Information gathering template prepared for the Global Education Monitoring Report 2021 - Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia - Inclusion and education: All means all.

Armenia

PROFILE PREPARED BY LILIT NAZARYAN

2021

Introduction

The template for the Profiles was a survey designed to collect information from countries in order to collect structured information to be used as the basis for the GEM Regional Report analysis work.

The survey respondents were specifically requested to not focus exclusively on children with disabilities, but include information on all of the groups considered to be vulnerable to exclusion or at risk of being marginalised, stereotyped or subject to discrimination, including for reasons such as gender, location, poverty, ethnicity, language, beliefs and religion, migration or displacement status, sexual orientation or gender identity expression.

The overall goal for the Profile was that the information provided in relation to each country identifies:

1.challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for the implementation of inclusion in education policies;

2.the ways in which countries monitor inclusion and exclusion in education (at individual and system levels);

3.challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for supporting inclusion in education created by sectors other than education and arrangements needed to co-ordinate work among government sectors, tiers of government and with other stakeholders to overcome overlapping dimensions of exclusion;

4.key policy solutions that are being implemented and key drivers of policy change.

The Profile begins with background information on the people completing the template.

The next section provides a short descriptive overview of the country's system of inclusive education.

This is followed by main sections presenting quantitative and qualitative data linked to each of the seven themes for the report:

1.laws and policies;

2.governance and finance;

3.data;

4.curricula, learning materials and assessment;

5.teachers and support personnel;

6.schools;

7.communities, parents and students.

Each section begins with a key guiding question (marked in italic text) that frames the overall information provided. This is followed by the specific questions on the main issues for the topic that should be answered.

Sections 1 and 2 focus on information relating to legislation and policies.

Section 3 focuses upon available data and the aims and procedures for data collection.

Sections 4 to 7 focus on information relating to policies and policy implementation in practice.

The information provided focuses on compulsory education (i.e. potentially -pre-primary, primary and lower secondary, and possibly upper secondary education). Only specific issues related to inclusion in early childhood education and post-compulsory education were considered when necessary.

Survey reply and respondents

Has the information in this profile been discussed with and validated by a government representative?

No / **Yes**

If yes, who and what is their professional capacity, role?

1. Gohar Mamikonyan, Advisor to the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, (face to face interview)

2. Robert Stepanyan, Head of Department of Development Programs and Monitoring, MOESCS, (face to face interview)

3. Syuzanna Makyan, Head of Preschool and Secondary Education Policy-Making and Analysis Division, MoESCS, (face to face interview)

4. Anahit Muradyan, Chief Specialist, Department for General Education, MOESCS, (face to face interview)

Which other people have been key informants? What is their professional role?

1. Alvard Poghosyan, UNICEF, Education Program Office (face to face interview)

2. Artak Poghosyan, Director of NCET, MoESCS (face to face interview)

3. Mushegh Hovsepyan, Advisor to the Minister of Education, MoLSA (online interview)

4. David Amiryan, Hayk Abrahamyan, Director for Programs and Program Coordinator, OSF-Armenia (face to face interview)

5. Artak Kyurumyan, Expert in Public Finance (online interview)

6. Araksya Svajyan, State Pedagogical University of Armenia (online interview)

What was the main challenge during the preparation of the profile?

No significant challenges encountered.

Please list the 5 most informative sources on inclusion in education (academic papers, policy reviews, evaluation studies etc.) for the country published since 2015 and provide links to the originals:

1. Data Gap Analysis: Availability and Cross-Sectoral Exchange of Data on Children with Disabilities in Armenia. UNICEF Armenia. 2018. (see Attachment#4)

2. Inclusive Education in Armenia: Stock-taking Exercise. UNICEF Armenia. October, 2016. (see Attachment#5)

3. Equity in Education in Armenia: Evidence from TIMSS 2003-2015. OSF-Armenia. 2018

4. The Profile of Equity in the General Education in Armenia in 2010-2016. OSF-Armenia. 2018.

5. Assessment of corruption risks in education sector of Armenia. TI Armenia. 2017

If internal, non-public or working documents were used, please add a note here.

