

ARMENIA

Policy Progress to End Violence against Children

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75%

of Armenia's children who experienced violent discipline last year

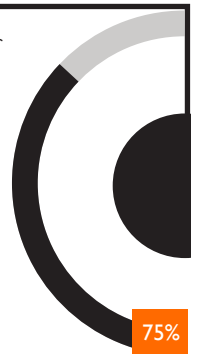
Introduction

As in many countries throughout the world, children living in Armenia experience situations of violence in their homes and within the communities where they live. Despite governments, citizens and children taking action to end this violence, the percentage of Armenia's children experiencing acts of violent discipline in the last year suggest that current efforts to end these abuses and other types of violence are not enough. World Vision believes that a world without violence against children is possible. It takes actions from all members and institutions in society to end violence against children.

This report focuses on a government's duty to create an enabling environment that ensures all actors can and will take action to end violence against children. Such an enabling environment requires that the government create a legal framework to set child rights standards and employ services to protect those rights. An enabling environment also requires conditions favourable to implementing those services, such as funding and strategy.

This report reviews the Armenian government's progress to create the minimum conditions in law and policy needed to ensure an enabling environment to end violence against children. These minimum conditions align with provisions stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and more specifically with General Comment, General Measures of Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹ that clarify necessary government actions to protect children from violence. These minimum standards do not mean that governments cannot do more to end violence against children, but rather, without these critical, foundational steps, it cannot enable all actors, within government, in civil society and in communities, to work in unity towards this achievable goal.

¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 5 "General Measures of Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 4 and 42 and paragraph 6 of Article 44)", CRC/GC/2003/5, November 27, 2003.



Report Methodology

World Vision bases the progress percentages on 28 questions and sub-questions that review government’s national policy, regulatory frameworks and other commitments targeting violence against children. These are in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and General Comment No. 5 on the Rights of the Child. This report lists each of the 28 questions and sub-questions in the last section of the report. Each sub-question received one of three answers: yes, no, or partial, scored 1, 0 or .5 respectively. The final score for each of the 28 questions is the average of its respective sub-points. Scores are noted by colour in the policy table annex (1 = green, .5 = yellow, 0 = red). In addition, the policy table provides legal and policy references that determined each score.

Armenia’s Legal Progress **59%**

The Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on Human Rights all enshrine national government commitments to protect children from violence. To fulfil these promises for children, it takes complex and coordinated actions; as a first step, it takes national laws and regulations to end violence against children.

Governments must establish national laws and regulations that forbid violence, prevent violence, create pathways to report violence and respond to violence. These four actions also create a clear approach to review and benchmark a government’s progress to create and reform laws that adequately protect children from violence. They represent the minimum effort needed to end violence against children. According to these benchmarks, Armenia’s legal and regulatory framework meets a 59 per cent total threshold of the four actions:



Forbid

Governments must create laws that forbid all forms of violence against children. These laws help set community values; laws must ban violence against children in all its forms and punish actions that contradict those values.



Prevent

Governments must create laws and regulations that prevent violence against children. Proactive policies can stem behaviours and actions that lead to violence.



Report

Governments must create laws and regulations that encourage children to report violence and mandate communities and professionals to report violence; such pathways should be accessible and confidential.



Response

Governments must respond to violence in ways that protect a child from future violence and provide rehabilitation and justice to remedy the violence act.

Governments must forbid all forms of physical and mental violence, sexual violence, child labour, child marriage, and where applicable, female genital mutilation.

Forbid 69%

Governments must create laws that forbid all forms of violence against children. These laws help set community values; laws must ban violence against children in all its forms and punish actions that contradict those values. Armenia's current legal provisions address all forms of violence against children yet upholds exceptions and definitional gaps that need attention in order to complete a ban on all violence.

