia. Targeted reforms in content areas of education started in 2003, which influenced curriculum, assessment procedures, and teaching and learning methodologies. Two significant foundational documents produced during this period were *The National Curriculum Framework for General Education* and *The State Standards for Secondary Education (*Center of Education Projects, PIU*, p.13).*

Other laws and regulatory frameworks on education reform include: Higher and Post-Graduate Professional Education (2004); Preliminary and Middle Level Professional (Vocational) Education (2005); State Education Inspectorate (2005); Preschool Education (2005); Strategy of the RA Higher Education Reforms (2003); Approval of Concept of Aesthetic Education (2004); Inclusive Education Policy (2005); and Pedagogical Education Reform Policy Paper (2005). "The most important state and national goal currently is the progressive development of the education system and ensuring its competitiveness in the international arena" (*Education in Armenia,* p. 4). The main goals of the ongoing reform in the education sector are to:

- increase general educational quality;
- ensure the relevance of the education system of Armenia to the modern economy society demands and internally accepted education standards; and
- orient the development of the Armenian education system toward the requirements of "knowledge economy" in the light of the current globalization conditions (Center of Education Projects, PIU*, pp. 36, 37).

As Armenia laid the legislative framework, it also focused on mid- and long-term planning. In 2006, the Education Development National Programme (2008-2015) was drafted. Currently it is under revision and it will most likely reflect the priorities of the education sector for 2010-2015. The Law on General Education was adapted in 2009. MoES then developed an action plan to stimulate activities to implement the law (e.g., teacher certification procedures; standards and procedures for external and internal assessment of education institutions; procedures for provision of alternative funding to education institutions).

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[3] In 2010, UNICEF's CEE/CIS Regional Office plans to develop a conceptual framework and roadmap for the CFS standards in countries of the region.

To appreciate Armenia's decade-long commitment to improving the system-wide quality of education, it is essential to recognize that these efforts are taking place within another phase of declining economic and social circumstances.[4] The results of efforts to strengthen national development in Armenia, within the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), provide a very recent and illuminating perspective on these circumstances. This perspective is included in this report to present a lens through which to view the challenges facing Government of Armenia (GoA). Since 2004, Armenia has been moving in the right direction with respect to poverty alleviation. Redistribution, social protection, and social assistance mechanisms contribute to overall poverty reduction. Nevertheless, regional disparities exist where the poor populations reside, based on such factors as demographic peculiarities and diversity in economic differences and infrastructure. Interestingly, Armenia's poverty occurs more typically in medium and small towns rather than in the capital city. These residents are the most deprived "in terms of common standards of minimum general and food subsistence levels in the country." However, the pre-crisis (economic decline begun at the end of 2008 and intensified in 2009) goals aimed to improve this situation by implementing policies to expand public expenditures of the social sphere (*MDG National Progress Report (2009)* pp. 14-16). The after-crisis scenario sadly reveals that the 2015 targets of poverty alleviation (lower than 1990 situation) and hunger reduction (half the proportion between 1990-2015) will not be met by 2015 (*MDG Progress Report*, p. 71).

With respect to the MDGs and the national education target to ensure that every child in Armenia will be able to complete a full course of high quality secondary schooling,[5] again the backdrop illuminates the struggle. Armenia's population is well educated. Less than four percent of the population has *not* completed segments of or the primary education cycle. Despite the growth in public expenditures for general secondary education, as a demonstration of its commitment to enhance the quality and accessibility of education, Armenia falls short of the CEE countries. But the importance of quality education pervades the reform dialogue and is mentioned frequently (e.g., "recognizing that the general secondary education is the basic step in the educational process, the country gives the top priority to the general education within the sector" and "improvement of the quality of education, which requires development and introduction of a unified system for knowledge assessment in all levels of education, the introduction of the quality assurance system is especially crucial for the secondary education" [*MDG Progress Report,* pp. 25-28]), as reflected in the initial Education Quality and Relevance Programme (EQRP) supported by the World Bank. In October 2009, the second EQRP broadened support to include both preschool and higher education, as well as general education (personal communication, Education Officer, UNICEF/Armenia, October 2009).

2.2 Armenia and the Global Context for Quality Education

All societies want children to be well educated, not only for their individual growth and potential, but as an investment in national development. For the past several decades, countries gaining independence were faced with the need to shift dramatically educational priorities and systems to address the needs of growing

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[4] An image that comes to mind is that Armenia is swimming upstream.

[5] The State Standards for Secondary Education define the structure of educational content, the educational load, and the qualitative requirements for learners. They have been developed in accordance with the principles defined in the National Education Curriculum. Secondary education refers to primary; middle and high school (grades 1-10).

populations. More children began to attend school but schools began to fall behind in providing the human, financial, and physical resources required to fulfill learner potential. Academic performance declined, resulting in the lack of basic skills and knowledge to participate in a new global society. This crisis of education was the target of the Jomtien global initiative in 1990, Education for All (EFA). This gathering was a benchmark to target quality education – enrolling in school was merely a first step in receiving an education. It was insufficient to meet national development priorities. Academic performance that could be measured was essential. Successfully completing a school cycle became the goal. Quality learning became the landscape of reform. Research and practice during this time focused on school effectiveness and school improvement, with evidence to place the whole school and the child as the essential focus of efforts to improve learning. These results from both the academic and the practitioner communities coincided with the international development community's declaration and focus on the child as the center of the teaching and learning universe (*Schubert and Prouty-Harris*, 2003).

Since independence, Armenia's education reform efforts have reflected the global focus on quality education, and Armenia has partnered with external donors to enable these efforts. The World Bank is a key partner through EQRP, which began its support by targeting teacher training in new methodologies such as active teaching, introducing Information Communication Technology (ICT), improving system management and efficiency by training principals, and improving the Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), some of which complement CFS. The current EQRP supports the pre-school level by addressing early childhood development, preschool education reforms, and higher education. As another donor, DfID has assisted, for example, by establishing the legal framework for the State Education Inspectorate and by strengthening its capacities to become operational. The programme was transferred to the GoA in 2007. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) assisted with the development of the new Strategic Vision and drafted the Education Development National Programme 2006-2015. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supported capacity strengthening in the Education Management Information System (EMIS), and the European Union (EU) emphasizes vocational and higher education as part of the European Neighborhood Plan (*MTR Report-Education* 08, p. 5).[6]

2.3 UNICEF

The CFS approach is the "signature model" of UNICEF's global focus on quality education for *all* children. It is grounded in the belief that "schools should operate in the best interests of the child. Educational environments must be safe, healthy and protective, staffed with trained teachers, equipped with adequate resources and offering conditions appropriate for learning" (*Actions for Children, Geneva 2009).* This foundation is based on the CRC and the conceptual development of the CFS Framework, both presented in 1995. CFS now functions in context-specific educational environments, as the basis for quality education in more than 90 countries. The three key principles of a Child-Friendly School (UNICEF, 2009) are: inclusiveness (e.g., equal access and participation for all students, no matter their background or ability); child-centeredness (e.g., in teaching and learning through hearing children's opinions, protecting the learning environment); and democratic

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[6] This is a Mid-Term Review of UNICEF Armenia country programme. The reference is taken exactly as it appears as the title of the document.

participation (e.g., school councils that represent teachers; parents; students in making decisions that affect the well-being of the school environment).

UNICEF works closely with the MoES and external partners to provide technical support to the reform effort, with a special focus to improve and strengthen areas of basic education. Armenia recognizes UNICEF's unique global leadership in advocating on behalf of children's rights.[7] Armenia has adopted a *National Plan of Action of the Republic of Armenia for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (2004-2015),* which contains 76 specific actions to be implemented by 2015. As UNICEF focuses globally to increase public awareness of child development and education issues, it works with national governments to develop and deliver innovative and effective education programmes. A recent shift throughout UNICEF now moves its unique role and experience into the policy dialogue so as to impact system reform. This shift is now happening in Armenia.

UNICEF Armenia's Country Programme 2010-2015 (*UNICEF,* 2009) reflects this organizational global shift from "specific interventions to introduction of strategic approaches and models and new roles in supporting system reform" (p. 5). The overall goal is to "contribute to the realization of children's rights to survival, growth, development, protection and participation and to achievement of MDGs" (p. 7). The main project areas will be child rights monitoring, social policies and budgeting, and decentralization and local planning (p. 9). Within this overall approach, the area of focus for this report is UNICEF's targeted activity on the quality of basic education for girls and boys ages 6-15.

2.4 MoES and UNICEF: A Common Purpose

UNICEF and the MoES envision CFS as an umbrella concept of the child-centered themes contained in the national education reforms. But there is a broader context within which to recognize the commonality of purpose between the MoES and UNICEF. This is the GoA's attention to territorial development and regional and community level development as a challenge to reducing regional disparities in poverty (*MDG Progress Report,* p. 19). UNICEF's programme goal is to "contribute to the realization of children's rights to survival, growth, development, protection and participation, and to achievement of the MDGs." Through this goal, the country programme will support the GoA's efforts and plans aimed at ensuring increased public investments in the social sectors; reducing regional disparities in access to quality services; and strengthening institutional capacities." UNICEF is further committed to supporting the government in its territorial administration and building regional capacity to plan on behalf of children (UNICEF Country Programme 2010-2015, pp. 7- 9). This aligns UNICEF priorities with the GoA's focus on reducing income gap (i.e. inequalities) by making social services available for the poor and socially vulnerable (*MDG Progress Report*, p. 19). This is a "moment in time" for the RA/MoES and UNICEF Armenia to mainstream the Child-Friendly School approach into the education system. *The CFS* framework *accelerates the path to quality education in Armenia in these ways:*

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[7] The Armenian culture is "child-friendly." One witnesses the interest and attention to children, as people go about their daily lives. Folks stop to pay attention to one another's children. Armenia houses the world famous "Children's Museum," a global collection of children's art. In 1999, the World Bank hosted an exhibit of Armenian children's art that depicted Armenian fairly tales.

- CFS complements the national curriculum and is in line with the new Law on General Education requirements. The CFS framework provides a bridge that links the CFS child-centered approach to the National Curriculum Framework and State Secondary School Standards;

- CFS includes all levels of schools in the process and can be adapted to specific local educational environments. It provides a structure to organize school programmes and reflect government priorities;

- CFS focuses on quality and addresses the conditions inside and outside the school that influence a child's opportunity to learn (e.g., social, emotional, and physical needs of all children);

- Linking education reform in Armenia and CFS is an opportunity to develop a unique approach to improving the quality of education.

In 2000, UNICEF began supporting CFS-related programmes in Armenia with the introduction of student councils and the idea of democratic schools. These efforts were implemented by Partnership and Teaching (P&T), a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Syunik marz, a productive implementing partner. In 2004, UNICEF supported the development of a concept paper in which representatives from several divisions within MoES, a regional NGO, and a local school developed the concept of a model school. The model school features a holistic concept that focuses on all aspects of quality education from a structural perspective and within a school environment. In 2004, this concept was approved by the Minister of Education and Science, and in 2006, UNICEF supported a MoES national team to develop a package, the centerpiece of which is the CFS Standards Framework.

The decision to shift from project to policy resulted from activities that continued after the Standards Framework was developed. UNICEF worked with MoES and P&T, which managed a process to introduce the CFS approach into education practice through activities such as the following:

- an awareness-raising campaign in Syunik marz through public media, internet, and roundtable discussions at the sub-regional level;

- a competitive process (drawn from other competitive activities such as "best teacher" state initiatives) among schools in Syunik marz that contained guidelines, time frame, application, and a simpler version of the CFS Framework (2007-2008);[8]

- review of applications from 20 schools through examination of submitted documents and site visits to short-listed applicants;

- the announcement of seven winners (those schools that had the maximum number of CFS standards and indicators in place) of this competition that became CFS pilot schools (2008);

- a CFS awareness campaign in Shirak marz and Lori marz to promote and inform stakeholders about the CFS and to generate interest in participating in a competition similar to that held in Syunik marz (2008);

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[8] P&T has a synopsis of the process used to select the CFS pilot school in its Report of 2005-2008 Activities, p. 67.

- A 2009 UNICEF workshop in Geneva in which a team of national experts developed a preliminary action plan.

The pilot initiative in Syunik marz functions as a lens through which the CFS Standards Framework views quality improvement through school self-assessment, and as a planning and management tool based on quality education and children's rights. The application process to become a pilot school began with approximately 100 schools, the stakeholders of which attended workshops and training sessions on the process. Winning schools received two UNICEF "School in a Box" awards. One contained teaching and learning materials for 80 students and the other contained recreational items to establish sports activities. The governor of the region also gave each school AMD 100,000 to use as the schools chose.

The strategy to move forward and expand these activities from "pilot to policy" was documented in a UNICEF meeting in Geneva in 2009. A delegation of five UNICEF and MoES members produced a preliminary action plan to articulate the path of integrating CFS into Armenian education policy and practice. The first task of this action plan was to outsource an assessment of the pilot projects and the CFS Standards Framework. The results of this assessment constitute this report and a companion report. This document contains a broad and diverse number of stakeholder perspectives, a review of the CFS Standards Framework and a review of a large number of national and international studies and reports. The ultimate purpose is to stimulate dialogue into useful and practical ways of moving forward to strategically mainstream CFS throughout the 11 marses in Armenia.

3. Methodology

The following key tasks specified in the TOR guided the information gathering and analysis of the pilot project and standards document:

1. desk review of documents related to education reform in country (e.g., MoES; Armenia; UNICEF national) and additional documents on regional, global, broader literature on quality education;[9]

2. review and analysis of CFS Rationale, Criteria, Indicators and Benchmarks (referred to as CFS Standards Framework);[10]

3. progress on several key relevant CFS criteria;

4. visits to schools in Syunik marz;

5. interviews with NGOs;

6. focus groups with parents, teachers, students;

7. meetings with key GoA officials;

8. working with the CFS national team;

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[9] Several documents from the broader literature on quality were included by contractor so as to be responsive to UNICEF's request to examine national reform within global context.

[10] A companion report presenting a review of the CFS Standards Framework with the CFS global framework appears as Annex 2, and has been submitted separately to UNICEF. It is also briefly discussed in the findings and recommendations sections of this report.

9. presentation and debrief meeting with invited guests at MoES.

Three key principles guided the data collection techniques in Armenia (29 September – 10 October): (1) purposive sampling of data sources, so as to communicate with and listen to a range of stakeholders directly linked to CFS; (2) probing for examples of real experiences and behaviors to describe how CFS functioned; and (3) providing a feedback loop to UNICEF staff, regional, and national stakeholders to keep them informed, receive feedback, and clarify factual information.

The overarching conceptual framework for conducting the specified tasks within a short time period was to construct an "information needs" framework that would streamline the meetings and document reviews in order to pinpoint the type of information drawn most usefully and efficiently from a particular source. The focus of the assessment was to learn how and why stakeholders were interested in the CFS approach, what it "looked like" to be engaged in CFS, and how this knowledge and experience informs the shift from CFS as a pilot activity to CFS as a policy in education reform. The sources of information (e.g., school principals, teachers, parents, students, class visits, Marz–NGO, National–MoES, National team, UNICEF) headed the rows, and the columns identified the overall type of information to be gathered (Context and/or Background; Establishing CFS; Maintaining CFS; or Expanding CFS). The type of information to be gathered was articulated in each cell and protocols were designed to gather the specific information from each source. The protocols primarily applied to individual interviews and focus groups as well as the class visits. The reviews of the literature and the Standards documents began as soon as documents were received (after the contract was signed), immediately prior to the on-site effort in Armenia. This document review continued through the final analysis and report preparation.

The data collection techniques required direct observations in pilot schools (Syunik marz) and individual and group discussions with practitioners to learn more about what CFS "looked like," as well as how local stakeholders implemented CFS. The visits included tours of the schools; class visits; focus group discussions with teachers, parents, and students; and interviews with principals. Data collection included local NGOs, regional education officials (i.e., policy makers in Yerevan, including the CFS national team).