Country system overview

Provide a brief (maximum 1 page) narrative of the country's compulsory educational system. Specifically, provide information about:

a.the different types of schools, institutions and educational provision within the system and the age range / ISCED levels of learners they cater for

Compulsory general education system in Armenia comprises three levels: primary/elementary school (1-4 grades, 6-9 age group), middle school (5-9 grades, 10-14 age group) and high school or Preliminary Vocational Education and Training (10-12 grade, 15-17 age group). The following types of institutions operate: Elementary schools that provide only primary/elementary education; Basic schools that provide primary/elementary and middle school education; separate High schools that are located mainly in urban areas and provide the 3rd level of compulsory general education; 12-year Comprehensive schools that are located predominantly in rural communities and provide all three levels of compulsory general education. There are also Colleges and Preliminary Vocational Education and Training institutions that commence at the age of 15 and substitute high school grades.

b.the different authorities responsible for different types of provision etc.

MoESCS is responsible for overall policy making in education sector, including all levels of education. MoESCS is also directly supervising operation of separate high schools, while other types of compulsory schools, as well as kindergartens are under the supervision of local governments.

c. any major external support programmes provided in the past 5 years e.g. bilateral - GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation) and USAID; or multi-lateral e.g. UNICEF, European Union, ADB (Asian Development Bank).

USAID-funded project **"Strengthening inclusive education system in Armenia, 2018-2021"**. It is implemented under the Implementation Letter #34 signed on April 8, 2008 between the US Government and the Government of the Republic of Armenia on "Change #1: strengthening the inclusive education system in Armenia". To achieve the targeted results new deadline of April 8, 2021 was set. Main expected outcomes are:

•Small-scale renovations in at least 100 mainstream schools, including construction/renovation of ramps, accessible bathrooms and resource centres.

•Enrichment of mainstream school and pedagogical-psychological support centres with necessary equipment and didactic materials.

•Small-scale renovations of at least 5 TPPSCs to enable support to mainstream schools.

There have been other support programs during the course of last 5 years. However, this was the only direct budget support by the USAID. Other projects were implemented by NGOs and clear and precise data on donor and the purpose of the projects is not available. One of such projects was funded by the EU Delegation in Armenia and implemented by the World Vision Armenia and the NGO Bridge of Hope.

No other information is available.

Are there specific features of the compulsory education system that impact on inclusion that should be kept in mind when reading the country response?

Area	Yes/No	Description of the feature
Early tracking of learners into a particular educational pathway	yes	There are several systems that track different groups of learners: 1. Last year MoESCS piloted a system of early <u>registration</u> to elementary schools in Yerevan. The system is planned to be introduced on all other regions of Armenia in 2020. The purpose behind development and introduction of this system was overcoming the illicit practice in registration of children in schools, such as bribes, misconduct and illicit agreements between parents and principles, admitting more children than pre-scribed in the school license, etc. From 2020 the process of registration to 1st grade will be almost fully automatized, including submission of paper applications will be done online. While registering a child, one of the parents will need to enter her/his name, mobile phone number, social security number (SSN) and SSN of a child (or, in case of not having SSN, a number of justification document). The system will check the consistency of documents and relationship between applicant and a child and will allow submitting registration form if connection between parent and child is approved via SSN system. After successful registration of a child, parents will have at least two-week time (last year the two-week deadline was applied, but this year MoESCS consider provided longer time for submission of full package of documents) to submit application to school, which is also done in the system and does not require visiting schools. Admission to specialized schools, such as sport, music, art, as well as to special boarding schools of children with disability (CWD) is not done through this system. The specialized schools usually have their own admission procedure, which include specific exams and preparation stage. Admission to special schools is limited now in most of the regions as the result of deinstitutionalization