Armenia's laws align with international standards on child marriage, commercial sex exploitation and all forms of physical and mental violence. However, provisional exceptions to law and use of general terminology rather than specific language limit the effect of these laws. In the case of child marriage for example, Armenia's laws allow parents to consent to marriage before the age of 18, and thus the state recognises marriages between and with children. In reference to child labour, the law forbids work that is cruel and hazardous but not work that is inhuman or degrading. Finally, legislation does not explicitly ban corporal punishment, although there is no legal defence for this act either. Without specific reference to corporal punishment, the laws that forbid all forms of physical and mental violence may not sufficiently protect children. It is important to note that during the Universal Periodic Reviews of 2010 and 2015 Armenia committed to prohibit all corporate punishment of children in all settings, including in the home.

Armenia's national laws that address sexual abuse and child pornography do not adequately protect children according to international standards. The law defines statutory rape in cases of children sixteen and under but does not protect children over the age of sixteen. In cases of child pornography, the law does not punish all acts associated with the offense. The recent draft Criminal Code provisions on this same matter does include offenders who offer, acquire, purchase or deliver a child for the purposes child pornography. Therefore the National Assembly can pass the draft law to address the gap accordingly.



Prevent **42%**

Governments must create laws and regulations that prevent violence against children. Proactive policies can stem behaviours and actions that lead to violence. Prevention policies empower children, peers, parents, caregivers and professionals to identify risks, seek help and create solutions before violence takes shape.

Armenia's current legal and regulatory provisions empower health and social service providers to prevent violence. Armenia adopted health policies that provide for home visits at key child development stages, equipping caregivers to prevent violence in the home. Social workers may also utilise home-based services and make home visits to children at risk of violence.

Armenia has not established prevention strategies in school settings; without these strategies in place, educators and children do not have the skills and steps to prevent violence. Actions should include the introduction and training on safe school policies, capacity building for educators on how to prevent, identify and report violence, clear measures planned and in place to respond to violence and a new life skills curriculum for students to help them manage the risks of violence through informed decision-making and to address gender stereotyping. There are regulatory provisions in place to ensure standards of structural safety in schools; separate toilets for girls and boys and adequate lighting reduce incidents of violence in school settings. The regulations do not mandate schoolyard fencing to provide a barrier between students and the public.

Report **58%**

Governments must create laws and regulations that encourage children to report violence and mandate communities and professionals to report violence; such pathways should be accessible and confidential. Once reported, professionals need guidelines and training to understand their roles and coordinate with other key actors.

Armenia's legal and regulatory framework sets out reporting pathways for professionals and communities, but the regulations do not fully create a system of reporting. For professionals, the Inter-Agency Social Partnership Charter requires mandatory reporting of child abuse, but the Charter does not capture all situations of violence against children. Without specific language, the Charter does not provide guidance to professionals on what constitutes a situation to report and is unlikely to trigger action by professionals in cases involving other issues of violence, such as sexual violence, child marriage, or peer bullying, to name a few.

For communities, the law does not require that citizens report alleged situations of violence against children. Without mandatory reporting requirements, officials will not be able to create a system that protects children from violence. For community members or victims who do voluntarily report violence, there are a number of reporting pathways. At the local level, police stations host women and children desks to assist with reporting and response actions. Protocols or guidelines are not yet in place to equip these desk officers with child-friendly and gender-sensitive training. Children may also call a variety of hotlines available across the country that correspond to state and local self-governing bodies. Next steps should include a mandate to create child-friendly reporting mechanisms in venues frequented by children: at schools, health clinics, alternative care or community centres.

Once reported, Armenia's laws create an expectation that various bodies and professionals will coordinate and work together to respond to cases of violence. However, protocols that manage coordination between stakeholders and follow child-friendly guidelines are missing.