Some readers of this report may be unfamiliar with the vocabulary used in the CFS approach. Here are a few commonly used terms and brief definitions:

- Child-centered: A school provides an environment for all children that supports rather than constrains social, emotional, physical, and pedagogical needs to learn.

- Internal/external assessment: Internal assessments are conducted within a programme or school and external assessments are conducted by an independent, outside authority.

- School self-assessment: An internal process by which local educators and other local stakeholders examine and document the progress of a school in achieving CFS standards. This is sometimes referred to as a monitoring tool and can be used as feedback for school management and programme improvement.

- School-improvement grant: An award received through a competitive process that funds a specific activity whose success will contribute to the success of a school programme (typically given to teachers).

- Stakeholder: Individuals or organizations that have special relationships to and interest in a particular programme (e.g., CFS approach).

- Standards: An approved outcome by a recognized authority used as a basis of comparison or judgment (e.g., State Standards or CFS Standards).

In-depth exploration or assessment of any situation typically requires a comprehensive research design, and additional time and resources. One of the constraints to this assessment is the absence of any baseline data on pilot schools or systematic documentation of what happened after awards were made to winning schools. However, other factors contributed to an informative and useful assessment of the CFS pilot schools and standards. *The timing of this assessment aligned with UNICEF and MoES joint efforts to bring CFS into the policy framework.* It therefore provided a very good opportunity to:

- build upon the actions undertaken by the MoES to focus education reform on the well-being of the Armenian child and move CFS into the policy dialogue;

- listen to the stakeholders describe their experiences to date in the CFS pilot schools and the NGOs;

- draw upon the global experience of UNICEF in shifting Child-Friendly Schools from project to policy (discussed in Geneva 2009) into the next steps;

- draw upon the experience and perspective of more than a decade of addressing quality education issues; and

- create a macro image (a "snapshot") of CFS in Armenia, upon which to plan the next steps for CFS as a integral component of national education reform.

CFS builds a bridge that connects policy and practice. The meeting place is the mutual priority on the well being of all the children in Armenia.

4. Overall Findings

The UNICEF decision to take a "snapshot" of CFS in Armenia as it moves toward the policy framework wisely included visiting schools and listening to stakeholder voices throughout the education system. The local and regional perspective strengthens knowledge and understanding of why CFS is important and how it functions, from those who are ultimately responsible for transforming the CFS approach into realistic and effective practices that improve the quality of teaching and learning. The national perspective contributes to understanding the process and rationale for bringing CFS into the mainstream education system. These combined perspectives and experiences form the basis for short-term and long-term planning to integrate CFS into all regions in Armenia.

The following summary conveys the essence of what was learned on site in Armenia. It describes why stakeholders are drawn to CFS, how it is being incorporated into

school and community life, and how these ideas, feelings, and experiences contribute to an expansion of CFS in Armenia.[11]

4.1 Inside the Schools

The consultant visited four schools around Goris and Kapan. Three were large schools, serving students in primary through secondary school, averaging several hundred students per school. One did not participate in the CFS competition.[12] The entry halls and public spaces on each floor were typically filled with large photos and newspaper clippings of military heroes (often local ones as this region experienced conflict) from World War II to the most recent war with Azerbaijan (usually men, but in one school there was a display of women heroes), patriot symbols, the Armenian flag, and in one school, a dove of peace. The walls also displayed the work of students – handicrafts such as embroidery by girls, paintings, and often "best" handwriting samples in Armenian and Russian. The schools were immaculate and, in one instance, the floors were still wet from a recent washing. The principals greeted our arrival and personally conducted school tours. We saw a library in only one school, which was a long dark corridor with a lightbulb overhead that was not turned on. The library had shelves filled with books and a cataloguing and checkout system. One corner was identified as the "CFS bookshelf" with newspapers and some books, but it was not featured and not very hospitable. One school had a sparsely furnished health room with a cot, first aid kit, and desk.

The consultant made brief visits to a range of classes (e.g., a primary level art class and an older class of students studying computer programming). In general, the classes were very well equipped with materials on the walls, alphabets, pictures, calendars, science equipment, and photos of prominent scientists. The students observed had personal copies of texts and exercise books. The rooms were large and the student chairs and desks occupied only about one-half of the overall space. The teaching methodology was typically question-and-answer between teachers and students or students presenting material in front of the class. One teacher attempted group work but stopped when the principal escorted us in and began to tell the teacher what to do.

4.2 Stakeholder Voices

   Student Council Focus Groups

We met with student councils in two CFS schools and it was most exciting! Councils were elected by their peers – from both middle and basic grades. A female student led one council and a male led the other. The male-led council consisted of four girls and three boys. When asked if there was a requirement on male/female balance, the students said no, but it was suggested. The girls did not speak at first and the boys

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[11] A full report of the field visit to Syunik marz appears as Annex 3.

[12] Any critical differences between the CFS and the non-CFS are noted. The principal of the non-CFS stated that she did not want to complete the process and the paperwork required to compete.

were most eager to talk. One tried to dominate, but we did not let this happen. The girls needed to be called upon directly and encouraged to speak, but spoke freely when invited – one about her ideas for student newspaper (she described herself as a journalist) and another about her responsibility as liaison to the local library. Two deputy head teachers (one male and one female) sat in on the meeting, but remained silent. Students did not seem influenced by their presence.

The second student council invited some classmates to join the meeting, so approximately 15 students attended – divided between male and female students. The female head of council who sat in the front row wanted to answer all the questions! Her hand was always raised and she jumped up and down in her seat. When asked what advice they would give to the Minister to improve schools, students gave these responses: "treat students as we are treated here – we are loved and cared for; people take time with us; we have freedom in class and receive attention of our teachers; fights or disagreements are resolved with discussions (one of the student council duties); be humorous, make certain teachers give feedback on homework." At one time during the meeting, a teacher came into the room and sat among the students. As one boy began to answer a question, she tried to tell him what to say. We asked her to remain silent and she did not. When she interrupted the student again, we asked her to leave. On one other occasion, two other adults opened the door and started to enter. I signaled them to not come in and they withdrew.

Parent/Teacher Focus Groups

At each of the other schools, we met with a combined group of parents and teachers because of our time limitations. In each meeting, there were only a few parents from the community, but some teachers represented two roles – the teacher and the parent.[13] Parent participation is low, and following independence, many parents only find work outside the village as herders or farmers, sometimes in Russia. Some parents hold traditional notions that school is the GoA's responsibility. In both groups, most of the participants were women. There was agreement (nodding heads) when responses were heard by others. The messages received were: they liked student opportunities to choose some of their own subjects and the process of reform in Armenia was a positive shift, although far more support to teachers was required to truly implement the new methods of teaching. The focus groups said no special training was needed or given to be a UNICEF school. When asked where teachers received help and support, they replied – "to one another." Some have formed teacher circles as their support groups (with a head teacher as facilitator) and seemed pleased with this.

Teachers seemed very interested in learning the new pedagogy of active teaching but they agreed it was very difficult to change their way of teaching. The parents said their children were taking more responsibility at home with chores and that they were researching information for their school assignments. In general, all thought the education reform was moving in the right direction but time was needed to fully change into the "new ways." Principals commented more than once that there was inadequate support and guidelines for new methods and regulations. There were no noticeable differences between the CFS and non-CFS focus group discussions.

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[13] It was not obvious whether the opinions expressed about parental relationships to the school were influenced by whether a parent was also a teacher or acting in a single "role" as either parent or teacher. There was no time to pursue this line of inquiry.

Principal Interviews

Principals in each of the four schools offered very gracious hospitality with personal tours of the school, coffee, delicious Armenian chocolates, and time for personal meetings. Each principal had things to say – with or without a specific question. They spoke about new teaching and learning methods slowly being installed in the schools, about student council agendas that were different with the CFS approach (e.g., students had more choices about what they wanted their responsibilities to be), and about the need for more support to enhance the use of new methods. One principal stated that a big advantage of a school becoming a Child-Friendly School was that the science instruction had improved (due perhaps to the purchase of equipment with the funds provided by the governor to winners of the competition) and a recreation programme was now in place because of the sports equipment provided by UNICEF. Another said that a big benefit was that now his school was noticed and recognized.

There was consensus among the CFS principals that the new Framework was difficult to use as a school self-assessment tool because it was complex. When asked if all schools had the capacity to implement CFS, principals said yes, with proper leadership, which was essential. This same comment was made at the NGO meetings. The necessity of effective school leadership has been a consistent finding in the literature for decades (Fullan, 2001).

NGO Interviews and Meetings

P& T has been a key implementer of CFS in Armenia, and it is a leader in methodological and organizational development. It publishes not only manuals, but also a regional newspaper that features educational issues. Its mission is now divided between civil society (e.g., delivers trainings and consultations) and education reform (e.g., now preparing guidelines to help school councils function effectively). P&T initiated a "student self-government project, assisting in the democratization of education, which resulted in regulations for student council operations approved by RA MoES and implemented in secondary schools thoughout Armenia" (*P&T Report of 2005-2008 activities*, p. 4). In 2004, P&T worked closely with UNICEF to develop the CFS Concept Paper since the earlier work done on student self-governing aligned well with CFS. P&T managed the region-wide competition to become a CFS pilot school. Currently, it is building a School Information Management System (SIMS) funded by UNICEF to monitor and evaluate the capacities of school administrators. The product is a software package that will be piloted in eight secondary schools in the Goris and Sisian areas of Syunik marz. The staff listed several pre-conditions it believed necessary to be in place before a school could function with a CFS approach: strong leadership, strong student council, openness and transparency in school governance, communication among all stakeholders, strong parent council, effective pedagogical training, and accountability at all levels.

The "reporting back" meeting included four local educators and two P&T members. One topic raised was "what type of expansion should CFS have in Armenia?" Two major opinions were proposed: To perfect the pilot model before expanding in other marses and to include a few schools in each of the 11 marses in Armenia so every marz could participate. In the midst of this discussion, a principal made the point that the winning schools that became pilot schools were only about 50 percent CFS and that it was important to understand that a CFS approach is a work in progress. The group also felt strongly that the CFS Standards Framework is the most important

entry point for schools into the CFS approach because the national standards were their "bottom line" for school performance.

National and Regional Government Interviews

These interviews from 10 MoES and National Institute of Education (NIE) officials each lasted from 30 to 90 minutes in the officials' offices. They were generous with their time and knowledge. In general, each affirmed the political will to bring CFS into the national policy framework, and that the time for this is now. *The education reform actions taken by Government align with the child-centered focus articulated by UNICEF.* There are several GoA decrees under development and CFS is most likely to become policy through the Law on General Education that calls for establishing school internal and external assessment procedures. The target date for bringing CFS into policy decree is February 2010, and this is expected to happen. UNICEF can be a moderator in the process. One official cautioned that at the moment there may be a perception within some areas of government that CFS belongs to certain "groups," and this needs to be clarified. CFS needs advocates at all decision-making levels of government so that each division or unit can articulate its "entry point" for supporting CFS and describe exactly how support will be provided.

After the policy decree is finalized, plans for creating practical ways to implement school internal/external assessment procedures within the principle of decentralization must be made. The current dialogue addresses assessment tools about the school and used by the school. The CFS Framework is mentioned as the basis for developing those procedures.

Four members of the CFS National Team were key participants in developing the CFS Standards Framework in 2006. Each of them holds a key government position that enables them to advocate for and keep CFS on track toward becoming government policy. Two members traveled outside Armenia to Thailand to witness CFS in action. One was a member of the delegation to Geneva and participated in developing the action plan there. The National Team members expressed keen interest in feedback on the CFS Standards Framework, since they think ahead to the need for a school-monitoring tool. The specific role of the National Team in the long-term plan has not yet been defined.

4.3 Issues for Consideration from CFS Perspective

The findings described above were then examined in relationship to the three core CFS principles of **inclusiveness** (e.g., equal access and participation for all students, no matter their background, ability, gender, ethnicity, vulnerability); **child-centeredness** (e.g., the well-being of the child from a social, emotional, physical, pedagogical perspective is the highest priority in the educational environment); and **democratic participation** (e.g., student, local educators and parents have a role in the school programme and management). The analysis begins where national reform makes a difference – at the local level.

Local Level: Where Policy Becomes Practice

The people living and working with the pilot schools and communities are pleased to be involved with CFS and feel connected to a much larger national vision of education reform. This identity brings pride and many visitors to the school. However, local educators are challenged to maintain this energy and focus as they shift from traditional teaching methods and relationships to those governed by democratic principles. The training on new methodologies was stimulating and helpful but insufficient to sustain these new ways. In order to achieve the long-term goal of

sustainability, the stakeholders will need to incorporate options for sources of support – both inside and outside the education system.

The presence of management during several school meetings with students and with teachers and parents, coupled with the occasional dominance of management during the conversations, violates the respect for the opinions of others and weakens the implementation of a core CFS principle – democratic participation. While acknowledging the CFS approach is a dramatic behavioral shift from the traditional ways a school functions, when educators are trying to demonstrate a CFS approach to a visitor, they would do well to pay more attention to letting others express opinions. Perhaps such behaviors are so much a part of the ethos that managers may not be aware of what they are doing. The importance of democratic participation in the school and how to honor that CFS value is an issue that requires special attention.

Local support from parents and from the community is weak. One reason for this is that one or both parents need to be away from home during the day, so they are not available to be at school. Some educators said that many parents consider Government as responsible for school because that is the tradition. A few local educators mentioned that children who experience a link between home and school may have less opportunity to be distracted from learning. The issue is how to align the household demand of employment to one of the fundamental principles of decentralized governance through parental participation. In the short term this may be an unrealistic expectation given the economic situation in Armenia, but it needs to be recognized as an issue over the longer term.

The CFS approach is a work in progress and takes time to fully integrate into a school programme. Estimates from regional and local educators range from three to five years; one person said it might take 10 years. None of the pilot schools are "fully" integrated, said one principal, who commented that no school scored higher than 50 percent convergence with CFS dimensions during the competition. This is not unusual or a "negative" finding, since the introduction of any change into a school programme requires a trial and error period and an adjustment to new methods and procedures. System-wide change demands even more time and resources to ensure structures are in place. There is no evidence to demonstrate how the CFS principles that resulted in a "winning" (i.e., pilot) school are maintained or have grown or expanded following the award. An issue linked to the idea of a "work in progress" is how local educators can monitor their own progress (or lack of progress) with respect to the CFS dimensions.

Pilot schools were able to leverage additional support. The Syunik marz governor awarded each school 100,000 AMD, to be used as it chose. It was suggested that science equipment was purchased by one school and school furniture by another, but this was not confirmed. These funds were in addition to the "School in a Box" (two to each school) given by UNICEF. The potential exists for obtaining external support from other donors and UNICEF has already begun this process by submitting proposals for donors to support self-improvement grants in schools. An issue for local schools and communities will be to explore ways to leverage CFS participation with additional funds or support.

A spirit of competition – striving to be the "best" – is woven into the cultural fabric, resulting in a cluster of pilot schools that were most able to showcase CFS principles. Becoming a CFS pilot school was a reward for moving toward decentralization rather than adopting a standard (CFS) toward which a school would strive. An issue for

consideration is how the CFS approach that fosters conditions for cooperation can be woven into the cultural fabric of competition.

The UNICEF global focus and the Armenia office programme strives to create conditions for equal participation of **all** children in learning, so none are "invisible" in the learning process. The issue is inclusiveness. For example, how does the average student who functions somewhere between the most disadvantaged and the most advantaged gain equal access to learning? If some girls (and other students) are reluctant to participate, how are they brought into the process?