		reforms and introduction of universal inclusive education in majority of mainstream schools. Only children with severe and profound disability can be admitted to special schools based on parents' choice. Other CWD should be admitted to mainstream schools.
		2. There is another system of registration of children with special needs in education. The system is not in public access, it is operated only by the RPPC and TPPSCs. There is no age restriction, registration is not mandatory. Any parent of a child with learning difficulties, disability, etc. can apply to the RPPC or TPPSC for assessment of special needs in education at any age until child is admitted to school. Once the assessment is done, a child is registered to the system and further follow up, recommendations on intervention is done by the RPPC and/or TPPSC specialists depends on residence of a child.
		Both 1st and 2nd systems are maintained by the NCET. This is the agency under the MoESCS supervision responsible for collection and maintenance of all data and statistics of education sector, as well as development and maintenance of information different information systems and databases.
		3. The MoLSA maintains several systems, where data about different groups of children is collected, including children in difficult life-situations, children living in poverty, children with antisocial behavior, children with disability.
'Double-shift' patterns to the school day (i.e. learners attend fir either a morning or afternoon session)	yes	There are schools in Yerevan and regions that practice "double-shift" and "triple-shift" patterns to the school day. However, it does not affect the inclusion directly. ***The number of children involved in the schools with "double-shift" and "triple-shift" patterns is provided by NCET:*** Double-shift: Total: 49,494 Male: 24,060 Female: 25,434 CWD: 151 CWD with assessed SEN: 137

		LSEN without disability: 773
		Refugee: 3
		Rural: 20,713
		Urban, excluded Yerevan: 6,261
		Yerevan: 22,520
		<u>Triple-shift</u>:
		Total:1,653
		Male: 743
		Female: 910
		CWD: 53
		CWD with assessed SEN: 53
		LSEN without disability: 61
		Refugee:0
		Rural: 0
		Urban, excluded Yerevan: 1,307
		Yerevan: 346
Grade retention	Yes/no	The decree of the Minster of Education and Science from May 3, 2012, <u>#388-N</u> defines the procedure of transition between grades and retention. Retention happen only if a child didn't attend classes for 200 hours and over and/or has 1-3 marks (in 10-mark grading system) for any subject. Children with assessed special needs in education are not at the risk of grade retention because their education is organized through IEP which is based on their needs and is being periodically revised according to the progress they made. Children with socially vulnerable backgrounds, who have to or mandated to engage in labor force instead of attending the classes, or children from families where domestic violence is widespread, or those who don't enjoy support for learning from parents and other family members, are at high risk of not attending the classes and thus being enforced to retain the grade. ***Statistics about grade retention is provided by NCET:*** <u>2015/2016</u> Total: 844

		Male: 397
		Female: 447
		2016/2017
		Total: 844
		Male: 406
		Female: 438
		2017/2018
		Total: 586
		Male: 210
		Female: 376
		2018/2019
		Total: 1330
		Male: 499
		Female: 831
Multiple languages of instruction	no	There are no schools in Armenia where multiple-language instruction is practiced. There are minority community mainstream schools where several or all subjects are taught in minority language, such as Russian schools or public schools in Yezidis communities.
Policies on access to compulsory education in local schools	no	Access to compulsory 12-year general education is ensured by the Low on General Education, Article 4. No further local policies are required.

In the country's system which groups are considered to be vulnerable to exclusion from education? Who has identified these groups as being vulnerable to exclusion?

There is no policy document that would define the groups of learners who are vulnerable to exclusion. MoESCS usually consider the following groups of children as learners at risk of exclusion: children with disability, children with special needs in education, children from socially vulnerable/poor families, children from bordering rural communities, ethnic minorities, refugee and emigrant children, children at risk as a result of improper parenting.

Please provide a brief (maximum 1 page) narrative overview of the historical development of inclusion of vulnerable groups in education in the country.