Respond **94%**

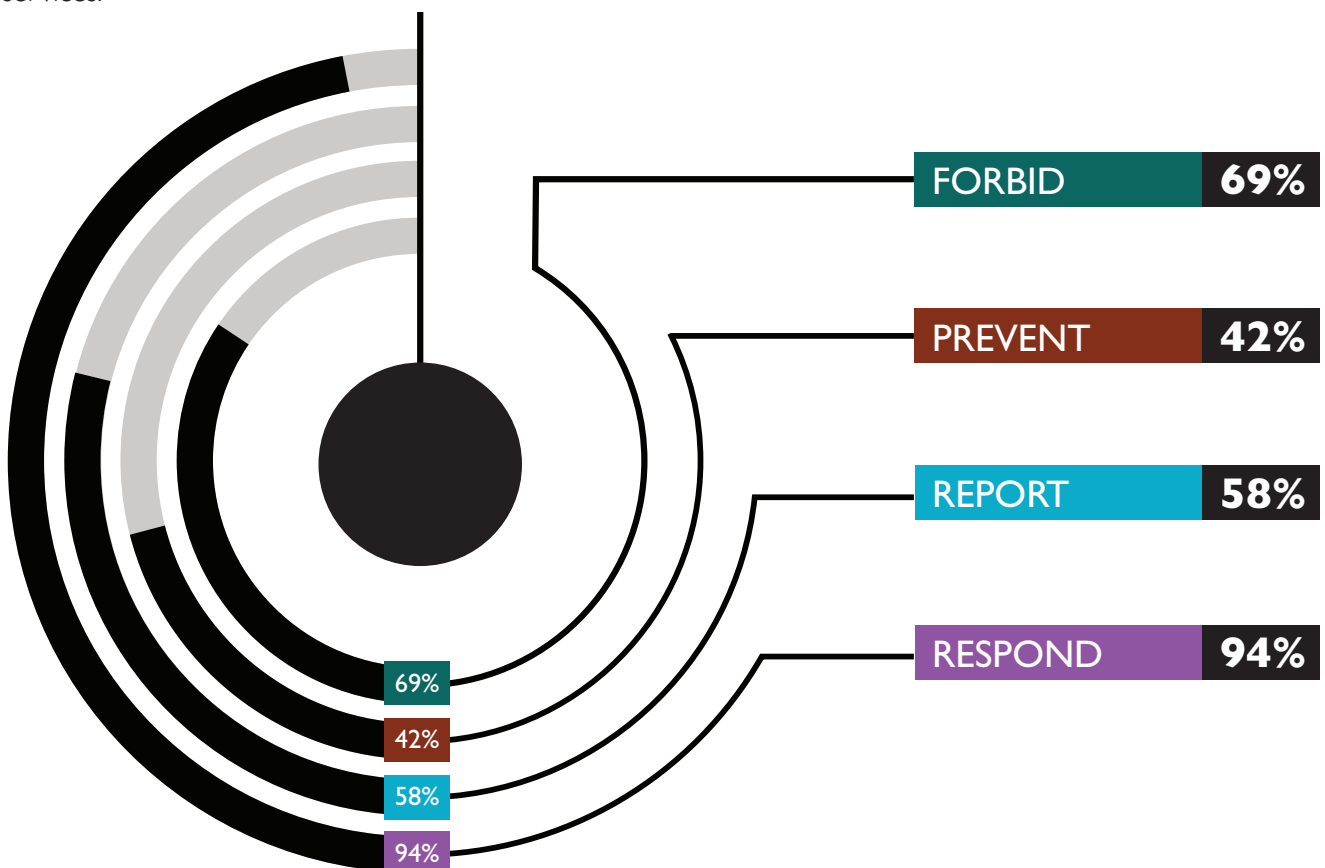
Governments must respond to violence in ways that protect a child from future violence and provide rehabilitation and justice to remedy the violent act. Like the three previous sections, this category of policy scores government's legal commitment, not its actions to implement this commitment. Without a mandated course of action towards recovery, governments cannot end violence against children.