Marz Level – Catalyst that Links Policy and Practice

The NGOs that operate from the regions perform some of the most important functions in implementing educational reform. They can assist schools in understanding the reality of what it means to be a CFS and to function according to the CFS dimensions. These organizations are close to the "action" and well positioned to identify gaps in implementation and areas where schools need support. They can identify where the struggles and challenges are. In response to one gap in support, P&T in Syunik marz is developing guidelines for student councils. P&T also receives support from UNICEF to build the monitoring and evaluation capacities of school administrators through SIMS. This is an opportunity to examine diverse learning styles and bring the CFS focus to learning. It is also a critical issue to make certain that SIMS collects information on the key CFS dimensions.

One issue to consider is whether or not the pilot activities linked to SIMS can be connected to the national expansion of CFS. If nothing is in place as new schools are brought into the CFS network, opportunities for learning about the progress of implementation will be lost. UNICEF will be unable to target investments without data about CFS.

National Level – Policy to Guide Practice

The CFS Standards Framework strives to link the National Curriculum Framework and the Secondary School Standards with CFS principles and dimensions. (Secondary/general education comprises primary, middle/basic, and high school [*Education in Armenia,* p.7]).[14] Stakeholders throughout the system mentioned that standards should form the basis for measuring school performance, so this mechanism (or a conceptually similar one) is deemed as the appropriate entry point for a school to adapt the CFS approach. The framework also holds the potential as the basis for a school-based assessment tool that can be used to monitor and manage a CFS implementation.

There are two issues for consideration. The first is the level of difficulty in using this complex framework as a self-assessment tool. This was mentioned by several users of the framework, so the NGO that managed the competition simplified the process in the tenders. The extent to which there are differences between these two versions needs to be explored further, as well as the implications for a potential school-based instrument. (See Annex 4 for an example of a school-based instrument.)

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[14] In 2008, Armenia introduced separate high schools and in 2009 there are 48 high schools that cover grades 10, 11, and 12. This is a new structure scheduled to be completed by 2012.

The second issue is the manner in which CFS dimensions are applied to the Standards Framework. In Armenia's Framework, they appear to be applied randomly throughout the analysis. In other country applications of CFS principles, national standards are used as one element of the Framework and each CFS dimension is examined against each national standard. By using this procedure, benchmarks and indicators of CFS are linked to a specific standard.[15] One consequence of not using CFS in the Armenia framework is that gaps in CFS benchmarks exist when compared with the standards. Such gaps also preclude the opportunity *to develop mechanisms for systematically tracking progress in implementing CFS.*

The CFS approach provides a conceptual construct that brings together the legal actions of Government and current reform efforts supported by external/donor partners around the well being of the child. It forms a structure to create a vision for change and to engage stakeholders. One issue for consideration is to make certain that there are no government regulations that may constrain CFS implementation. It is important that all government regulations within appropriate departments reflect the CFS approach in order to facilitate implementation of CFS dimensions. CFS should not violate a GoA regulation.

A story told by one respondent illustrates a potential conflict: whether or not parents or other non-school personnel can come to school property to prepare food. The storyteller thought that according to GoA regulations, anyone who prepared food on the school premises for children in school needed to have a government-issued license.

The political will exists to bring the CFS approach into the system-wide reform effort. The entry point is the need for internal and external assessment procedures about schools within the Law on General Education. The deadline for developing those procedures is February 2010. Key policy makers indicate readiness to move CFS forward into the policy framework. The CFS national team is a strong source of support within the government. The issue will be in making certain that all necessary units are on board for CFS and that the three core CFS dimensions are formally addressed within the government structure.

4.4 CFS Evaluation According to UNICEF Criteria

UNICEF identifies five key evaluation criteria in examining CFS: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, inclusiveness, and sustainability. This analysis strove to identify whether or not CFS was "on track" with each dimension, in relation to GoA plans and associated programmes of other partners. The intent is certainly present in the dialogue and the content of the material, and there are some indications that CFS is moving in the right direction. But there is insufficient evidence to respond to the broad and comprehensive questions framed in the TOR, and evidence should continue to be collected.

In the discussion below, the five evaluation criteria are addressed. The text in italics summarizes each criterion as described in the TOR.

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[15] The review of the CFS Standards Framework in Annex 2 examines the document with respect to the Child-Friendly Schools Program Manual (focuses on the three core principles), published by UNICEF HQ and just released in 2009, so not available when the Armenia document was constructed. The principles in the manual offer a useful point of comparison for Armenia and a structure for articulating specific standards and indicators. The review identifies gaps in the existing CFS Framework in Armenia and offers recommendations to bring about greater congruence between CFS and national priorities.

Relevance. *The concept of relevance is described in five items: (1) relevance contains availability, adaptability, accessibility, acceptability; (2) value of CFS to primary stakeholder needs; (3) CFS in relation to UNICEF country programme and educational reform; (4) contribution of CFS to education reform; and (5) whether participating schools are child-friendly.* Key ministry officials are on board, although a need exists to make certain all bases are covered here and all the key divisions favor CFS. The CFS national team is a big asset because its members are within the government. There is an acknowledgement and recognition that the time *is* right for formal recognition of the convergence of CFS, other donor activities (e.g., EQRP), and the education reform steps taken by MoES. With respect to the UNICEF country programme, CFS does meet requirements to address priority of moving into system infusion and improving the quality of basic education but there may be ways in which the link to other country programme priorities may be strengthened. One example of this is ensuring that the child protection issues are comprehensively addressed in the CFS Framework.

Effectiveness. *Effectiveness is looking at the extent to which implementation of the CFS approach has enhanced teaching and learning process and environment.* The evidence is less clear on this dimension because of the absence of any systematic research or baseline data. However, CFS themes are in place in the winning pilot schools, and one can assume the themes are also present, to some extent, in those schools that made the "first cut" in the competition. Because of the alignment of government reforms in teacher training and decentralization and the work of NGOs in Syunik marz, some of these characteristics were already in place. The additional value that comes from being a CFS "winning" school comes with the award of "School in a Box" materials and recreation equipment, in addition to a school's opportunity to leverage additional support, such as the pilot schools experienced in Syunik marz with the award of 100,000 AMD from the governor. In the anticipated expansion and the need for more school support, UNICEF is already laying the groundwork to leverage additional resources through proposals to external donors to fund school-improvement grants.

Efficiency. *The issue about efficiency links to cost-effectiveness in scaling up so as to achieve intended results and to create conditions for systemic change and ongoing professional development in primary education.* The question of how to most efficiently expand CFS is a topic being discussed throughout the system. Should Armenia attempt to cover every region or concentrate on full development of the model on a select sample? The "votes" are leaning toward including all 11 regions so as to establish a CFS vision of education quality with as many schools as possible and throughout the country. It is then a national vision. It is also important not to leave any school feeling they are not part of a key element in the education reform. The question of preconditions or readiness to become CFS is still "on the table" and not yet settled, but will be more focused when the final decision about targeted schools is made. Professional development will be the responsibility of NIE.

Inclusiveness. *Inclusiveness addresses participation of marginalized students in the learning process and sensitivity to gender, cultural and ethnic diversity, and treating all persons with dignity and respect.* There is certainly an awareness of this significant dimension – school educators acknowledge the regulations and report they are attempting to follow them. Principals said they paid fees for some socially vulnerable students out of their own funds. But this does not address the structural need to reach out to and enable full participation of these students. Some observers believed that the focus was more on children with disabilities rather than applying a broader definition of inclusiveness that included ethnic minorities, gender, and

socially vulnerable children. The CFS can strengthen the CFS Standards with other country programme UNICEF activities where appropriate.

Sustainability. *The issue is described in four items that focus on whether CFS strengthens basic reform effort; whether there is political will for CFS; costs of scaling up the project; and mainstreaming worthy components.* Government support is present. There remains a critically unresolved question of ongoing support from either the public or private sector (either locally or nationally) following a school launch of CFS. This is recognized at all levels and school personnel are understandably concerned. UNICEF recognizes this and currently is seeking support from external sources to assist. There is no alternate plan in place, however (e.g., what the alternatives are – internal or external – to support the schools). The resolution of this matter may end up as the responsibility of local stakeholders and this may prove difficult. The CFS approach includes parent and community support as key, but this appears to be a weak feature of implementation. The decision has been taken to focus on system-wide mainstreaming of CFS and not on project-by-project scaling up.

Results-based Management. *The issue is overall management of CFS and extent to which stakeholders use information from CFS in decision-making, as well as the decision points in design and implementation. The CFS Standards Framework is the key document.* This framework, produced by MoES with UNICEF support, was used as a self-assessment tool by schools that had competed to become a pilot school. A few principals reported that this was a very helpful management tool to structure a diverse school programme. There was no evidence from this effort to suggest that it was used regularly, although the potential for using this as the basis for a monitoring tool is being discussed. At the moment, there is no other mechanism in place for stakeholders to use CFS information in making decisions. This is planned among the next steps.

5. Suggested Recommendations

These suggested recommendations are grounded in the results of this assessment. They offer specific and practical steps that use CFS to accelerate the path to quality education in Armenia. As stated in the TOR, the intended users of this assessment include broad and diverse stakeholders – ranging from MoES to implementing partners, regional marses, organizations and pedagogical institutions, UNICEF country and regional offices, bilateral agencies, and other stakeholders. For each audience, the purpose is to assist Armenia in implementing CFS as a key element of education reform. For UNICEF, the findings and recommendations will inform the alignment between the next country programme (2010–2015) and the national priorities of Armenia.

5.1 Develop UNICEF-MoES Action Plan

Developing a comprehensive Action Plan for CFS (2010–2015) is a foundational step to be undertaken with MoES as soon as possible.

UNICEF-MoES Plans for Immediate Action

The priority now should be to make certain that the move toward CFS as a key approach to education reform in the policy framework stays on track. The CFS national team indicated they would be the "monitors" within the system. For each query posed during the interviews about possible constraints for CFS to become a decree, none were mentioned. However, it will be wise to heed the warning by one

official who indicated that CFS may be in the hands of some particular offices, or perceived as such, and that all necessary divisions may not be committed to CFS. It will be important to identify those "uncommitted" officials, and move quickly to bring them to an understanding of the approach and make certain they will not derail the process. This is essential. The particular strategy to address this need may be an appropriate task for the national team.

UNICEF-MoES Long-Term Action Plan (Road Map)

There are important components of a plan identified in the action agenda presented in Geneva (e.g., policy background, national plans, gap analysis, CFS capacity, and inputs required), but they fall short of presenting a sequence of steps or a road map. The components of the plan should link to who is responsible for the task; what activities fall within a task; how the activities are connected; what the short term and long term expected outcomes are; anticipated deliverables; phased plan over time; and so forth. One way to manage this task is to look ahead to 2015 and list what activities need to be in place by that time (e.g., all schools in Armenia have incorporated the CFS vision into their planning). Then work backward year by year, articulating goals, outcomes, activities, and so forth.[16]

Create a vision of a child-centered reform effort that is guided by the CFS approach.[17] Connect it not only to the MoES reform effort, but also to priorities described in the UNICEF Country Programme 2010-2015, so that CFS is not viewed simply as the "basic education" component but is linked to other UNICEF priorities such as life skills or Child Protection. For example, the UNICEF document lists two critical paths to strengthening the social sector besides basic education: (1) young child and adolescent health and (2) child protection (pp. 10-11). Is there some mechanism for improving the cost-effectiveness and the efficiency of implementing each of these initiatives by thinking of them more holistically, thereby connecting them to one another? The CFS framework mandates safe and healthy environments in the schools and adolescent health targets health professionals and the identification of violence against children. These may be some of the same children targeted in CFS basic education. Further consideration of this potential opportunity to link activities or programmes may be useful.

Preparing a programme rationale or logic model provides a structure for laying out how the CFS approach expands within the education system and how it connects to both internal colleagues at UNICEF and external partners such as the World Bank and EU. A model would articulate how the actions are connected and how the programme grows over time. Armenia as a country is still in a dramatic transition after independence. Economic circumstances have declined, work opportunities require living away from home, people are learning new survival skills, traditional crafts are becoming sources of income, young men are leaving school early, and the traditional relationship between the school and community is shifting. Many people are searching for a new "comfort zone."

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[16] This is a very labor-intensive task and will take time. Such plans have many names (e.g., logic models; programme rationales; results chains) but the point is to get a road map in place.

[17] Building a momentum throughout Armenia to become part of the CFS network would create a supportive and enabling constituency – a grass movement in behalf of quality education through CFS.

A five-year action plan is a demanding task, but well worth the investment and of critical importance at the beginning of a significant shift of CFS into the mainstream education reform in Armenia. The team that develops this plan should represent the major constituencies responsible for CFS – for example, in MoES, Marz level, local educators, UNICEF colleagues, other donor partners who have programmes that link to CFS approach, and perhaps some private sector supporters.

The tasks laid out in Geneva and in the TOR began the planning process. One task included in that plan that could be undertaken soon – before completing the overall Action Plan – is a review and revision of the Information Package and approach used in the advocacy campaigns. The package is filled with very useful information that should be updated to reflect experiences with pilot schools in Syunik marz, the advocacy campaign in the other two regions, and any new developments (e.g., SIMS) that would be useful for schools to consider in becoming part of the CFS vision. An advocacy campaign can be waged as soon as the strategy for expanding CFS has been decided. An immediate next step should be the preparation of a one page "brief" on CFS that can be distributed as an information piece (or brochure) when meeting new colleagues or informing interested individuals about CFS. The handout distributed at Geneva is one example of such a brief. It should be Armenia specific, of course, including a brief description of key dimensions of CFS; the global integration of CFS in education policy; CFS accomplishments and activities in Armenia; connection of CFS to education reform themes; the shift from project to the policy framework; and a few words on the future of CFS in Armenia.

5.2 Create a National CFS Coordinating Committee

A coordinating committee has great potential. It could stimulate a network of CFS participants throughout Armenia; serve as a link to all levels of education system, external partners and broader community; establish a periodic and user-friendly reporting system (e.g., something as simple as a checklist); and maintain a CFS "presence" in Armenia. The types of representatives on such a committee may be key national personnel who serve in critical "entry points" for CFS in the system; key players at the marz level (e.g., an NGO representative and a local educator; representatives from each of the 11 regions). At a minimum, it should include all regions that have CFS schools, external partners, and individuals from the private sector who are potential donors or supporters, and UNICEF. It would also be appropriate to invite someone to serve from within the CEE region who is implementing the CFS approach. If possible, forming a small secretariat to support the committee would be an administrative support and a visible sign of importance.

5.3 Select Methodology for Expanding CFS Approach in Armenia

Several approaches exist for shifting from demonstration pilot projects to system-wide change. Armenia's goal is to mainstream CFS into the system so it is incorporated into reform planning, financing, and implementation. One advantage of being part of the system and not on the margins of reform is the capacity to facilitate sustainability (see *UNICEF CFS Manual,* Chapter 9, 2008). A necessary decision is whether to "roll out" the CFS gradually throughout the country over a specified period of time or to introduce some element of CFS in every school in Armenia at about the same time. There are many considerations when expanding CFS (e.g., target specific marses [the pilot has already done this, but only in a small number of schools]; target specific grades; and select specific CFS dimensions to address, such as inclusiveness). There are many ways to move this forward and there may be influence on the decision, such as resource constraints.

One idea for discussion is the following: If CFS is integrated into the education system, then it seems reasonable that some number of schools in each marz should be invited into the CFS network, whether it is a specific number per region or whether they are selected proportionally. In selecting schools, consider developing a "readiness" checklist for schools and communities. P&T has a list of suggested pre-conditions for becoming a CFS school. Perhaps there are some core readiness items (e.g., commitment of the school leader or community interest). Having some specific data about candidate schools can provide some evidence about the extent to which resources and support are required; predictability about time required to implement CFS; and proximity to meeting overall UNICEF priorities. Using the criterion of "inclusiveness," schools in each marz could be selected that represent a range of "readiness" for CFS from those that are the least able (i.e., have no key CFS characteristics in place) to those who are the most able (i.e., already have several key CFS characteristics in place) and those in the middle.[18] Charting progress for each type of school would contribute evidence-based experience and lessons learned, to guide future selection process in reaching all 6 to 15 year-old children. (Refer to www.UNESCObkk.org for a very comprehensive description of introducing schools to CFS.)