Inclusive education is implemented in Armenia since 2001. Since that time, the reforms have been predominantly focused on CWD. In 2005, the GoA adopted the concept of IE. At that time the Law on Education of Persons with

Special Education Needs was adopted and IE reforms became a part of the Education Development National Programme for 2008-2015. The LGE was amended in 2014 with an aim to align the legislation with the newly adopted SDGs, as well as with the Incheon Declaration and CRPD. These amendments created solid foundation for realization of the right to education for CWD. However, so far IE reforms are predominantly focused on deinstitutionalization of CWD and their placement in mainstream public schools rather than creating an education environment where divers needs of every child would be visible and addressable to enable quality and inclusive learning process for very child. The criteria for learning disabilities (including linguistic minorities) are vague and ambiguous resulting in no specific service provision for children in need. Inclusive schools prefer to admit those "inclusive" children who bring additional funding to school but, at the same time, do not cause them too much additional work.

Education of persons with disabilities should enable each student to live, study and act autonomously, with adequate support and in accordance with the individual capacities. Any support measures provided to children with disabilities should be compliant with the goal of inclusion. They must be designed to strengthen opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in the classroom, rather than marginalize them. Thus, it is important to turn the focus of IE reforms into targeting the quality of inclusion and the personalized and individualized support to CWD or LSEN that would enable their smooth transition between the levels of education and sustainable development throughout the life. Even if CWD or LSEN reach out to inclusive general schools, their chances to continue education in vocational or tertiary education and get the equal participation in workforce is limited and still questionable. No official statistics available to showcase the number of CWD or LSEN who made it to higher education and further to the labour market.

Section 1: Laws and Policies

What is the framework of legislation, policy and guidelines for supporting the development of an inclusive education system?

Have international/UN conventions/declarations to protect the rights of groups who are potentially vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion been integrated into national and/or regional law?

Convention/declaration on	Law	Comments
Child rights (UNCRC)	The Law on Rights of a Child	The law was adopted in 1996. It contains all the rights of a child prescribed by UN CRC. Since adoption, the Law was amended several times. Most recent amendments were in 2018. However, no significant changes to the Law after adoption of UN CRPD regarding inclusive education were made. It can be qualified as outdated policy document and not in line with current challenges of child protection.
Disability (UNCRPD)	Armenia has not yet adopted a comprehensive legislative act that would reflect main provisions of the UNCRPD. There is a Law on Social Protection of disabled people adopted in 1993. It is still in force but does not ensure proper mechanism for protection of the rights of people with disability.	The LGE has been amended in 2014. It prescribes transition universal inclusive general education by 2025. New amendments to the Law on Pre-school education are currently in the agenda of the Parliament of Armenia. Through adoption of these amendment to the Law, inclusive education will be extended to pre-school education level. MoLSA has recently circulated a draft Law on the Rights of Persons with Disability the

		provisions of which are most effectively reflect the mechanisms and provisions provided by CRPD. It is envisaged that the Law will be processed through the Parliament and adopted by the end of 2020. MoLSA initiated also the process of ratification of the Optional Protocol of the UN CRPD. The full ratification is planned by mid 2020.
Gender (Convention on discrimination against women CEDAW)	The Law on Equal Rights of Women and Men. Adopted in 2013.	The law is non-complete. It does not provide for effective mechanism of protection from discrimination, as well mechanism of application of relevant sanctions.
Ethnicity or language (UN Declaration on Rights of persons belonging to National, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities)	There is no stand-alone law that would regulate the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities	Domestic legislation does not provide for definition of national or ethnic minority. The government still has no strategy for protection of the right of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. In 2019 the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) circulated a draft Law on National Minorities and the Law on Ensuring Equality. Both laws are still in draft stage and it's not clear when and how they will be adopted. The provisions of the draft laws are declarative and does not provide for clear

		mechanism of implementation of anti-discriminative policies.