Armenia has committed to the development of response services for some child victims of violence, namely children caught in violence in the home through the provisions of laws. Armenia's Law, entitled *Preventing violence in the family, protecting the victims of violence in the family, and restoring harmony in the family* mandates response services in cases of violence in the home. Created in 2017, it provides for specific actions in cases of an alleged act of violence, including removing an alleged perpetrator from the home, protective placement for victims, medical aid, psychological counselling, legal aid, and judicial review. However, this law does not create sufficient witness protection requirements. The Human Rights Protection National Strategy also highlights this gap with an objective to put new measures in place through an amended criminal procedure law.

Conclusion | Legal Progress

Armenia has made progress to put in place laws that forbid violence against children. Next steps require legal reforms to address gaps in sexual abuse and child pornography and provisional exceptions noted in laws against child marriage, child labour and physical punishment. To prevent violence, Armenia has legally empowered health and social service providers to prevent violence through home visits and local community engagement. Armenia has not established prevention strategies in school settings to further limit exposure to violence. To build reporting pathways, Armenia created reporting protocols for some professionals, but does not have a system of reporting that creates coordination among stakeholders for all types of violence against children.

To respond to violence, Armenia's law that tackles violence in the home commits to a series of response services.



Armenia | Preparing to Implement **24%**

Once national governments adopt laws to end violence against children, they must also create policies to implement those laws. These policies provide for sufficient resourcing, coordination, awareness-raising and political momentum to equip the public sector workforce to implement laws and allow its citizens to rely on these laws at the community level.

There are four distinct actions that governments must take to ready their policies for implementation. According to these four benchmarks, Armenia's readiness to implement their policies to end violence meets at 24 per cent total threshold:



Fund

To prepare for policy implementation, national governments must provide budgets to fund services, personnel and trainings to implement laws and policies to end violence against children.



Manage data

Governments must create centralised information systems or national databases that host information on children victims of all types of violence, abuse and neglect.



Promote accountability

Participation in accountability processes can provide national governments with new funding, political and technical support, citizen approval and oversight to strengthen policies and move towards the implementation of policies.



Raise awareness

Governments must take steps to inform its citizens about issues of violence against children; public awareness builds momentum around behaviours to prevent, report and respond to violence and invites citizen responsibility.

Fund **0%**

To prepare for policy implementation, national governments must provide budgets to fund services, personnel and trainings to implement laws and policies to end violence against children. These resources are hard-won, given competing political and funding interests, however, funding from official development assistance budgets coupled with partnerships from civil society can offer significant resource pathways when coupled with state budgets. Crucial for success is to create a detailed budget for national action plans and current laws and policies that identify activity-related costs and implementation plans; these are essential components to finding partners and making progress.

At present, Armenia's current National Strategy for the Protection of Child Rights (2018-2022) sets a pathway to create and implement policies and services that end violence against children, but the strategy lacks detailed cost projections and identified budgets necessary to achieve the objectives. As well, public data at the national and local level is not available to understand the apportionment of budgets dedicated to end violence against children in current service delivery.

Manage Data **0%**

Governments must create centralised information systems or national databases that host information on children victims of all types of violence, abuse and neglect. The system must segregate data by type of violence, age, gender and disability and assign responsibility to manage the database to a specific public sector workforce. Centralised information systems provide the tools for individual case management that propel referral and coordination between workforce experts. A national system also creates consistent prevalence data on violence against children that is necessary for evidence-based policymaking and budget allocation.

Armenia recognises the strategic necessity of centralized information systems to track violence against children. The 2017 Armenia's *Preventing violence in the family, protecting the victims of violence in the family, and restoring harmony in the family Law* provides for a centralised registration system specifically for domestic violence cases. No action has been taken to date to build this platform. The National Strategy for the Protection of Child Rights (2018-2022) sets as an objective, an updated database that contains information on all children subjected to violence.

Promote Accountability **45%**

Participation in accountability processes can provide national governments with new funding, political and technical support, citizen approval and oversight to strengthen policies and move towards the implementation of policies. There are global, regional and national level accountability mechanisms that governments can harness to seek new support and partnerships.