5.4 Revisit the CFS Standards Framework[19]

The state and national goal is "the progressive development of the education system and ensuring its competitiveness in the international arena…orientation to the knowledge economy is the headstone of current reforms" (*Center of Education Projects, PIU,* p. 4). In 2006 this Framework aligned the National Curriculum Framework and the Secondary School Standards, which then formed the basis of the pilot school competition in Syunik marz. It is now being discussed as the basis for developing a school-based monitoring tool (i.e., school self-assessment instrument). Before proceeding with this revision, ask the following questions: What is the purpose of a Standards Framework? Who are the users of the Framework? Should a school-monitoring or self-assessment tool be drawn from this document or should a new and different tool be created?

Answering the above questions will guide the decision about whether to revise the existing document or to create a new document. This is especially important because CFS is intended to be part of the School Internal/External Assessment regulation so a school self-assessment tool is a priority. In other countries, the application of CFS into system-wide reform uses the CFS dimensions to form the standard for developing country-specific indicators and outcomes to measure quality education. The CFS Standards Framework developed in Armenia is not systematically aligned with the UNICEF/CFS dimensions. They should be more thoroughly developed and used to establish school-based performance indicators. At the outset, define all terms such as dimension, theme, benchmark, and indicator. Then, in each section, define a specific theme and develop all ideas, criteria, and benchmarks within that theme. There are several countries that have undertaken such a process (e.g., Thailand, Philippines, Macedonia), which are described further in the UNICEF *CFS Program*

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[18] When considering criteria for selection, it may be helpful to remember the poor areas in small villages and towns as mentioned in the first section.

[19] A separate review and analysis of the CFS Standards Framework within the perspective of the global framework developed by UNICEF Headquarters appears as Annex 2. The Armenia document predated the UNICEF Headquarters document by three years.

Manual (2009). The CFS model is flexible and countries are encouraged to use the core dimensions as the basis for developing standards that meet national priorities.

5.5 Track Progress and Performance

Chapter 8 of the CFS Program Manual provides a helpful summary of the importance of monitoring and evaluation. The important message is that data need to be routinely gathered, analyzed, and used to chart progress about whether implementation is on track. There are several potential offices where CFS data may be collected. Here are some considerations:

- At the national level, EMIS routinely collects information such as school attendance, absenteeism, and demographic information. This probably would not be the most efficient or useful place in the system to incorporate specific CFS characteristics because information typically flows only in one direction – up. However, the EMIS data from CFS schools may be very useful in understanding comparative analyses of CFS and non-CFS schools.

- Within the national system, the Inspectorate is a newly established division that is developing protocols for auditing school compliance with GoA regulations. Although this duty is viewed typically as one that is more punitive than supportive, there is the potential to create a more supportive environment for this task. Items linked to CFS dimensions could be included in the protocol. The chair of the School Internal and External Assessment Regulation Committee is the deputy head of this office, who is interested in pursuing these new ideas.

- The UNICEF-supported SIMS developed by P&T in Syunik marz is a very significant step forward in building local capacity in to monitor and evaluate school information. It should include information linked to the key CFS dimensions. This has system-wide potential.

- A Learning Management Information System (LMIS) is being used in East and Central Asia at the school level to track individual children in school. More than 10 countries now use this computerized Excel system based on a prototype developed in Thailand. This system tracks individual student characteristics (e.g., talents, weaknesses) and learning difficulties. It is based on the premise that children will learn and that if there is some constraint, it will be identified and addressed. The focus is to improve child learning. Analyses and use of the data are done at the local level (*CFS Program Manual,* Chapter 8).

Baseline Data. There is a crucial need for information about the implementation progress and challenges of CFS. Such information serves as a management tool for making necessary programme adjustments, but it can also be used a marketing tool to communicate to potential adopters, donors, schools, and communities what can be gained by bring CFS into a school and community. One of the most important CFS intended outcomes is student learning – both the process and performance. The desired outcome of the CFS approach is to improve the quality of education for all learners. This means all children need to achieve and evidence must be gathered to demonstrate CFS is an effective and cost-effective approach (compared to non-CFS) to improve student performance.

As Armenia strives to strengthen its education capacity through standards, infrastructure, and innovative approaches, this process will be incomplete and unconvincing if the effect of these reforms on learner outcomes is not known. Such evidence is also required when deciding whether any programme changes are

necessary. Effective schools will create demand and will reduce wastage, increase enrollment, and provide incentives for parent and community support.

5.6 Develop School Self-assessment Instruments

These may also be referred to as school-based monitoring tools. They are used by schools to identify their own progress (or lack of progress) of an implementation toward a defined standard. The use of such a tool symbolizes that the school views itself and demonstrates to others that it is a learning organization. This is particularly significant because the *path toward quality comes from within* the school. It is essential to have periodic feedback about whether progress toward quality is taking place and to use that information to make programme adjustments.

Before designing such a tool, it is important to ask the following questions: What is the purpose of this tool (i.e., What questions or issues will it address and what information needs to be collected in order to answer the questions)? Is it connected to the CFS dimensions being implemented in a school? What happens to the information that is collected? Who analyzes the information and to whom do the findings go? To be useful, there should be a process of reporting back to all the stakeholders to fulfill the CFS democratic participation dimension and to be considered in any programme changes.

These instruments or monitoring tools are typically easy to use (e.g., a checklist or scale). They may contain a separate component for each stakeholder or tool version for each stakeholder and they are and keyed to the CFS dimensions. Context-specific tools are used throughout the global UNICEF network. Here are references to specific sites within and outside of UNICEF:

- http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin (a presentation) Inclusive Education in Thai Child-Friendly Schools with a specific School Self-Assessment instrument included in the presentation

- http://www.weblis.unep.org/cgi (refers to a specific instrument Ed (593)2

- http://www.unicef.org/life skills (a paper by Elaine Furniss/Unicef/HQ - Learning Achievement that outlines principles and procedures)

- www.Equip123.net/equip2/docs/SchoolSelfAssessment (a packet of guidelines and protocols for school improvement)

- http://www.Equip1.org (a School Self-Assessment of Child Friendliness: identifying criteria for evaluation. Educational Support to Children of Underserved Populations (ESCUP)

- http://www.casel.org/download (an instrument to measure social and emotional learning of children)

- http://www.drtomkelly.com/sasqs.htlm (a systematic assessment for quality schools by Thomas Kelly; a manual for self-assessment)

- http://www.scs.aed./org/ssa (describes a program that supports schools in improving teaching and learning through ongoing reflection and review)

5.7 Use School-improvement Grants

Small grants have become a very common practice in many sectors – including education, health, and agriculture – to assist individuals or groups in carrying out specific activities that contribute to accomplishing programme goals. A school improvement fund is under consideration by UNICEF Armenia to provide an opportunity for schools to compete for funds to strengthen a school's implementation of the CFS approach. The design and procedures for such a fund are in process. The information below provides some additional information on small grants.

Small grants usually provide modest sums of money that are dispersed by the government or by another organization for a targeted component of a larger project. The small grants must contribute to the overall implementation of an activity. In Armenia the grant could be for something related to the CFS approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning in a school. For example, a grant might support a feeding program or an outreach program to parents or purchase much-needed supplies. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify and justify what is being requested and why it is necessary. Cost sharing is often required.

Here is an illustration of a grant cycle. A working committee is formed. This might be the coordinating committee. The committee develops a package of information that includes an announcement of the grant program; a description of the application process with details about who reviews the application and criteria used to select them (this must be seen as transparent); a sample application form; a schedule of funding cycles and the range of funds available for each application; a list of examples of the types of activities that may be funded; a reporting schedule; and perhaps an "information sharing" mechanism so good ideas may be communicated to others. A cycle may include school submission of a very brief concept paper (to obtain feedback on the idea and increase the chance for a successful application and project); a full project proposal and budget; an agreement letter between the funder and the applicant; a periodic reporting schedule that may include fund site visits to project; disperse funds (may be all at once or in several tranches); and a project completion report. The committee can decide what constitutes completion – a product or some other evidence of completion.

A well-known small-grants programme took place in West Africa between 1994 and 2002. It was designed to enable teachers to participate fully in school reform by initiating professional development activities.

See http://www.symposium-books.co.uk/book/bookdetails.asp?bid=11 for Dembele, M. and Schwille, J. (2007). Accountability in the context of teacher empowerment: The Guinean experience. In M.T.Tatto (dir). *Reforming Teaching Globally (pp. 245-265).* Oxford Series in Comparative Education. Didcot: Symposium Books.

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Other references on small grants include:

- Creative Center for Community Mobilization and American Institutes for Research. *Primary School Support Program Small-Scale Grants.* American Institutes for Research: Mponela, Malawi. 2008 (project supported by USAID).

- The World Bank also funded a Social Development Civil Society Fund Program (formerly Small Grants Program) in 1983 to provide a mechanism for the Bank to disseminate information. These could be adapted to the Armenia context in CFS. http://go.worldbank.org/1KA1PMV2CO. There are several examples on this site from the CEE region. Search for Armenia.

Other recommendations to be considered in choosing next steps are presented briefly below:

5.8 Identify CFS Support Structure

Work closely with NGOs and other marz-level institutions to canvass the region to identify all the public and private institutions and organizations that may potentially support the implementation of CFS in the region.

- Identify Teacher Resource Centres where teachers can consult one another, examine special materials that address CFS issues and practices, and see videos of best practices. The idea is to bring teachers together to create a network and build a critical mass of support.

- Contact post-secondary institutions such as pedagogical institutes or universities that can assist in data collection, research studies, and teacher training. The point is to engage these institutions in the vision and the process.

- Visit private sector businesses or religious organizations, which may have programmes that can be linked to school support. This could also be an opportunity for schools to leverage additional resources in addition to what UNICEF is trying to do.

- Identify any other donor-supported activities, such as the USAID *Youth and Community Action Project* throughout Armenia. The idea is that there are youth trained and ready to engage in civic participation. Support to schools may be a potential activity. (P&T was a partner in this project.)

- Consider a region-wide coordinating committee similar to the one recommended at the national level. This can be a sub-committee that is linked to the national one. A nation-wide network can be formed through these committees.

- Create partner schools where possible so that they can support and help one another. This builds cohesion and strength in the implementation. As the expansion grows, the more experienced schools can mentor the new ones. There are many ways to bring schools together to create a synergy and a movement to CFS.

- Conduct a special parent-intensive campaign to address the weak link in many of the villages. Learn why parents are not supporting the schools and help them think of ideas that are within their reach to support.

5.9 Develop School Guidelines

Develop a set of guidelines to help schools maintain the vision of a CFS focus. The *CFS Program Manual* (2009) is a valuable resource in preparing an Armenia-specific package. As suggested in the Action Plan, guidelines should include elements specifically directed toward each stakeholder. It is important to take advantage of the resources that already exist such as the Manual and P&T's efforts in creating council

guidelines. The teacher training packages used in the active teaching methodologies may also be useful. It is prudent to not reinvent the wheel.

This report draws upon several resources and experiences from a global and national perspective to address growing education reform in Armenia. The intention and the hope is that the information and recommendations emerging from this assessment will stimulate the dialogue and strengthen the path to accelerate the child-friendly, quality education that has already been launched in Armenia.

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Terms of Reference

Project/Program Title and Annual Work-Plan number (ProMS) **Child Development and Education**

Background:
CFS related programmes were initiated in Armenia since 2000 through introduction of student councils and concept of democratic school. Shift to more comprehensive and integrated approach to CFS started in 2004 in the context of wider general educational reforms implemented by MoES through World Bank (WB) funded Education Quality and Relevance Programme. MoES developed and adopted the CFS concept as a holistic approach that addresses all aspects of quality education at schools level and as complementary to the ongoing structural reforms and particularly to the adopted in 2004 National Curriculum Framework. As part of the UNICEF cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), in 2006 the expert team developed a national CFS package that includes Child friendly school framework, standards and indicators.

In 2007-2008 the MoES through UNICEF guidance initiated the pilot testing of CFS standards and indicators in one region of Armenia (Syunik marz) with an intention to use the CFS framework as a tool of quality improvement through localized self-assessment, planning, and management and as a means for mobilizing the community around education and child rights issues. The initiative started in 22 schools with application of CFS standards for analysis of current situation, identification gaps in school functions against CFS standards through self-assessment. The goal of this programme was to support schools to assess and use the existing resources (knowledge and skills of teachers, pedagogues, school principals and students) for the development of the school and with full participation of all stakeholders.

In 2008 an awareness raising campaign on CFS framework was carried out in two other regions of Armenia. In total 364 schools participated in the project since 2006. The project was implemented by local NGOs under MoES and UNICEF guidance. Currently MoES relies on UNICEF expertise for institutionalization of the CFS framework and expansion in all 11 regions of Armenia during 2010-2015 Country Programme.

In April 2009 a team of national experts participated in CFS workshop in Geneva and as a follow up came up with the following action plan:

Assessment of CFS standards and indicators document with an intention to identify existing gaps with regards to the global CFS framework developed by UNICEF HQ (international consultancy) -2009
Development of a budgeted action plan for mainstreaming of CFS framework into the general education reform initiatives-2009
Adapt and pre-test a CFS information package to raise awareness about CFS amongst education officials at all levels and school inspectors. -2010
Develop a CFS training package to equip teams (school principals, teachers, parents, students etc.) in schools with skills and knowledge on how to improve the learning environment for children in schools. The training package should include guide, training modules; monitoring tools to measure impact of the training. -2010
Develop and pre-test a monitoring tool (includes checklists/formats and methods how to use the tools) for school inspectors to assess whether children are learning in a child friendly environment-2010

Purpose of this project: ***Assessment of Child Friendly School Pilot Projects and CFS Standards Document***
In response to the ongoing challenges and opportunities in the education sector in Armenia, and for the purpose of making UNICEF support to education in the country more strategic and relevant, aligned to the national priorities and main development partners (the WB and EU) interventions for 2010-2015, UNICEF is looking forward to use the results of this evaluation for developing a comprehensive strategy to support MoES in replication and extension of the Child Friendly School (CFS) model in all regions of Armenia.

The main users of the evaluation report will be the government (Ministry of Education and Science, local self government bodies, pedagogical institutes), implementing partners (Regional CFS Teams, NGOs…), UNICEF Country Office in Armenia CEE/CIS Regional Office, bilateral agencies and other stakeholders. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation of the CFS Project will be used to inform the next country programme development and implementation process of UNICEF Armenia Office for 2010-2015.

Annex 2.

An Analysis of Armenia's "Child-Friendly Schools:

Rationale, Criteria, Indicators and Benchmarks"

Introduction

The Terms of Reference for this consultancy requested (1) that existing gaps be identified with regard to the content and usage of Armenia's existing CFS Standards document; and (2) an assessment of the CFS pilot project compared to the global CFS framework and local context. This document compares Armenia's existing CFS Standards document to the global CFS framework (i.e., CFS principles). The purpose of this is to identify potential gaps in Armenia's CFS Standards Framework document that may be related to gaps in the local context (i.e., pilot schools) and to illustrate ways in which the CFS principles can be integrated more intentionally and succinctly into Armenia's document.

It should be noted that in 2010, UNICEF's CEE/CIS Regional Office plans to develop a conceptual framework and a roadmap for the development of Child-Friendly School (CFS) standards in countries of the region. However, since this conceptual framework has not yet been developed, this analysis of Armenia's "Child-Friendly Schools Rationale, Criteria, Indicators and Benchmarks" (hereafter called the "CFS Standards Framework") is compared with the three CFS principles and the guiding concepts articulated in UNICEF's 2009 *Child-Friendly Schools Manual* (hereafter called the *CFS Manual*). The *CFS Manual* discusses the facets of CFS and the variations of the CFS approach that have been developed in over 90 countries. The *CFS Manual* is not prescriptive; it acknowledges that each of the three principles must be considered and applied within the context of the local and national conditions and cultures. Understood in this way, the three principles provide points of comparison from which to analyze Armenia's CFS Standards Framework.