Provide an overview of general education legislation impacting on the inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups:

Name and link	Year and status (enacted, under preparation etc.)	Description of key content
Constitution of Armenia	2015, enacted	The Constitution of Armenia defines everyone's right to education. Article 86 of Constitution defines creation of favourable conditions for the full and comprehensive development of individuality of children as one of the main directions of state policy. Further safeguards of provision of free of charge compulsory general education are elaborated in the provisions of the Law on General Education.
The Law on the Rights of a Child	1996, enacted	Article 11 of the law defines the right to education of a child. According to the article, every child has the right to education.
Law on General Education	2009, enacted	The principle of universal inclusion, proclaimed in the Law on General Education. Inclusive education is defined by the law as a guarantee for realization of the right to education for every child. Declaration of universal IE as an umbrella for general education reforms in Armenia is significant achievement since declaration of Independence. The amendments to Law from 2014 have created solid foundation for realization of the right to education for CWD. However, so far IE reforms are predominantly focused on deinstitutionalization of CWD and their placement in mainstream public schools rather than creating an education environment where divers needs of every child would be visible and addressable to enable quality and inclusive learning process for very child.
Law on Education	1999, enacted	The Law on Education defines "quality of education" as "a measurable outcome of the organization of education aimed at achieving the goals and objectives set by the education policy, which is assessed

		considering the learner's individual needs, the education organization environment, the programmatic content of education, the education organization process, and the learning outcomes assessed as per the established criteria." However, the Law does not elaborate on each dimension and its systemic role in the political, cultural and economic context, as it is limited to a formal enumeration of the dimensions.
Draft law on Pre-school education	2020, included in spring agenda of the Parliament, passes first hearings	Through adoption of these amendment to the Law, inclusive education will be extended to pre-school level.

Provide an overview of education policy or guidelines impacting on inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups:

Name and link	Year and status (enacted, under preparation etc.)	Description of key content
Action Plan and Timetable of Establishment of the System of Universal Inclusive Education	2016, enacted	The document was adopted by GoA on February 18, 2016. It defines the schedule and chronology of the activities, including establishment of RPPC and TPPSCs, awareness raising and introduction of IE in different regions of Armenia towards achieving of the goal of universal inclusive education by 2025.
Sample statute and the list of national and territorial pedagogical-psychological support services	GoA decree from 13 October, 2016, #1058-N, enacted	The document defines the scope of operation, goal and objectives of the RPSC and TPPSCs, as well as the list of the services to be established b 2015. The later includes one RPSC and 20 TPPSCs.
The financing procedure of Territorial pedagogical-psychological support services	Government decree from 22 September, 2016, #968-N, enacted	This regulation provides the framework of financing TPPSC. According to the provision of this regulation the annual financing of the TPPSC consist of annual salary fund of pedagogical-psychological staff and maintenance costs. The number of pedagogical-psychological staff depends on the number of registered children at the relevant territorial district based on the following calculation: 30 staff position for up to 10,000 registered

		children, 44 positions for 10,001 – 25,000 children and 60 positions 25,001 and above number of children.
<u>Scaling of allocation of extra funding for learners in need of special educational conditions based on the level of functional disorder</u>	Government decree from 17 February, 2017, #141-N, enacted	The document defines the mechanism of allocation of extra financial resources to schools for organization of education of LSEN, including the coefficients for moderate, severe and profound functional disorder, as well as the number pedagogical-psychological support staff positions depends on the number of children at school. The document also defines the procedure of allocation of the positions of teacher's assistant based on the general number of pupils at schools. According to this procedure, for every 15 children 1 position of teacher's assistant is envisioned. For funding please refer to next Section.
<u>Definition of pedagogical-psychological support services for organization of education</u>	Decree of the government from 13 October, 2016, #1047-N, enacted	The document provides for the types of pedagogical-psychological support services provided on school, TPPSC and RPPC levels to children who have the following groups of functional disorders: • voice and speech; • hearing; • vision; • intellectual (mental) retardation; and • mobility. Children with moderate, severe and profound functional disorder are defined by the LGE as privileged groups eligible for extra financing for organization of their education at mainstream schools.
The procedure for providing pedagogical-psychological support services for organization of education (Attachment #1)	Decree of the Minister of Education and Science from 13 April, 2017, #370-A/2, enacted	The document provides for the detailed regulation of provision of pedagogical-psychological support services on three levels: school, TPPSC, RPPC.