Armenia strengthened its resolve to implement its laws and policies against violence when it joined the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. Through this membership, Armenia agreed to new scrutiny, funding and technical support. At the national level, the independent Human Rights Defender's Office established a Child Protection Unit with the blessing of the National Assembly to allow citizen-driven accountability. Armenia however has not yet created core policies or mechanisms to consult children and youth in policies that affect them, including violence. There are also no systemic reporting protocols on progress towards the National Strategy objectives; reporting progress and gaps are essential tools to promote partnerships with donors and civil society.

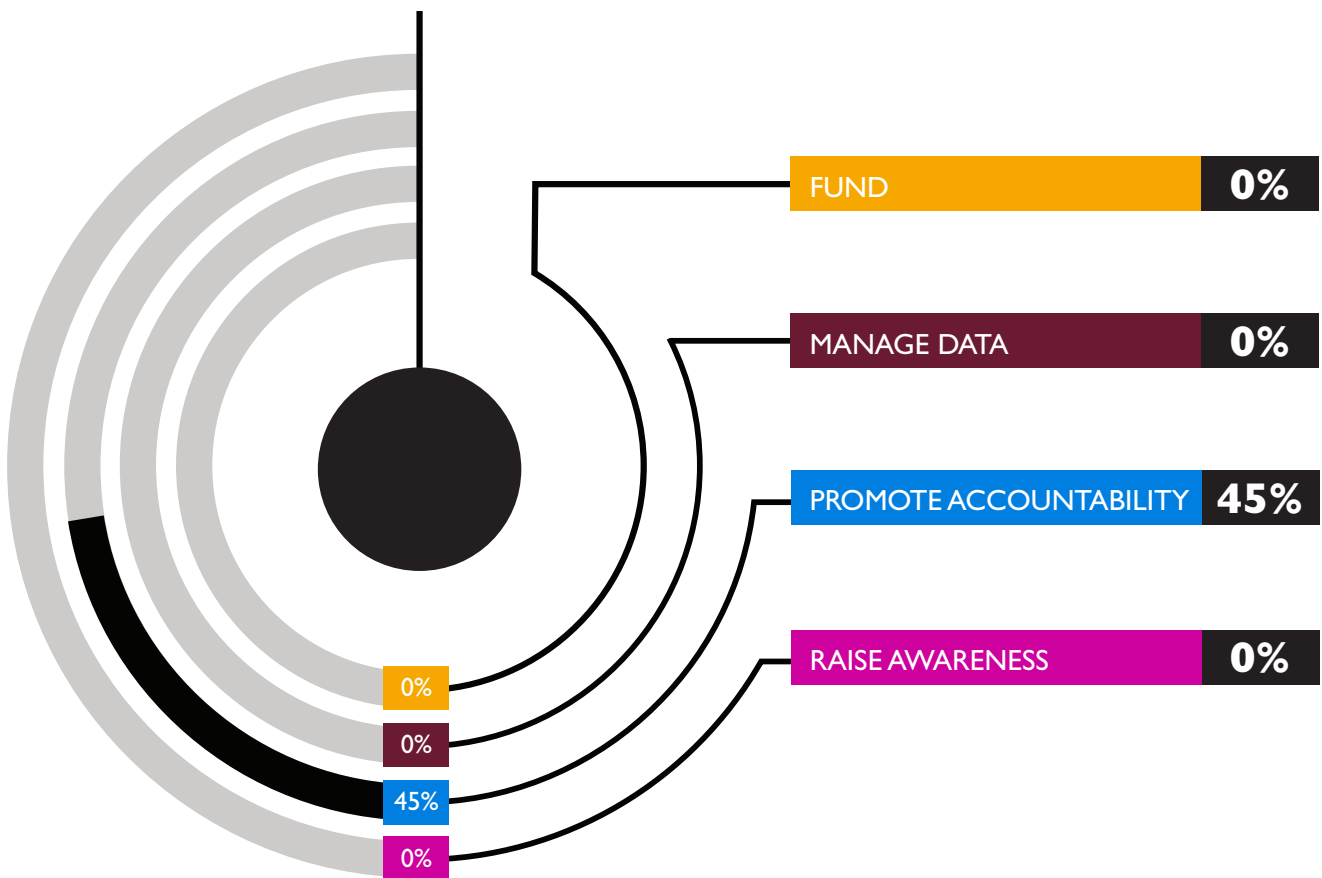
Raise Public Awareness **0%**

Governments must take steps to inform its citizens about issues of violence against children; public awareness builds momentum around behaviours to prevent, report and respond to violence and invites citizen responsibility. Although donors and civil society can be main partners in this process, governments must provide leadership and systematic actions (that assign responsibility to specific actors and ministries) to change ad hoc advertisements into well-managed, directed campaigns.

The Armenian Government is not yet leading public awareness initiatives to address violence against children. Various ministries have supported civil society actors through participation and endorsement of campaigns that sanction violence against children and these same ministries have taken individual actions to bring public awareness to specific issues. However, Armenia does not yet have a systemic strategy or long-term partnership that includes funding to engage in attitude and behaviour change against violence.

Conclusion | Progress towards Implementation

At present, Armenia's current National Strategy for the Protection of Child Rights (2018-2022) sets a pathway to create and implement laws and services that end violence against children, but the strategy lacks detailed cost projections and identified budgets necessary to achieve the objectives. There is political resolve to set a course towards implementation however, as Armenia joined the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. To take advantage of this resolve, it will be important for Armenia to create a systemic reporting process on actions taken in pursuit of the new national strategy. One such action under the strategy is the creation of a database that contains information on all children subjected to violence. Finally, Armenia's resolve to end violence against children should include outreach and awareness raising to its citizens; leading a systematic campaign at local levels and the national level are important elements towards change.



Scoring National Progress

Main and Sub-Indicators	Legal/Policy Source	Score
1 Forbid in all settings all forms of physical and mental violence		