Armenia's CFS Standards Framework contains seven sections: (1) Educational Process; (2) School Environment; (3) Performance Evaluation; (4) Information Technologies; (5) Professional Development; (6) Directive Strategies; and (7) School Management and Relations with Community. In contrast, the three core principles articulated in the 2009 *Manual* that provide guidance for the CFS are child-centeredness; democratic participation; and inclusiveness (i.e., gender, abilities, religion, languages, class, ethnicities, and other socially constructed categories). The categories of the CFS Standards Framework as articulated by Armenia – that is, the environment, process, technologies, strategies, management, and evaluation – constitute the structure(s) through which the three core principles can be enacted. Therefore, it could be anticipated that the three principles would emerge in various forms under each category. The analysis below explores the relationship between the structures and the principles in order to evaluate where the gaps are in the CFS Standards Framework. Each section begins with a discussion of Armenia's CFS Standards Framework, which is followed by a discussion of some part of the *CFS Manual* that illuminates ways in which the principles can be integrated into the CFS Standards Framework.

Section 1: Educational Process

The Educational Process section of Armenia's CFS Standards Framework includes many ideas that are child-centered. There is mention of individualization and the idea that children should be seen as "explorers." There is mention of long-term self-

development plans for students and that teachers should strive to develop the innate ability of all students. There should be preparation for life after school completion, including transition to work or further studies. Teachers are called to vary their practice depending on the students' interests and abilities and to allow students to initiate events and activities. According to this section, teaching should allow children to construct their knowledge, and teachers should use a variety of methods and modes of teaching including individual and small groups.

Although the section mentions these themes, the ideas are not developed across the table. For example, students are compared to explorers, but the indicators and benchmarks do not clearly describe what makes a student an explorer and how the school can support that (Note: Criteria 1.2 and 1.5 are identical in the English version). Being an explorer implies the student has some form of independence and constructs his or her understanding, yet the benchmarks in this section state little about students working independently or guiding their own learning. Instead, the section elaborates much more on what the teacher should be doing.

The section also mentions community and parent involvement. Community involvement in the education process is a form of democratic participation, a core principle of CFS.

It should be noted that this section includes items that might be expected to appear in other sections (e.g., lighting and library collections under environment rather than under educational processes). It also does not mention the CFS principle of inclusiveness, which would include gender-responsiveness in education processes, attention to children's first and second language use, and related areas.

Chapter 6 of the *CFS Manual* – "Learners, Teachers and School Managers" – outlines some principles of Child-Friendly instruction that apply to Section 1 of Armenia's CFS Standards Framework. Teachers, according to the *CFS Manual*, need to strive to understand each individual child, use different techniques with different children, and understand that different children can follow different paths to success in school. Teachers also understand that children learn by exploring, expressing ideas, and challenging other opinions. Girls and boys should have the freedom to apply their unique perspectives and resources to solve problems. Implicit throughout this discussion is the fact that to provide equal learning opportunities to all students may mean that teachers use different strategies and practices for different students or groups of students. Providing equity to all students requires teachers to use different approaches when working with them. This holds true to the entire spectrum of child diversity (boys and girls, ethnic and linguistic minorities, special education students and other socially constructed categories).

Section 2: School Environment

Section 2 of Armenia's CFS Standards Framework focuses on the social and psychological environment at school. The Framework emphasizes inclusion and mentions the acceptance of student diversity and creating a socially and psychologically safe place for students. The Framework explicitly mentions the inclusion of students with special needs, the acceptance of national (i.e., ethnic) differences, and equal access to school facilities for all children. Student involvement in leading the development of inclusive policy is also mentioned (e.g., students are to be involved in drafting coexistence rules).

This section does not include a discussion of physical space, another aspect of the school environment, although lighting is mentioned in the section on educational procedures

The social and psychological environment of the school is a critical, recurring theme that runs throughout the *CFS Manual*.

The *CFS Manual* Chapter 5, "Schools as Protective Environments," discusses the physical environment of the school, a key aspect of a child-friendly school. This encompasses a wide range of issues, including physical safety, psychological safety, teaching of life skills and nutrition, inclusion of at-risk students, and collaboration with parents and communities to ensure the safety of children. Also included are discussions of the cleanliness of the facilities, the removal of toxic materials, the provision of bathroom facilities for both girls and boys, first aid instruction, and prohibition of corporal and emotional punishment. In summary, this chapter describes a safe school as a place where children can learn, play, and work without fear or undue physical or emotional risk. When necessary, the school teaches children the skills to be safe and healthy.

Other issues mentioned in the *CFS Manual* Chapter 5 that may be addressed in Armenia include: a formal assessment of safety risks, formal school measures to promote ideas such as equity, inclusion, and safety, transportation to and from school. Further, the *CFS Manual* mentions that parents and the wider community could be involved in promoting the physical and psychological safety of children.

Related topics are found in Chapter 3 of the *CFS Manual* on "Location, Design, and Construction." This chapter discusses the architecture, landscape, and interior design of schools. Ideas mentioned in this chapter include making the classroom child-friendly by creating places for children to work in groups or individually. The schools grounds should also be safe with areas for work and play. In addition, adequate bathroom facilities for boys and girls, and water are important. School accessibility, heat, ventilation, adequate paint or finish work, and age-appropriate furniture all play a part in promoting an adequate school environment where children are comfortable and can learn.

In terms of inclusiveness, the *CFS Manual* mentions gender and religious differences in addition to national and ability differences mentioned in the CFS Standards Framework.

Section 3: Performance Evaluation

Evaluation is the topic of Section 3 of the CFS Standards Framework. The section is limited in scope and includes three main points: (1) school activities and decision-making should be transparent and open to public scrutiny; (2) there should be efficient use of resources; and (3) students should display positive behavior.

In contrast, Chapter 8 of the *CFS Manual* focuses on monitoring and evaluation from a wider perspective. This process is not a simple task to complete periodically, but a way to improve the school by monitoring the implementation of the child-friendly school principles on an ongoing basis.

Evaluation includes traditional areas such as equity, academic performance, efficiency, effectiveness, and enrollment. CFS schools should also emphasize involving teachers, parents, administrators, community members and other stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation process. (The process of evaluation and democratic participation in the process are both to be evaluated as well.) Finally,

evaluation should take place on multiple levels: the community, the school, the classroom, and the individual learner.

Performance monitoring and evaluation certainly is a process to find and remedy deficiencies, but it is much more than that. Because each CFS school is unique in its response to local conditions, evaluation can and needs to be a process that drives improvement and implementation as it collects information that increases the understanding of what CFS means in the local context.

Section 4: Information Technologies

In the Armenian CFS Standards Framework, Information Technology (IT) is mentioned in terms of tracking student enrollment and publication of information about the school. Mentioned elsewhere in the CFS Standards Framework is the provision that the computer lab, and other school resources, is available equitably to all students.

The use of IT is integrated throughout the *CFS Manual*. Consistent with the CFS principles, IT can be used to enhance the students' learning through access to information on the internet. IT provides a new mode of teaching as well as new ways for students to present his or her learning. The internet is also a source of new teaching methods and content that can be used to enhance democratic participation by using it to share or gather information from stakeholders.

Section 5: Professional Development

The Armenian CFS Standards Framework obligates schools to provide professional development. Primarily it offers general claims to increasing requirements for teachers and increased student performance.

Chapter 6 of the *CFS Manual* ("Learners, Teachers, and School Managers") discusses of the efficacy of professional development and different forms it can take. Developing a CFS school is a creative process, as is the professional development of teachers in those schools. The content of professional development should further the principles of CFS. Professional development should provide teachers the skills to improve instruction for all students with an emphasis on child-centered instruction, to improve community participation in the school, and to improve learning opportunities for all students including girls, boys, special needs children, ethnic and religious minorities, and other marginalized students.

Section 6: Directive Strategies

The Directive Strategies section of the Armenian CFS Standards Framework includes aspects of two core principles of a CFS school. First, the section includes the idea of inclusive education and the need for outreach to all students. There is specific mention of needed efforts to achieve gender equality and inclusion of vulnerable students, and to make the school accessible and affordable for all students. Second, the section mentions the child-centered belief that every child can learn.

The purpose of this section is not clear to the outside reader. It would be appropriate and anticipated that the CFS principles mentioned would be embedded throughout the document; it may be useful to keep them in his section for emphasis. If emphasizing the principles through this section this is the intent, perhaps all three core principles should be included and each should be more fully developed. The

CFS Manual integrates the principles throughout and provides a model for doing this with a standards document as well.

Section 7: School Management and Relations with Community

Section 7 of the CFS Standards Framework includes two aspects of democratic participation. First is the two-way relationship with the community. Parents and community members are to be included on various advisory councils and the school should address problems in the community such as environment or health concerns. Second, students should have some autonomy, although exactly what autonomy students have through a "parliament" is not clear to the outside reader.

This section may be expanded to include more of the core principles of CFS. For example, parents will likely need information about CFS and child-centered teaching practices, the importance of education for girls, gender-responsiveness in education, and the importance of parental involvement.

The *CFS Manual* (Chapter 4, "School and Community") elaborates on the relationship between school and community as a reciprocal relationship. The school needs to involve the community in the school and the school also needs to strive to inculcate child-friendly ideas in the community. This is one aspect of democratic participation. This may mean helping to change the community's understanding of quality education and or even promoting the idea that the community should be involved in school matters. Student participation, such as the consultant saw enacted in CFS in Armenia, can inform a grounded understanding and articulation of student involvement in their own child-friendly education.

Section 8: School Administration

Section 8 of the CFS Standards Framework on school administration is quite general. It refers to a general set of skills and qualifications that a school director should have. In addition, it states that teachers should be involved in school management.

The *CFS Manual* (Chapter 6, "Learners, Teachers, and School Managers") outlines a number of high expectations for school directors, with regard to their instructional leadership abilities in schools, their school leadership overall, and their capacity to be good managers. School directors of child-friendly schools are to be expert teachers and able to mentor teachers on their staff as well. It is important that they have a collaborative management style, and that they understand the CFS principles and are able to apply them. CFS school directors need to have the leadership capacity to change a school's culture and to enhance working relationships with the community, involving the community in the work of the school. The *CFS Manual* also notes the importance of the role of school directors in raising funds for the school.

Concluding Remarks

While the *CFS Manual* does not provide a comprehensive or exclusive description of CFS, it does elaborate on the main principles and key areas of child-friendly schools. It describes schools that offer high quality education, which enables girls and boys to enact their rights as set forth in the CRC. Some specific areas of school structures (e.g., heat) and CFS principles that are pertinent to schools in Armenia are not explicitly mentioned in the *CFS Manual*. In this regard, Armenia can also share its perspectives and needs with the global body of knowledge that is emerging around CFS.

With this in mind, as Armenia proceeds to revise its CFS Standards Framework, it is important that all stakeholders become familiar with the three core CFS principles – child-centeredness, inclusiveness, and democratic participation – and how to apply these principles in the context of Armenian schools.

Currently the Armenian CFS Standards Framework is arranged in a compartmentalized fashion (e.g., administration is separate from the educational process, which is separate from evaluation, and linkages are not shown clearly). This assessment document reflects these divisions.

When Armenia begins to revise its CFS standards, it could be useful to organize the standards around themes related to the core principles (as with the CFS Standards drafted for China), or according to the five or six dimensions of child-friendly schools (e.g., Macedonia). This type of organization would help shed light on how the CFS principles are interwoven through all aspects of the school system and the individual school. It is important that Armenia not try to imitate other programs but rather understand the assumptions underlying the other documents, understanding that stakeholders' comprehension of CFS and global understandings of CFS will both deepen and change over time. Developing CFS in Armenia will contribute to a global understanding of what CFS means in providing a quality education to *all* girls and boys.

Several specific recommendations are offered as Armenia proceeds to review its CFS Standards Document. (1) Define the purpose of the document. Is the Framework designed to guide implementation of CFS principles, to evaluate existing schools, or something else? Reaching clarity on this will make it possible to use the document widely and in the way that it is intended. (2) For each section or subsection, it would be helpful to provide a theme and a clear definition and a rationale for the theme, then limit all ideas within each section to the respective theme. For example, Education Procedures would focus on teaching and learning, while comments about lighting are included in a section on school facilities rather than education procedures. (3) The terms criterion, indicators, and benchmarks need to be defined and followed consistently. Comments within the indicators and benchmarks columns need to be consistent with the definitions and with each section's theme.

As noted above, the CEE/CIS Regional Office is in the process of developing a conceptual framework and a roadmap for standards revision according to research-based, CFS principles. UNICEF Armenia can continue to draw on both the documents cited in this report and on other documents produced by UNICEF Headquarters as it moves forward in its own standards development process. It can also continue to interact with the Regional Office, in order to ensure that a participatory process is used to refine Armenia's CFS standards as well as take into account the various evidence-based suggestions offered in the longer document developed for this consultancy.

Annex 3.   Field Notes – Visit to Syunik marz

30 September 2009

Goris (Techt) School #1: A bit difficult to locate school but villagers provided directions.   Serves 12 grades with about 270 students. Floors were very clean and looked like they had just been washed as there were still some water marks. Principal met us at the door and accompanied us throughout our visit. He even sat in on the focus group meeting with parents/teachers.   Beautiful entrance through gate and a long driveway to school doors. The grand foyer in the school filled with photos of military heroes from several wars. There was a dove of peace at one end near the library. I learned as we visited other schools that this military emphasis was quite common.

School Tour and Class Visits. Principal guided us on a school tour. Our first stop was a very large but very dark and narrow library. Students use only when fulfilling assignments and we were told students have heavy overload so don't have time for recreational reading. There was a CFS corner with some newspapers but it was not a very inviting or hospitable space. A sparsely furnished health room had a cot, desk and a first aid kit. We briefly observed a history class (students telling a story by standing in front of class, then rest of class answered questions about story – very enthusiastic both teacher and pupils and teacher called equally on male and female students. We were in the middle of the hall when the bell sounded for break time and we stepped into a class where students were gathered, but not clear why. As we began to speak to the students, the Principal interrupted to ask someone to clean the chalkboard (learned later that students have duties to keep school clean and this is one of them). An internet lab (middle school students) had about 10-12 computers where students come in to do classwork. The computers are integrated into instruction twice per month per class and students welcome all other times. We were assured that students do take advantage of the opportunity. We stopped in a 3rd grade art class where students have individual books, with lots of construction paper and scissors. They were cutting paper to make green trees and being helped individually by the teacher, working with colors and shapes.

Focus Group. We met with parents and teachers together because our visit was very short – about 1.5 hours (this was true of all school visits).   All 18 were women and some were both parent and teacher. The Principal sat in the front of the room during the discussion although he remained quiet.   The deputy head tried to dominate the discussion, interrupting other participants' contributions.   They liked opportunity for students to have some freedom of choice in subjects; all agreed that the process of reform in Armenia was positive, but that more support was needed to teachers as they learned about these new methods of teaching. Participants shook heads affirmatively as one teacher expressed how much she liked the student councils. Although these councils were in place before CFS, their agenda was now different. Students actually identified the types of activities and duties for which they would take responsibility. For example, they wrote articles about school life, working in the village. Student council is also responsible for monitoring school cleaning.

Principal interview: When we returned to the Principal's office, he opened the suggestion box that is in the entrance hallway. There were five ideas in the box and Principal said that the box had not been opened for one month. Examples of suggestions included: bring in chess master to sharpen chess skills (student); pay socially vulnerable student's fees (principal said this was being done) ,organize trip to local sites (student). Principal said that he reports back to students each month with action of the suggestions. This typically occurs during the public announcements.