Please describe any specific plans and strategies designed to support inclusion in education (e.g. national strategy on migrant learners):

Name and link	Year and status (approved, under preparation etc.)	Description of the focus
n/a		

Is there a definition of inclusion in education?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒Yes

If yes, please provide the definition and give the official source:

 "**Inclusive education** is a mean to ensure full participation and achievement of educational outcomes as defined by the general education national curriculum of every child, including learners in need of special educational conditions, in line with their development characteristics through provision of relevant and necessary conditions and adjusted environment". _**LGE**_**, Article 3.**

If no, please give further information:

Is there a definition of vulnerable groups?

☒ No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please provide the definition and give the official source:

If no, please give further information:

The LGE does not provide for the definition of vulnerable groups. Article 4 of LGE defines inclusive education as a guarantee for realization of the right to education for every child**.** However, the Article 35 of LGE prescribes allocation of extra financing for fulfilment of special needs in education exclusively for those children who have moderate, severe and profound functional disorder (voice and speech; hearing; vision; intellectual (mental) retardation; and mobility). Thus, this provision of LGE can be interpreted the way that it does define mentioned groups of children as special or vulnerable groups.

Is there a definition of special educational needs?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please provide the definition and give the official source:

LGE does not define the term "special educational need", rather it provides for the definition of "**a person in need of special educational conditions**", who, according to the definition, is a person who has learning difficulties, including physical or mental differences, that require special educational conditions to be applied to ensure that she/he comprehends the general education curriculum in full. As "**special conditions for education**" the LGE defines: "the complex of subject curricula and teaching methods, technical resources for individual teaching, adjusted environment,

as well as pedagogical, social and other services that are aimed at supporting comprehension of mainstream education program by individuals." *LGE, Article 3*

If no, please give further information:

Please provide information on any future developments planned for inclusion in education.

According to the Action Plan and Timetable of Establishment of the System of Universal Inclusive Education, in 2020 two regions: Gegharkunik and Kotayk will turn into regions providing universal inclusive general education. The last two regions will turn into inclusive in 2021. According to MOESCS, by 2025 all relevant policy framework will be revised and/or amended/adopted to enable further provision of quality universal inclusive general education in all regions of Armenia.

In 2018 USAID solicited two experts to draft Strategic Vision and the Roadmap for Inclusive Education in Armenia for the period of 2019-2015. The draft was submitted to the MoESCS in September 2019. However, it is not yet approved and enacted.

Please provide information on any reports, evaluations and/or reviews of legislation and/or policy relating to inclusion in education, since 2015. This could include official and parallel reports on UNCRPD etc.

1. Concluding observations on the initial report of Armenia. Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. UN CRPD. CRPD/C/ARM/CO/1. 8 May 2017.

•The Concluding observations of the committee include separate chapter on the right to education (CRPD Article 24). The Committee, particularly, voice out the concerned that, despite the increasing trend towards inclusive education, many children with disabilities remain in segregated educational settings and do not receive the support they need to access inclusive education. It is also concerned about the lack of accessibility and reasonable accommodation for children with disabilities in mainstream schools, and the lack of sufficient support and training for administrative and teaching staff with regard to inclusive education. The absence of a comprehensive strategy to promote inclusive education in urban and rural areas is also highlighted as an issue. The committee recommends the GoA to intensify efforts towards introduction of universal IE by 2025; to allocate the resources necessary to guarantee reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, including those living in urban and rural areas, to inclusive and quality education, including preschool and tertiary education; to make training on inclusive education and on its implementation mandatory for administrative and teaching staff.