All forms of physical or mental violence	Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Rights of the Child (1996), Article. 9	
Corporal punishment at home	Family Code of the Republic of Armenia (2004), Article. 53(1)	
Corporal punishment at school	Law of the Republic of Armenia on Education (1999), Article. 49(2)	
Corporal punishment in alternative care		
Corporal punishment in penal institutions	Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Treatment of Arrestees and Detainees (2002), Art. 2; Penitentiary Code of the Republic of Armenia (2002), Article. 6	
Any other form of cruel or degrading punishment or treatment	Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Rights of the Child (1996), Art. 9 Family Code of the Republic of Armenia (2004), Article. 53(1) Penitentiary Code of the Republic of Armenia (2002), Article. 6	
2 Forbid sexual violence		
Sexual abuse and violence	Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia (2003), Chapter 18 Articles 138-142.	
Commercial sexual exploitation	Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia (2003), Chapter 18, Articles 132.2, 166, 261–263.	
Child pornography, online and offline	Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia (2003), Chapter 18, Articles 166, 263(20)	
3 Forbid female genital mutilation		
Female genital mutilation		
4 Forbid Child labour		
Child labour that is hazardous (identifying specific activities)	RA Law on the Approval of the List of Occupations and Work that are likely to be Heavy and Hazardous for Persons Under the Age of 18 Years, Pregnant Women, and Women Taking Care of a Child under the Age of 1 Year; (2006), ROA Official Bulletin 2006.02.01/6; Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia (2004), Articles 140, 148–149, 153, 155, 209, 249, and 257.	
Child labour that interferes with a child's education	Law of the Republic of Armenia on Education (2015), Article. 18(7).	
Child labour that is harmful to a child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development	Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Rights of the Child (1996), Article 19.	
Child labour that involves cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment	Labour Code of the Republic of Armenia (2004), Article 257.	
Child labour that involves the sale of a child or servitude	Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia (2003 as amended 2011), Chapter 18, Articles 168.	
Child labour that involves activities in which a child is used for legally punishable criminal acts	Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia (2003 as amended 2011), Chapter 18, Articles 165.	
5 Forbid Child Marriage		
Marriage under the age of 18 for men and women without exception	Family Code of the Republic of Armenia (2005, as amended 2012) Chapter 3, Article 10.	
6 Home visits to Prevent Violence		
Home visits by Social welfare specialists	RA Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities (1993), Art 35; 1044 GoAM Order (Cooperation mechanisms between professionals)	
Home visits by Health care workers	RA Health Minister order N12 n, April 2015 Appendix 2	