Principal also calls one school meeting per semester and actions based on suggestions reported at that time. Principal said he covers a lot of other material during those meetings, but he didn't give specifics about the agenda. The Principal described the types of councils established in the school. There are five councils: students; parents; trustees; pedagogical; school (all these are part of the CFS Framework).

Principal reported that he responded to invitation by NGO to discuss standards and use them as basis for school self-assessment. **This school was selected as one of the 7 winners of the competition – they produced good application, filled with evidence and "passed all stakeholder interviews."** A committee, representing key constituencies (teachers; parents - didn't say if students were on committee) prepared the application to be Child Friendly School. The competition was organized by the Goris Partnership for Teaching (PIT), a Syunik Marz NGO), formerly the Goris Teachers Union.

Principal said that parents were not that interested in school – they feel that's the Principal's job. I later learned that many parents are in Russia or away from home long-distance to earn an income. After independence, the job market declined as industries closed and many people needed to work away from home to support their families.

I asked on a scale of 1-5 the extent to which his school reflected the CFS approach. He smiled and hesitated, but then said he was a 5. When asked if his school had implemented CFS (scale 1-5) he was reluctant to answer and said 5, but I heard on Friday at PIT meeting from a principal who attended that realistically, CFS is a work in progress and no winning school has achieved 100% implementation (however that may be measured). Perhaps this principal didn't want to reveal it was a work in progress or that his school wasn't as good as he thought we expected it to be, or we wanted to hear. I inquired what were benefits of being part of the UNICEF CFS and he said sports and science equipment. They had a recreation programme they didn't have before and science instruction had improved with better equipment (I think he purchased this equipment with the funds given by the Marz Governor to pilot schools).

School #2 (Grades 1-11 – 179 students).

School Tour and Class Visits. The hallways were similar to the first school, filled with Armenian war heroes and evidence of student competition (e.g., best handwriting; best embroidery). This Principal did not come into classes with us. The first class was Armenian language class to lower primary students. Teacher very good in making connections between text and objects in the class, she illustrated singular and plural. There was lots of class participation and she called evenly on students although one very responsive girl in the back was quite eager to answer every question. We then visited 4th grade English class, they were using an exercise book. This was as dull as the first was interesting. The teacher had one pupil copying a sentence from text – "Every evening our family gathers in the living room" (this sentence was produced from a series of scrambled words in the exercise book, but we weren't there for the construction of the sentence so weren't sure who produced the sentence). A second student was repeating the task (copying sentence on the board) as the bell rang and class was over. Teacher simply said class was over. There were no final words or wrap up so we didn't know where she was going with this. Nothing about how this lesson would be carried over to the next lesson.

Teacher walked out of the room without a nod to the students. She exited before the students did. The next class was a 9th grade IT class. Students were taking turns answering questions in front of the class and seemed very confident. One student drew schematic of program on board. No computers in the room as they needed to go to the lab to use them. I think it was a programming class (N=13). All the classes we visited ranged from 13-25).

Principal Interview. I learned to my surprise from this Principal that she did not apply for CFS competition because she thought there was too much paperwork required in the application. She was very self-confident and presented her school as having no major problems or concerns. There was a no smoking rule and she stressed that she did not believe in physical punishment. There was a low absenteeism rate among both teachers and pupils. She said if people wanted to know about her school they could come and talk to her teachers and students. She receives support from a major donor whose picture is included among the Armenian heroes in the front of the school but didn't learn too much about the donor. (This was later described as a "bad" school – miscommunication in request for strongly implemented school and a weaker one struggling to install CFS). Principal thinks that the national education reform OK but thinks there is not enough training support when new requirements are introduced. For example, a new testing system (students now graded on 10 point scale rather than 5) has been introduced but teachers having trouble learning how to use. I didn't have a good feeling about her.

Focus Group. Again, this was a combined meeting of parents and teachers because of time limitations. Some represented both roles (n+14). Of the two parents from the community, two were both males. All others were females. The Principal did attend this meeting and after several minutes, tried to dominate the discussion. At one point, she disagreed with something one teacher was trying to say and so they began a dialogue. After returning to the overall session, that teacher did not comment again. Teachers were interested in learning the new pedagogy of interactive teaching/learning, but they agreed it was difficult to do at the beginning because such a dramatic shift from Soviet days of didactic teaching. The parents said children showing increased responsibility – researched information for school – helped others. Principal made it clear that parents were welcome to visit the school on Fridays, even unannounced. In general, all thought reform was moving in the right direction. In addition to complaint about lack of training for new testing system. Principal also unhappy because texts came with no teacher's manual.

Seemed to be well-run school, although teacher tried to present a "no problems" approach – low absenteeism, high academic performance.

Overall impressions of the schools:

1. Hallways filled with military material – war heroes; local martyrs; local men who served in WW2 and war with Azerbijan. I have photos from each school, but the wars are clearly NOT over.
2. School 2 had pictures of local women who were Armenian heroes.
3. Illustrative children's material in the hallways and foyer, student paintings (this a very popular activity in Armenia, as I later learned. The Children's Museum in Yerevan showcases children's paintings from around the world.) Both schools had displays of "good handwriting."
4. No health room in the Non-CF school.

5. Toilet in non-CFS school was in Principal's anteroom; no water; couldn't flush or wash hands; no paper. Quite filthy. In CF School, facility was outdoors with privacy doors.
6. We were more than 4 hours outside of Yerevan in rural villages, the center of wars and not far from Iran border and NK border. The schools were immaculate (I think this is a hallmark of management) and I didn't notice major areas that needed refurbishing. The buildings were large, made of concrete (divided into primary side and secondary side) and/or stone (Armenia is a mountainous country and most buildings constructed of stone. However, the buildings were chilly and cold, winter must be very difficult.
7. Classroom spaces were all large size – I didn't observe any "overcrowding;" very well equipped with materials all over walls -- charts; posters; student work; alphabet; equipment etc. They don't seem impoverished. Students sat in desks two by two (desks had no room to store books); only half class size used with desks; only one class had group organization (school #1) and principal interfered with instruction in progress because he wanted teacher to demonstrate something else, so the group work ended and a more traditional instruction began - so we couldn't see groups at work.

NGO (Partnerships in Teaching) Meeting. Three key staff (Varduck Daduatz – Project Development Manager & pedagogical leader; Aram MusalRanyan – Educational Area Specialist & coordinator; Ruzarian Tolozyan – Educational Area Specialist). The Director was out of town, but returned for the wrap-up on Friday. Ruzarian spoke English and told about civil society work of NGO and that PIT just received USAID grant-worthy credential. Lilit Madchyan – Web Designer & IT specialist was also present but did not participate.

Focus of this discussion (1.5 hours – staff stayed late to be with us as we were late in arriving) was to learn more about process of setting up CFS and relationship to NGO plus their recommendations for CFS expansion an NGO current and potential involvement with the CF Schools.

PIT and CFS/Syunik Marz. Partnership in Teaching was formerly the Goris Teachers Union. I received a very well-organized presentation packet of materials that included a report summarizing activities for the past several years, summary sheets of current projects and copies of the Tenders issued for CFS competition in Syunik Marz.

One of the early activities of the NGO was to support the conceptual development and implementation of Student Councils in the Marz (not sure if it was pioneering in Armenia), and then grew to developing materials on democratic school governance and training model for teachers. PIT worked with UNICEF to develop concept paper on CFS (2004) in which a working group of stakeholders from MOES, NIE, head teachers, etc participated. This is another example of a "good match" because the group understood the CFS approach as it reflected the two pieces the PIT had developed. They worked for about two years on this and then UNICEF supported PIT to manage a Marz-wide school competition to become a CFS pilot school. The Standards Framework that had been developed by the MOES in 2006 formed the basis for the self-assessment tool used by the schools (their working committees) to determine the extent to which the school complemented the CFS Framework. The applicants also received a copy of the CFS concept paper. The PIT simplified the Framework in the form of Tenders (only in Armenian) so as to facilitate completion of

the application.   About 120 responded to the invitation to hear about the competition, 40 applied and the applications examined carefully to determine school alignment with the Framework, but insufficient evidence to prove). There was a short list of 20 created from the first review (by working group), which were then reviewed with additional criteria (e.g. site visits; meeting with school working committees and councils). The final number of pilot schools chosen was six. These "winners" were showcased at a big ceremony attended by dignitaries from public and private sectors in Syunik Marz, UNICEF and MOES.   Each winning school received two UNICEF "Schools in a Box" (lots of individual student materials) plus equipment to launch recreation programmes (balls; nets; etc), a lot of recognition (including introductions I think of those schools who made the short list). Governor also gave each winning school 100,000 AMD. One school purchased science equipment (I think); another distributed among worthy teachers; not sure what others did but would be interesting to find out.

Not clear why some schools did NOT apply but hypothesis that they believe they fell short of the fundamentals and could not compete or, like the Principal reported, didn't want to complete the paperwork.   Think this would be interesting to investigate to determine if there is something to learn that may influence expansion of CFS throughout Armenia.

Today the PIT has an ongoing informal relationship with the applicant schools around Goris but no formal mechanism in place. Receive feedback on what's happening but no data collection.

PIT and CFS outside of Syunik Marz. In 2008 PIT worked with UNICEF in Shirak Marz and Lori Marz to provide full coverage, awareness campaign and orientation training re CFS in 340 schools. However, before a school becomes a CFS it must be instructed by the MOES.   Schools in these two regions are still waiting for these decisions, but they are on "hold" because of the current emphasis on moving CFS into the policy framework.   There was also an expectation that this decisions would follow on the international UNICEF meeting in Geneva, originally scheduled for 2008, but that meeting was postponed and did not take place until 2009.

PIT and School Readiness for CFS.   Based on the PIT experience, the staff offered a list of essential pre-conditions for school to install CFS framework.   They believe this is a necessary, preliminary step in school integration of CFS, because it may prevent "failures" in implementation.   This list represents a preference for targeting resources for expanding CFS in Armenia toward those most likely to succeed. Pre-condition criteria include (but probably not limited to):

1. Headmaster with the will & energy to make it happen. Learn what resources out there to call upon for support (those in place) so as NOT to create model of dependency from outsiders to make CFS a reality.

2. Strong student council – featured in the CFS framework – working on activities that support the school.

3. Openness and transparency in all aspects of school governance and financing.

4. Parents council – probably the weakest link in the chain –especially at the upper school level.

5. Comprehensive communication strategy to all stakeholders.

6. Effective pedagogical training.

7. Accountability at all levels

I inquired whether PIT would support process used in Syunik Mars to expand CFS in Armenia.   Basically yes, but get existing schools to partner with new ones. Government is now asking schools for their 3-4 year plan (independent of CFS).

PIT currently working on manuals to help introduce, manage and support each type of Council (e.g. Student; Parent; Teacher) in a school.

In response to my query about how long does it take for a "typical" school to go through process of becoming CFS, the answer was 5-10 years to be complete.

Observations from day one in the field.

1. There is no systematic data on the CFS framework in schools (some observations; anecdotal information etc.) There was no systematic follow-up to what happened in the "winning" schools following the ceremony and receipt of UNICEF Boxes. UNICEF and MOES really need systematic information on what the CFS looks like within the school and how things may or may not be different after being declared a "winner." There should be some comparasions with non-CFS schools and if possible, those schools that made the first cut in the competition.   Baseline data are critical in a pilot process.

2. All schools submit periodic reports to MOES, using quantitative data on enrollment, absenteeism etc. It isn't clear who reads or reviews them or what happens to them. It might be useful to analyse and determine if there are differences between CFS participant schools and non-schools by Marz.

3. I don't think there are formal links with post-secondary institutions. It would be useful to consider this not only for a potential support to the schools, but also to engage upper level students or graduate students in a research process to help document and analyze CFS in the schools. It provides a low-cost opportunity for potentially useful implementation partner.

4. That CFS will be the centerpiece of MOES strategic plan AND that there will be a shift within UNICEF from an implementing partner to one that works at policy level seems to be assumed.   This will then move to a strategic choice among options for scaling up.

5. Consider infusion of CFS as a top-down/bottom-up partnership. Imagine an hourglass with national priorities at one end and local priorities and realities at the other end. They meet in the middle with the CFS approach.   The hourglass does not remain static, but has the flexibility of "listening" and using input from both ends so as to strengthen the middle – i.e., Child-Friendly Schools throughout Armenia.

1 October 2009 (Kapan)

School #1. One of the competition winners. No introductory tour of the school but noticed that the foyer and entry hall lined with material similar to those seen yesterday. We were late arriving as we did not leave Goris until 10 a.m. and it was an hour drive to Kapan. Met with Magda (heads both the NGO head and Teachers Union), who escorted us to the school.

Principal and Deputy Interview.   Met with the principal and the two deputy heads (one female; one male). They all want CFS because it's innovative with a broader, more participatory pedagogical style. They report that children are more motivated. They clearly know the CFS vocabulary.   Principal wanted to control the meeting agenda.   As an example of the more participatory style, he said he would be visiting the 11th grade on Friday as a demonstration of child friendliness/democracy but he did not say what he was going to do, despite several attempts to get him to give an example – be specific. Said he was just going to "show up."

One deputy (female) said there were difficulties in using the framework as a self-assessment tool because it was very complex, but the mechanism of including committees or councils helped as they worked through together. They view the councils as the "duty officers" of the CFS framework who are the key local implementers (I think), but they also expect and need support, again, they say, from Government. Inquired if poor schools had capacity to implement CFS and principal said yes, with the proper leadership, which was essential (e.g., strong manager; commitment to CFS).   He said that success depended on the relationships within the school among all educators and students and parents.   If teachers are trained, they can do what's expected of them.   They also concurred with what we heard before – the need to strengthen the link with the parents.   During this meeting the staff interrupted the principal and he acknowledged this behavior as part of their positive relationship.   They all agreed that schools needed time to implement CFS. This as other schools, believed they were always implementing CFS. It was a work in progress.

Since time was so short, we met with the student council rather than teacher/parent group.

Student Focus Group. Met with student council   (Four girls and two boys, elected by other students. Although no prescription for male/female equity in elections, there is some language in the guidelines that urges this consideration).   The two deputies sat in on the meeting, but they were silent and their presence didn't seem to bother the students at all, who were quite vocal, particularly the boys. Girls did not speak at first until called upon. One boy tried to dominate, but we did our best to have him wait his turn.   One member (male) said the council addressed the problems of the school, identified by students through interaction with other students. One duty of council was to monitor cleanliness of school (councils in both schools Thursday mentioned this duty, as did someone's Principal in one of yesterday's schools), according to schedule they produce. Each council member is responsible for sphere/theme of his or her choice. One girl said she was a journalist and was organizing to produce a school newspaper that would tell stories about students, but again, there was competition to be featured in the newsletter. One member (female) was the liaison with the marz library to feature certain books and authors such as Saroyan and Tumanian.   Another activity was to organize a knowledge contest" among the students (offered by council president), which involved consultation with the teachers to do this. I could never get them to say what the competition was.

School #2 (Lernazor). This is a "well-known" winning school within the CFS pilot schools, although this school never competed (e.g., also because of the paperwork involved).   It was chosen because of its very unique relationship with the small rural and very historic village which it serves. Because of its uniqueness (lead by a Principal of 25 years in this school and village) not only in the relationship within the community, but because of everyone's personal and close relationship with the principal, it has been deemed worthy of CFS designation. Although not formally implementing CFS approach, they interpret that the way the school functions demonstrates what a CFS may look like.   There are fewer than 100 families in this village and many have been there for generations. The school and community are "one" and apparently always have been, as long as this principal has been there. (There is no one in line or being trained to take over principal's position.)   The primary criterion for the nature of the school/village relationship seems to be all around the principal.