2. Human Rights Watch Submission on Armenia to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). February 15, 2017.

•HRW submission has a stand-alone section on the Lack of Access to Quality Inclusive Education. In particular, the submission points out that children with disabilities, including those in mainstream schools designated as "inclusive", often do not receive a quality education on an equal basis with others. It also highlights the lack of reasonable accommodations, including, but not limited to, the absence of basic physical accessibility in educational buildings; a lack of accessible sanitary facilities; and a lack of accommodations for children with sensory disabilities. It reports that

a lack of an individualized approach to education and social development impedes the ability of many children with disabilities to enjoy a quality education. Despite attending inclusive schools, many CWD do not attend classes with other children or are present in classrooms but do not participate in the academic curriculum. Their education often consists of primarily or exclusively one hour or shorter sessions once or a few times a week with specialists (a speech therapist, psychologist, and social worker). CWD may be relegated to home education, due to problems with accessibility in schools, homes, and in the community as well as schools' failure to provide reasonable accommodation.

What are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hindrances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to laws and policies in the country?

The GOA ratified UN CRPD in 2010. Other instruments setting out standards relevant to inclusive education and ratified by the GOA include UN CRC, the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). Notably, for advancing inclusive education, the GOA has not ratified the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. GoA has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRPD which would confer additional powers of review on the CRPD Committee, including individual and group complaints as well as commission of inquiry procedures.

Armenia is also party to other international instruments with particular significance for advancing inclusive education and human rights including, among others, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the ILO Convention on the Minimum Age for Employment (1973), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979). In addition, the GOA has signed and ratified some 62 treaties of the Council of Europe and is committed to a number of Council of Europe mechanisms, including those most relevant to inclusive education, namely, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), and the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR).

Domestic legislation, including the LGE, has been adopted to account for the transition to inclusive education, however, the legal framework does reflect underdevelopment in a number of key areas. In particular:

•No reasonable accommodation policy for education exists.

•While the legislation does include an IEP, there is little in the way of conceptual clarity or standards specifying the types of supports needed; IEPs are developed on the basis of assessment of functional disorder, rather the factual needs for organization of education of a child at mainstream classroom, as well as accommodation of their needs during exams.

•Universal design, as defined in Article 2 of the CRPD and further explicated in various provisions of the CRPD, is not reflected in the legal framework.

•No minimum standards adopted in relation to accessing education in terms of physical access, communication access, information access, or adaptation of curriculum.

•No recourse available for parents/students in terms of the implementation of IEPs.

•No comprehensive monitoring provisions on inclusive education.

•There are notable gaps in accompanying regulations which could provide essential guidance and direction in the implementation of inclusive education.

Section 2: Governance and Finance

How far are inclusive principles underpinning policies at national and local levels effectively supported by governance and financing mechanisms?

Is there formal collaboration across ministries on inclusion in education?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒Yes

If yes, in which areas does this take place and who is involved?

The is a

Area	Yes/No	Description: what mechanism, who is involved and how
Policy development, implementation and coordination	yes	The informal cross-ministerial work group was established in 2019 for coordination of introduction of universal inclusive education in the regions of Armenia in line with the timetable. The MoESCS coordinates the activities of work group. The MoLSA, as well as representatives of relevant regional/municipal governments participate in work group. It also invites external people/organizations, such as representatives of NGO and experts of the field to participate in the meetings and consult the process of transition to universal inclusive general education. In 2019 the group worked hard towards transition to universal IE in Yerevan and two other regions of Armenia (Shirak and Aragatsotn). However, from summer 2019 the operation of the group is terminated.
Identification of needs / referral for services	yes	The main focus of transition process was reorganization of special schools into TPPSCs and deinstitutionalisation of children from special schools: their return to families and referral to mainstream schools nearby. During this process, the comprehensive assessment of needs of children and their families was undertaken by joint efforts of governmental authorities and NGOs. Majority of children were referred to families and mainstream schools. However, the shortage of well-establish network of alternative community-based services for CWD and LSEN, including day-care and rehabilitation services creates additional challenges for families.