7 VAC Safe Policies and Measures in Schools to Prevent Violence		
Laws or regulations that mandate in schools anti-bullying and / or VAC safe policies		
Laws or regulations that mandate in schools mechanisms to report all forms of violence		
Laws or regulations that mandate in schools clear measures planned and in place to respond to violence		
Laws or regulations that mandate in schools training and capacity building for teachers to recognize and respond to violence		
8 School Safety/Environmental Standards to Prevent Violence		
Laws or regulations that mandate safety / environment standards in schools: separate toilets by gender	RA Health Minister Order N 82, on "Sanitary rules and norms of Public schools structure and protection, N 2.III.4.2..." (2003) Article 3, point 16.	
Laws or regulations that mandate safety / environment standards in schools: adequate lighting	RA Health Minister Order N 82, on "Sanitary rules and norms of Public schools structure and protection, N 2.III.4.2..." Article 4: Natural and artificial lightening, point 23.	
Laws or regulations that mandate safety / environment standards in schools: school yard fencing	n/a	
9 Life Skills Education for Children to Recognise and Prevent VAC		
Official national education curriculum includes life skills education to help children manage the risks of violence		
Official national education curriculum includes life skills education to help children equip them with informed decision making		
Official national education curriculum includes life skills education to help children addresses gender stereotyping		
10 Mandatory Reporting of all Cases of Neglect, Abuse, Violence and Exploitation against Children		
A mandatory reporting law for professionals who work with children	RA Government Decree, Inter-Agency Social Partnership Charter, Para 2 and Article 5 (Part III).	
A mandatory reporting law for citizens		
11 Reporting Protocols / Guidelines in place for Service Providers		
Reporting protocols and referral guidelines for police	RA Government Decree, Inter-Agency Social Partnership Charter	
Reporting protocols and referral guidelines for health professionals	RA Government Decree, Inter-Agency Social Partnership Charter	
Reporting protocols and referral guidelines for educators	RA Government Decree, Inter-Agency Social Partnership Charter	
Reporting protocols and referral guidelines for social workers	RA Government Decree, Inter-Agency Social Partnership Charter	
12 Free and Publically Accessible Hotline to Report Violence		
Government-operated national helpline/hotline, free and publically accessible	Women's and Children Support Centre, Territorial Social Support Agency, Human Rights Defender	
13 Facilitate and Streamline VAC and GBV Reporting/Referrals		
Mandated units / desks at police or other community spaces that encourage reporting and streamline referrals	RA Preventing violence in the family, protecting the victims of violence in the family, and restoring harmony in the family Law (2017).	
14 Create Specialised Police Units / Individuals to Receive Reports		
Regulations require specialised police units / individuals trained to receive reports on VAC	Police Department on Prevention of Domestic Violence	