Students greeted us at the gate and formed a parade as we entered the school. The longer we walked, the more students gathered. The official school day had ended and we were late arriving so unfortunately, did not observe any classes in session. A very large "Welcome UNICEF" poster hangs in the school hallway (not nearly as large a school or entry as we witnessed in other visits).   The principal stood at the top of the stairs surrounded by students and he was hugging and teasing each as they clamored to be as close to him as they could.

Principal Interview.   As we met in the principal's office, students were coming and going, scratching his back, looking for chocolates, whispering in his ear about something. Conversations and discussions about my queries were regularly disrupted by the presence of the students. One was the female head of student council. I think this was his style and a way of demonstrating his relationship to the school family but he gave brief responses to queries and data collection was difficult due to these actions. He said that to learn about his school, visitors needed to stay much longer, perhaps several days. Nice, but not really doable.   The Principal has personal contact with the all village families (90 in community) and there is a list of each family with all members posted on his wall.   The school is open until 11 p.m. at night. People are apparently free to come and go. Community events are held here. The community has established a local museum in one of the rooms – with artifacts from Bronze Age and it's a quite extraordinary place.   It's an old town and area and everyone seems to be part of an archeological "dig" – if you have to go much below the surface to find these incredible artifacts.   They are all naturally and justifiably proud of this museum.

The principal says that the activities associated with CFS are not new to the way this school functions, and that is probably true. (I have no idea what happened in a class and that was a big disappointment, because I think it's very important to have some idea about the pedagogy. I noticed that this is seldom mentioned in these meetings, unless asked.   In response to my query about what the advantage to this school is to be a CFS "winner," the principal was quick to respond that connection to UNICEF means that the school is now noticed.   The principal displayed a huge book which he said contained his action plans to be submitted to Government.   The documents were bound in a hand-lettered folder but he made a point of saying that there were no instructions from MOES on how to prepare the plans.   He gave me copies of "memorial notes" which are like honor roles that recognize student achievements. Again, focus on the best.

Student Council Focus Group.   Met with student council and some other members of student body. About 15 participants, evenly represented by females and

males. The student council leader is a female, who sat in the front row and wanted to do most of the talking. A teacher walked in to the meeting in the middle of our discussion and tried to coach students in their responses (they needed no assistance). Armine asked her to listen to students but she continued to intervene, so Armine asked her to leave.   The principal opened the door during the meeting, but I did not invite him to join us.   (The need for the management to either be present or do most of the talking in these meetings strikes me as a violation of the respect for others' opinions that are part of the CFS and the decentralization principles, yet it occurred quite frequently).

I asked what advice they would offer to the Minister in helping schools when he visits in a few weeks. Here are some of the responses: treat students as we are treated here -- we are loved and cared for. People take time with us. We have freedom in class and receive attention of our teachers. Fights or disagreements resolved with negotiation (one of the duties of the student council).   The students like their classes because can argue with the teacher and if the student "wins" teacher must accept this (not clear how the winner is decided).   They want to "show off" their school to lots of visitors. The principal always has door open and welcomes students. Be humorous, students said; explain new materials. They appreciate receiving immediate feedback on homework. Students were very enthusiastic and energetic. Although a few tried to dominate, I strove to give everyone an opportunity to speak, inviting those who did not raise their hands. Student council monitors good behavior of students. Establishes school rules which are posted in the hallway – this seem to be true for all schools.

Big lunch as we tried to leave. We were late for another appointment in Kapan with NIE Regional Director.

Overall, my chief impression is that visitors are given the principal's orchestrated presentation.   Principal not fully engaged with attempts to direct discussion to special inquiries.   Students seem to have no boundaries on their time with him; their constant presence was very disruptive for interview purposes. They didn't seem to notice that they were disrupting. Both seemed anxious to demonstrate their "relationship."   It's an unusual school which is worthy of further exploration on what is really going on there with respect to the school programme, pedagogy, academic performance.   Something's happening and probably lots of good things, but appears to need some rigor.   The energy in this environment revolves around the principal. This may be a unique, "one-of-a-kind" school environment.

NGO Conversation (Magda Gevorkian. Head/Kapan Teachers Union and NGO + NIE Branch.) She accompanied us to the two schools although she moved in and out of the meetings, answering her mobile phone, and did not engage in discussion until I posed questions in the car.   She thinks the MOES directives need supplemental material from Government (e.g., for new scoring/grading system.   Also need materials to help implement student councils as they have no guidelines.   She thinks class sizes of 30 in urban areas too large and teachers can't be effective. She is a strong supporter of CFS and UNICEF.

Interview with Head of Education Dept/Syunik Marz (Lyutvig Nazutyunyan).

He said that NIE was only involved in the beginning when developing the Standards Framework, attended the awards ceremony for the winning / pilot schools. He is less involved now, except for an occasional visit to a school. There is no formal mechanism in place for his role. He commented that the Soviet way of education was

very content-based. Children were very obedient, but didn't say whether he favored this system. He supports CFS.

He offered some ideas about expanding CFS in the Armenian education reform. For example, he suggests a broad sweep of CFS at the marz level (rather than target one or two marses), throughout Armenia, beginning with a few schools in each marz. He believes, based on his experience, that reforms take a long time to become part of a system (there is need for trial and error) and because there is so much variation (e.g. rural/urban; socially vulnerable; special ed; schools on borders) among the schools, every marz needs to participate in the expanded CFS. This more accurately reflects a system-wide change linked to policy and part of the overall education reform. He estimated three years to fully integrate CFS into a school.

When queried about length of time required for CFS to be fully integrated into a school programme, he said approximately three years. He also stressed the need flexibility and independence to introduce changes in a school, which is not a matter of finance, but also suggested that support to the school should come from the marz.

He offered some ideas for providing support to the schools during implementation of CFS: region-wide resource centres where teachers may meet for training, share best practices, locate resource materials. (I think these Resource Centres already exist.) Establish network of teachers who meet and share at least twice per year and enable them to be in communication with one another throughout the year. He also mentioned the use of public media such as radio and TV as a good communication tool .Mr. Nazutyunyan also stressed the importance of having either a school or regional CFS coordinator – even if only part-time.

Additional Observations – from this second day in the field.

1. Look further into some new, creative resources to support the school implementation of CFS, as suggested above – communications media. Might also look into local and/or regional private sector to provide some resources. Community and parents are often used together, which may suggest that an interpretation of community support really means parent support. Community should be more broadly defined.

2. Is a participatory, more democratic, approach to management and implementation of school agenda accepted seriously when the traditional hierarchical patterns are in place during visits like ours? Or is this an effort to make the visit "go well?" Teachers want to coach students in our focus group meetings; principals attend class visits with us or the teacher/parent meetings.

3. How realistic is it to expect a large parent role if many parents are working away from the home and village? Has this been explored? It's important because it is a key characteristic of the CFS approach.

4. There is a recognition that support materials for helping councils to function smoothly and efficiently are needed and the PIT/Goris is in the process of responding to that need. Hopefully, these materials will be made available to all schools implementing CFS and to those who may have student councils but not yet be part of the CFS network.

5. Already mentioned the need for systematic data collection on implementation of CFS and the difference it has made in a school.   Also interested to know how principals used the funds provided by the Governor to the winning/pilot schools.

2 October 2009   Goris

Wrap Up and Debrief Meeting Goris – Partnership in Training (PIT) NGO Office.
Participants included: Partners in Teaching – Director (Arastes) and Aram; Marz rep/National Institute of Education (NIE); principal (one of winning schools); Board member PIT and parent; one teacher or Deputy Head from non-participating CFS school.

I was asked to do a presentation of global attention to quality and the UNICEF experience within that global context, UNICEF's focus on quality (focus on learner) through Child-Friendly Schools and holistic approach, range of integration among countries using CFS approach in some way and variety in types of models used. (This is described fully in the Report.) This led into the mission in Syunik Marz to see and listen to the experience of implementing CFS in the field. Here are the highlights:

1. There was an animated discussion around the table over whether or not CFS expansion should focus on one or two Marses to develop models that can then be replicated (I pointed out that this was already being done in their Marz and some of them were participating) OR begin with a few schools in each Marz and then work on regional level.   No resolution to the discussion, but the majority seemed to favor the introduction in a small number of schools throughout Armenia.   Especially since this intended to come through national policy of education reform.
2. Principal made the point that the "winners" were not fully CFS – didn't know how long this would take – at least several years.   It was important to recognize CFS as a process of moving toward school improvement and quality education. .
3. PIT/Head said that even the "winners" of the competition didn't have evidence for more than 50% characteristics of CFS. *Note.* I wonder why they should. Important to remember that the education reform activities funded by the World Bank in particularly, contain some of the characteristics of CFS approach (e.g., active teaching; decentralized school management).
4. Agreed that CFS could not be installed without strong management; equipment for classes and environment; and teacher training in skills and attitude. This is core.
5. The deputy principal said this society was not ready to transform to such an extent of participatory pedagogy and management required by CFS.
6. Many participants suggested that a CFS coordinator be appointed in the school (not necessarily full-time) or perhaps a cluster of schools. Someone needs to be minding the "store" and this isn't happening. Principals are strong managers of their schools, but not necessarily CFS. Some felt school-based councils needed to be coordinated.
7. Agreement that supporting materials needed to guide committees – PIT working on support for student councils just now.   Some feel that Government should give this support though given the dwindling national resources, this is highly unlikely. And it won't come from UNICEF as it moved to policy work rather than project focus.

8. There is a gap in parents' responsibility. This came through in school visits. Many believe schooling is Government responsibility – that's why parents send children to school.
9. Need right conditions for CFS to be installed (see Wednesday's notes) but that Government should do this.
10. The CFS Standards Framework is the most appropriate entry point for schools into the CFS approach because Standards are their "bottom line" for school performance. No questions on this, but some of the participants felt this document did not need to be revised unless there are changes in Government.
11. One key change in grading has been issued by Government – mentioned in Wednesday's notes- moving from 5 point scale to 10 point. There is some expectation that teacher will be judging individual performance on number of elements (sounds like portfolio) but there is no manual to help install this and teachers quite concerned. Principal says "just do it."

Observations/Impressions

1. CFS not perfectly installed in any school. The schools which made the "first cut" competition \have some elements, such as interactive teaching; group work; councils; sports equipment; science equipment.
2. This culture has a tradition of dependence and support from Government (e.g., Soviet times) and moving to increased self-reliance and responsibility for mainstreaming innovations and striving for sustainability is a very new idea and for some, very difficult to practically adopt.
3. CFS s the right direction for school reform, but it's going to take lots of time. A criterion of success for a CFS is for the school to continually improve (although no mechanism in place to measure this).
4. The CFS framework is correct entry point (Qu: Is it a "user-friendly" document?) *Note.* Are schools which really need CFS excluded because they can't compete? If so, does this follow UNICEF mandate?
5. Culture focused on the "best" – so competition for everything. School halls lined with student work; Armenian heroes; those who have "won" something. Not clear how the average child is affirmed in this culture and if not, does this weaken the application of UNICEF mandate in Armenia.
6. What determined "winner" of the competition? I think highest score in match between school culture and the framework. If this is so, then the "most ready" were winners. Is there an inherent contradiction in serving the "best" within the society with a global model designed to reach those most "in need?"
7. At this stage, using the "winner" as the CFS school, it seems as though CFS is value added to a strong school.
8. The Armenian model may be yet another and very unique approach in the global UNICEF CFS mix.

Annex 4.   Sample School Self Assessment (Macedonia)

CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL

Self-assessment activities of Child-Friendly Schools

Components

The school self-evaluation process consists of three major activities, carried out as three phases that follow one after the other:

(1)   Conducting child rights sensitization workshops
(2)   Performing school self-assessment
(3)   Processing the obtained results
(4)   Developing action plans

(1) Conducting child rights sensitization (CRS) workshops

Main objective

The main objective of the CRS workshops is to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child among school personnel, children and their parents and create awareness of the four basic groups of child rights:

- survival rights
- development rights
- protection rights
- participation rights.

Participants

The CRS workshops are simultaneously carried out with three separate groups of participants: teachers, parents and children.

The aim is to include all teachers in the workshop for teachers. However, if their number exceeds 40, all categories of teachers that exist in a particular school should be equitably represented in the total number of 30-35 teachers. In addition to having a balanced number of classroom teachers (grades 1-4/1-5) and subject teachers (grades 6-8/6-9), all varieties of subject teachers should be included. If the school has more than one language of instruction, teachers that teach in all offered languages have to be included and fairly represented.

The number of participating children and parents should be around 25-35 in each group. The workshop for children is intended mainly for 6-7 grade students selected on the bases of the following criteria: (a) there has to be a balanced number of girls and boys; and (b) all 6-7 grade classes should be represented by their presidents and vice-presidents, as well as by other students considered to be leaders among their classmates. The group of parents should consist of parents that: (a) have demonstrated interest in the school life (actively participate in parents' councils and/or school boards); and (b) have more children currently enrolled in the school.

Activities

The CRS workshops take about 6-7 working hours in total. They are a combination of small group work, whole group discussions, presentations,

demonstrations, role plays, and games and apply interactive approach that encourages experiential learning.

Although the CRS workshops for teachers, children and parents share the same objective and follow the same approach, workshops with adults differ from the workshop with children in the activities that lead towards the goals.

The CRS workshop for children consists of various activities that can be grouped around the fallowing topics and purposes:

1. Rights, needs and wants	▪ Differentiating wants from needs and connecting needs with basic rights
2. Child rights, behaviors and emotions	▪ Identifying adults' behavior that makes children happy/unhappy ▪ Connecting the behaviors that make children happy/unhappy with child rights
3. Rights and responsibilities	▪ Connecting rights with responsibilities ▪ Comparing children and adults in terms of rihgts and responsibilities
4. Child rights as human rights	▪ Understanding the concepts of Human Rights and Child Rights and their relations
5. Child rights in the Convention	• Clarifying the meaning of Child • Recognizing the four basic groups of basic child rights
6. Child rights violations	▪ Identifying typical situations of child rights violations at their school ▪ Preparing and performing role plays of the typical situations

The CRS workshops for both groups of adults (teachers and parents) follow the same agenda that differs from the agenda of the CRS workshop for children. The workshops for adults consist of different activities that fall under similar topics and purposes:

1. Child rights, behaviors and emotions	▪ Connecting the emotions portrayed in pictures with child rights that can be identified as violated or respected ▪ Presentation of the commonalities in the "negative"/"positive" memories about events from their own school experience
2. Child rights as human rights	▪ Understanding the concepts of Human Rights and Child Rights and their relations
3. Child rights in the Convention	• Clarifying the meaning of Child • Recognizing the four basic groups of basic child rights
4. Child rights violations	▪ Identifying child rights that are violated in situations taken from real school life ▪ Recognizing common child rights violations at their school (by observing the role plays prepared by students)

(2) Performing school self-assessment (SSA)

<u>Main objective</u>

The main objective of the SSA is to encourage participation in school improvement by using self-assessment as a tool for developing strategies for schools to meet the standards of the six dimensions of child friendly school's approach:

- inclusiveness
- effectiveness

- health, safety and protection
- gender responsiveness
- participation of students, parents and community
- respect for child rights and multiculuralism

<u>Assessment criteria</u>

SSA is based on a list of 46 (48*) indicators that are used as assessment criteria.
The indicators refer to the six dimensions of the child friendly school approach:

Inclusiveness

1. Teachers create conditions and try to make every child in the school to learn as much as possible.
2. Teachers **do not** criticize children in front of other children or parents.
3. Data for every child is available in the school that can be used to help his/her development and improvement, as well as to protect his/her rights.
4. All children participate at the class activities.
5. All children participate extra-curriculum activities (recitals, courses, etc) according to their interest.
6. Teachers and children care for the children with problems (for example children that have been ill for a longer period, or those who have low grades) and they help them overcome the problems
7. The school has conditions for enrollment of children with special needs (it is physically accessible, the staff is trained, the children, teachers and parents are prepared)