Regulations require specialised police units / individuals trained to follow gender-sensitive protocols		
Regulations require specialised police units / individuals trained to follow child friendly protocols	RA Criminal Procedure Code, Articles. 205, 207	
Regulations require specialised police units / individuals trained to follow protocols to involve/ work with other specialists as needed	Inter-Agency Social Partnership Charter; RA Law on Domestic Violence (2017).	
15 Child-friendly Reporting Pathways Provided in Places Frequented by Children		
Regulations require child-friendly reporting pathways / mechanisms in schools		
Regulations require child-friendly reporting pathways / mechanisms in health clinics		
Regulations require child-friendly reporting pathways / mechanisms in alternative care		
Regulations require child-friendly reporting pathways / mechanisms in community centres		
16 Respond to Reports of Violence		
Removal of offender (in domestic violence cases)	RA Law on Domestic Violence (2017), Article. 7	
Protective placement (in alternative care)	RA Law on Domestic Violence (2017), Article. 20	
First aid and medical assistance in cases of violence	RA Law on Domestic Violence (2017), Article. 17	
Long-term medical and mental health services	RA Law on Domestic Violence (2017), Article. 17	
Psychological counselling and rehabilitation	RA Law on Domestic Violence (2017), Article. 19	
Access to legal support / aid	RA Law on Domestic Violence (2017), Article. 19	
Access to legal protection	RA Law on Domestic Violence (2017), Article. 8	
Witness protection	RA Criminal Procedure, Article. 53	
Judicial review (holding offenders criminally responsible)	RA Law on Domestic Violence (2017), Article. 7	
17 Fund National Action Plans on VAC		
National action plans on violence against children are costed out with identified sources of funding		
18 Clear, Transparent Budgetary Commitments to End Violence against Children		
Data is available on government budgetary commitments for ending violence against children at the national level		
Data is available on government budgetary commitments for ending violence against children at the local level		
19 Centralised Database with Disaggregated Data on VAC to Manage Cases and Analyse Policies		
Centralised database on child victims of violence by type of violence		
Centralised database on child victims of violence by age		
Centralised database on child victims of violence by gender		
Centralised database on child victims of violence by disability		
20 Regular VAC Surveys Mandated by Law for Prevalence Data		
Law or regulatory framework requires a representative population survey that provides a baseline on prevalence data (including violence against children)		

21 Active National Action Plans to Forbid Violence		
National action plans are updated and in place to end child labour	Republic of Armenia's National Strategy 2017-2021 on Child Rights	
National action plans are updated and in place to end child marriage	Republic of Armenia's National Strategy 2017-2021 on Child Rights – no activity set	
National action plans are updated and in place to end female genital mutilation	Republic of Armenia's National Strategy 2017-2021 on Child Rights – no activity set	
National action plans are updated and in place to end physical violence	Republic of Armenia's National Strategy 2017-2021 on Child Rights – no activity set	
National action plans are updated and in place to end sexual violence and exploitation	Republic of Armenia's National Strategy 2017-2021 on Child Rights – no activity set	
National action plans are updated and in place to end trafficking	Republic of Armenia's National Strategy 2017-2021 on Child Rights – no activity set	
22 – 26 Accountability Mechanisms at the National and Global Level		
Mandated independent human rights institution operates a child rights unit	Law on Human Rights Defender, Article 2, paragraph 3, Human Rights Defender's Office, Child Protection Unit	
Government regularly reports on national action plan progress (regarding violence against children)		
Government regularly reports on ending violence against children to global accountability processes, including UPR, VNR, CRC	UPR Review (2010), VNR Review (2018), CRC (2019)	
Children meaningfully participate at key stages of policy development for ending violence against children		
Government has compiled with a recommendation from the CRC process from the most recent reporting period or last 3-5 years	Human Rights Defender of Armenia, Commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its protocols: the state of fulfilment by Armenia (2018)	
27 – 28 Raise Awareness on VAC to Citizens		
Government has funded a public awareness campaign to address violence against children in the last 3 years		
Government created public awareness activities by relevant professionals at the community level in the last 3 years		

World Vision Armenia | Romanos Melikyan I, Yerevan, Armenia.

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organisation dedicated to working with children, families and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, World Vision is dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

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In February of 2017 Armenia's leading child protection organizations united their efforts to implement "Share Love, not Violence," a five-year public campaign to combat violence against children aimed to prevent and eliminate violence against children and create comprehensive rehabilitation of children exposed to violence. This partnership is WV Armenia's actions to participate in World Vision's Global Campaign, It Takes a World.