Effectiveness

8. Children learn with pleasure.
9. At school, children are taught useful things for their everyday life.
10. Children learn through group work and through their own experience.
11. Teachers, through their work and behaviour set a good example for the children.
12. During the class, the teachers encourage children to think and make their own conclusions, to ask questions and express their opinion.
13. Teachers monitor and grade the children during the entire school year, in order to make the children learn better.
14. Parents are regularly and timely informed on the attendance, activity and achievements of their children.
15. Teachers attend trainings (seminars, workshops, courses …) and introduce inovations into the programme.
16. Teachers use different tools in the classes in order to facilitate children's learning.
17. The school has computers that are used for the curriculum and extra-curriculum activities.
18. Timetable of classes in the school is in compliance with the needs of the children.

health, safety and protection

19. The school takes care for the health of the teachers and children.
20. There is **NO** violence (biting, molesting, mocking and abuse) in the school by children or teachers.
21. There are **NO** corporal punishment and insulting of children by teachers.
22. There are **NO** drugs and alcohol, or gambling and pornography in the school.
23. One can **NOT** smoke in the school.
24. The school encourages the children to have a healthy diet, and warns them on the risks of eating fast food.
25. The school facilities and the school yard are tidy, clean and safe.
26. The school has enough clean toilets, separate for children and adults, and separate

for girls and boys.
27. Teachers and children feel safe at school.
28. During the classes and the breaks there are order and discipline.
29. At school, children are gaining knowledge and skills related to their social and personal development (how to cooperate, to communicate, to express their emotions, on conflict resolution, etc).
30. If there is a problem at school, a professional service (pedagogue/psychologist) offers support to the children.

gender responsiveness

31. The girls have equal opportunities for physical recreation and play during the gym classes and the other extra curriculum activities, as the boys.
32. All teachers in the school are equally treating the boys and the girls at the classes as well as during the extra curriculum activities.
33. All teachers teach the children to recognize the unequal approach towards the boys and the girls in the school books and other school material, and to react appropriately.
34. All teachers teach the children to react to the unequal approach towards the boys and the girls in the interpersonal relations of everybody in the school

participation of students, parents and community

35. Children, parents and the community are regularly and timely informed on the events in the school.
36. Teachers, parents and the community participate in a rule making process and improvement of the work in the school.
37. Children have opportunity to express their opinion on everything that is happening in the school.
38. The school has a democratically chosen organization of children (school organization), that has an active role in decision and rule making processes concerning the life of the children in the school.
39. The school encourages and supports the children in the activities that are of benefit for the community.
40. The community provides material support to the school and participates in the activities organized by the school.

respect for child rights and multiculuralism

41. Children know and enjoy their rights, but also respect the rights of the others.
42. All employees of the school are introduced with the children's rights and know how to plasticize them.
43. The parents are introduced with children's rights.
44. Children learn how to respect their own culture and the culture of the other ethnic communities in the R. of Macedonia.
45. All teachers teach the children to recognize and correct the negative impressions for the individuals with different ethnic background (Macedonian, Albanian, Roma, Turkish, etc), that are present in the school books and other school material.
46. The school enables children that learn Macedonian language, to learn at least one language of the other ethnic communities in the R. of Macedonia (for example: Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, Roma, Vlach, etc).
47. Students who study in a language other than Macedonian, master Macedonian in the school.*
48. School organizes joint curricular or extracurricular activities with mixed language/ethnic groups of students.*

Two more indicators (47 & 48) are added to the list that is applied in ethnically mixed schools (schools with more than one language of instruction). Both refer to the CFS dimension of multiculturalism.

Self-assessment questionnaire

The self-assessment questionnaire comprises of the list of indicators which serve as assessment criteria for child friendly school.

In the actual questionnaire the list of indicators is placed in the middle, with two other parts – one on the left and the other on the right. The left part calls for assessing the current practice in the school on a scale from 1 (it does not apply to the school at all) to 4 (it applies completely). The right part assesses the level of significance and expectation of each indicator using a scale from 1 (it is not important) to 4 (it is extremely important).

An excerpt from the self-assessment questionnaire is given bellow, whereas the whole instrument is added at the end of this paper.

CURRENT SITUATION				indicators:	DESIRABLE SITUATION			
1- it does not apply at all	2- it applies in some cases	3- it applies in most cases	4- it does not apply at all		1- it is not important	2- it is important to some extend	3- it is very important	4- it is extremely important
1	2	3	4	1. Teachers create conditions and try to make every child in the school to learn as much as possible.	1	2	3	4

The self-assessment questionnaire ends with three empty spaces, where participants can write indicators that are not included in the instrument, but are considered important for presenting the overall picture of the school. It offers an opportunity to add internal criteria to the list of external criteria specified in advance.

Participants

The assessment is done by the teachers, children, and parents that attended the CRS workshops. The CRS workshops were conducted to create awareness of the importance of respecting survival, development, protection, and participation rights and provide shared understanding of common violations of child rights in the school setting.

It is assumed that in the absence of awareness and shared understanding, adults will enter the assessment with the wrong presumption that *children are given more rights than they deserve* and *the children should learn their responsibilities before they ask for their rights*. These shared misconceptions very often influence teachers' attitudes towards students, providing justification for violating their rights at school.

<u>Assessment procedure</u>

The self-assessment procedure *for adults* opens with activities intended for developing awareness for evaluation criteria. Both groups of adults (teachers and parents) in separate sessions are asked to identify characteristics of:

- <u>students</u> who achieve highly and feel comfortable at school?
- <u>teachers</u> who encourage children to achieve highly and feel comfortable at school?
- <u>parents</u> who encourage their children to achieve highly and feel comfortable at school?
- <u>schools</u> that create conditions for children to achieve highly and feel comfortable as students?

The answers obtained through small group work, lead to defining common characteristics of teachers/parents/school that are important for child friendly school.

The assessment procedure *for adults* continues with two other activities, which also apply to *children* that take part in the self-assessment procedure. The first one is the core activity – completing the self-assessment questionnaire, and the last one is a follow up discussion.

The self-assessment questionnaire is applied individually. All preconditions (e.g. comfortable seat, enough personal space, etc.) for providing individual responses are taken care off even before delivering the instruction for completing the instrument. Instructions are detailed and use examples to explain the procedure easier. Participants are asked to first assess the current situation, and then assess the desired situation while responding to the indicators one by one.

After completing the self assessment questionnaire, participants engage in a discussion initiated by the following questions:

- Which criteria are the most present in this particular school? How do you see it?
- Which criteria are the least present in this particular school? How do you see it?
- Where would you like to see most improvement taking place?

It is expected that for the first two years at least, the overall assessment procedure is facilitated by CFS project team. It is assumed that schools need this kind of support to get acquainted to the requirements of a more objective, valid and reliable self-assessment and understand how important it is for moderating school improvement.

(3) Processing the obtained results

After participants in each group have assessed the current school situation and expressed the level of importance for each indicator, their answers are assembled and calculated to provide basis for inter-group comparisons as well as for comparisons between the current and desired situation on each dimension and indicator.

The assessment results for each indicator are expressed as average grades and calculated as means of all grades given to an indicator (= the sum of individual grades assigned to an indicator divided by the number of respondents included in the assessment of that indicator). In that way, each indicator gets six average grades: three describing the current situation as perceived by each of the three groups of

respondents (teachers, children and parents), and three illustrating the desirable situation as conveyed by the same groups respectively.

The same approach applies to calculating the results for the six dimensions. The sum of individual grades assigned to all indicators that constitute a particular dimension is divided by the number of respondents included in the assessment of those indicators in order to come up with the average grades for that dimension. Each dimension ends up with six average grades that correspond to those obtained for each indicator.

The results of these calculations are then summarized in a table. An excerpt from such a table is given bellow. It includes results only for inclusiveness and its indicators.

| CURRENT SITUATION average grades			dimensions (and indicators):	DESIRABLE SITUATION average grades		
TEACHERS	CHILDREN	PARENTS		TEACHERS	CHILDREN	PARENTS
2.9	**2.6**	**2.6**	**Inclusiveness**	**3.6**	**3.7**	**3.7**
3.2	3.2	2.9	1. Teachers create conditions and try to make every child in the school to learn as much as possible.	3.7	3.9	4.0
2.8	1.7	1.9	2. Teachers *do not* criticize children in front of other children or parents.	3.5	3.1	3.6
3.0	2.1	2.5	3. Data for every child is available in the school that can be used to help his/her development and improvement, as well as to protect his/her rights.	3.7	3.9	3.6
2.8	2.0	2.4	4. All children participate at the class activities.	3.6	3.7	3.7
2.3	2.4	2.2	5. All children participate extra-curriculum activities (recitals, courses, etc) according to their interest.	3.3	3.5	3.5
3.0	2.6	2.6	6. Teachers and children care for the children with problems (for example children that have been ill for a longer period, or those who have low grades) and they help them overcome the problems	3.7	3.8	3.3
3.6	3.8	3.4	7. The school has conditions for enrollment of children with special needs (it is physically accessible, the staff is trained, the children, teachers and parents are prepared)	3.9	3.8	3.6

Average grades can be compared in several ways. They can serve to provide inter-group comparisons – to determine the difference between the assessments done by teachers, children and parents. If there are gaps between teachers', children's, and parents perceptions, it means that the groups have different understanding of the situation and they should work on providing shared ground for joint intervention.

A graphical example is given in the following illustration:
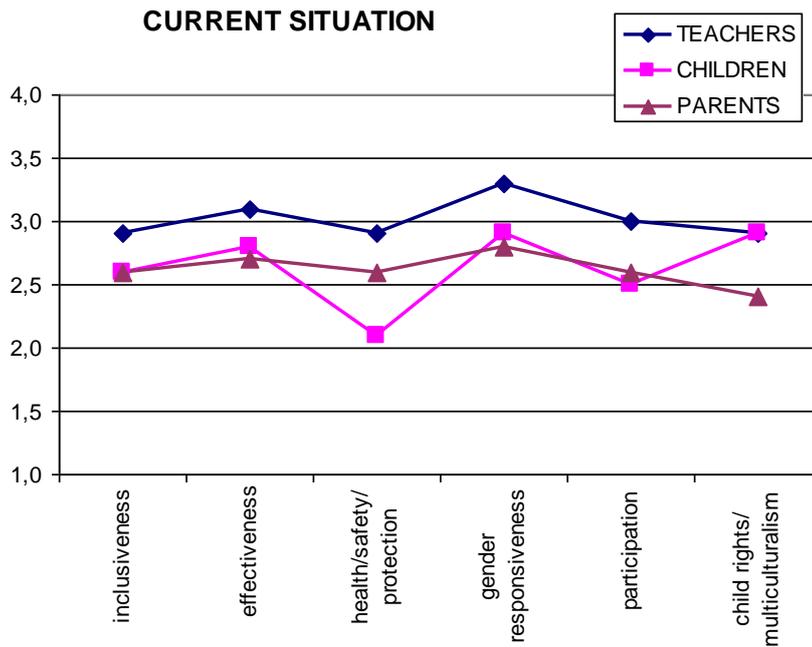
CURRENT SITUATION

Average grades can also be used for intra-group comparisons. They can clarify the difference between the current and desirable situations as assessed by each of the three groups of respondents on each dimension, as well as on each indicator within a specified dimension. If the gap between the current and desirable situation is wide, it means that there are many problems which are in need of immediate solution and therefore should be repaired.

Graphical examples of the comparative results between the reality and expectation/importance for the group of children are given in the following illustrations:

CHILDREN

INCLUSIVENESS - children
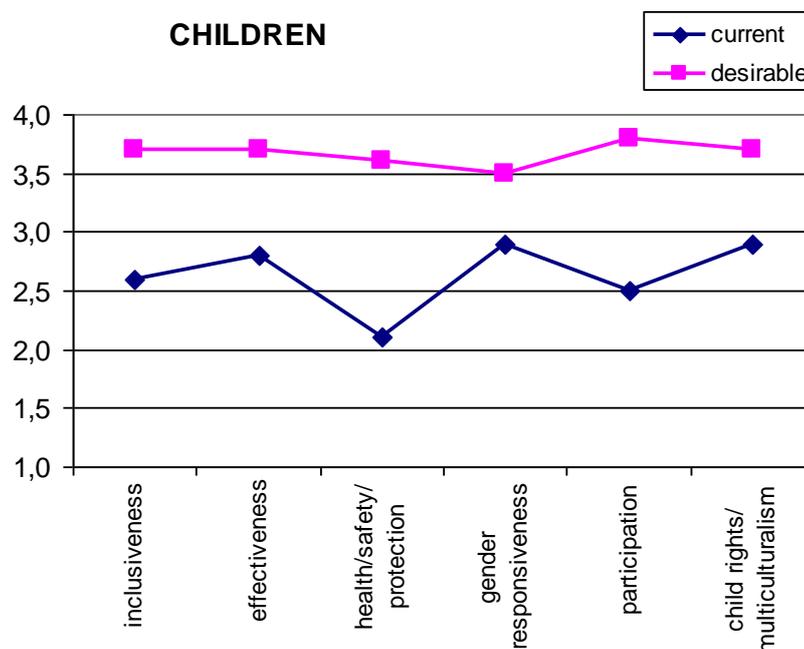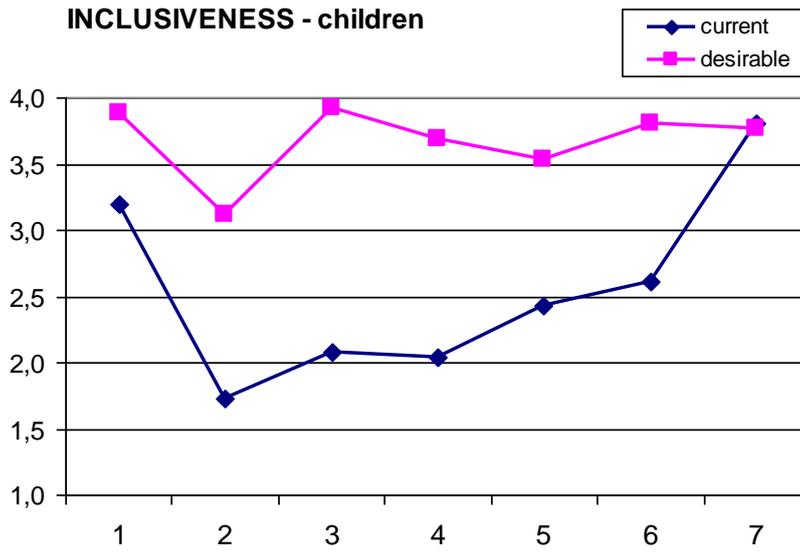
(4) Developing action plans

Annex 5.   Overview of School Self-Improvement Grants

Steps of a School Improvement Grant Cycle

1. A **working committee** is formed. This might be the coordinating committee.

2. The committee develops a **package of information** that includes:

   - an announcement of the grant program;

   - a description of the application process with details about who reviews the application and criteria used to select them, (this must be seen as transparent);

   - a sample application form;

   - a schedule of funding cycles and the range of funds available for each application;

   - a list of examples of the types of activities that may be funded;

   - a reporting schedule; and

   - an "information sharing" mechanism so good ideas may be communicated to others.

3. A cycle may include the following:

   (1) school submission of a very brief concept paper (to obtain feedback on the idea and increase the chance for a successful application and project);

   (2) a full project proposal and budget;

   (3) an agreement letter between the funder and the applicant;

   (4) a periodic reporting schedule that may include fund site visits to project; disperse funds (may be all at once or in several tranches); and

   (5) a project completion report. The committee can decide what constitutes completion – a product or some other evidence of completion.

NOTE: As the following EQUIP 2 document indicates, there is wide variation on the school improvement grant process. This annex is illustrative of the core elements that are included in the small grant process.