Data sharing	yes	During transitional process the social services of the MoLSA conducted assessment of families of institutionalised children and provided the results of the assessments to MoESCS for further elaboration and consideration during the referral process. And again, it's worth mentioning, that this was done on ad-hock manner, rather than it was institutionalised procedure of collaboration between two ministries. It's important to notice, that each of the governmental agencies maintain separate database of children in need and there is an need to consolidate all databased in one so that information about a child is stored in one platform accessible for every entitled agency working with children.
Monitoring and evaluation	No	There is no well-established monitoring and evaluation mechanism towards implementation of IE, including any cross-sectoral body.
Quality assurance and accountability	No	Same as above

If no, please give further information:

There is no well-established monitoring and evaluation mechanism towards implementation of IE, including any cross-sectoral body. There is no formal quality assurance mechanism at any level. The EI conducts annual inspections at selected number of schools (up to 20 per year). However, the subject of inspection usually includes review of the formal documentation and their maintenance. The EI conducts also lessons' observations. However, it has limited human resources to cover inspections of event 10% of schools annually.

Are there shared responsibilities between central and local governments on inclusion in education?

Area	Yes/No	Description: who is involved and how
Policy development, implementation and coordination	No / Yes	Policy development in education sector is exclusive authority of MoESCS. Local government shares the responsibility of coordination and governance of schools together with MoESCS
Identification of needs / referral for services	yes	RPPC and TPPSCs, together with schools share the responsibility of identification of SEN and provision of special educational services to a LSEN. RPPC and TPPSCs, as well as separate high schools are under the supervision of the MoESCS, while main schools and comprehensive 12-year schools are supervised by local governments.
Data sharing	yes	Same as above

Monitoring and evaluation	no	There is no well-established monitoring and evaluation mechanism towards implementation of IE, including any cross-sectoral body neither at the local nor national level. As a transitional step, before full functionality of all TPPSCs, the RPPC monitors and provides coaching to newly established TPPSCs. After 2025, the monitoring functions will be conducted by TPPSCs, including coaching in identification, assessment of a special educational and provision of pedagogical-psychological services.
Quality assurance and accountability	no	There is no formal quality assurance and/or accountability mechanism at school level. The EI conducts annual inspection at selected number of schools (up to 20 per year). However, the subject of inspection usually includes review of the formal documentation and their maintenance. The EI conducts also lessons' observations. However, it has limited human resources to cover inspections of event 10% of schools annually.

Are non-governmental organisations and/or associations involved in governance processes?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒Yes

If yes, please the describe their involvement:

There are a number of participatory mechanisms where representatives of NGOs, associations and civic movements are involved. Those are working groups established at the MoESCS level, public councils attached to the Minister of ESCS, governing boards of mainstream schools, etc. However, due to small number of CSO representation in these bodies, the possibility of influencing the decision-making is limited.

Are there any accountability mechanisms to promote the inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups?

Area	Yes/No	Description of the focus/actors involved (e.g. state/non state)
Appeal process for rights violations	Yes	There are several platforms for submission of appeals. One of them is the hot line of MoESCS. But the informal feedback of parents and other constituencies shows limited trust in this service. Another service is e-request.am web platform, that allows sending any kind of request and/or appeal to any governmental authority. However, the awareness about this web-based platform among citizens is limited, as well

		as the is no statistics or report available on the usage of the platform by citizens. Human rights defender's office also available for any kind of appeals related to wide range of issues, including education and child rights. The office can issue an investigation as a follow up of any appeal. It also publishes annual and/or special reports on different aspects of public interest, including education and rights of the child.
School inspection	Yes	Education inspectorate conducts annual inspection at limited number of schools (up to 20 per year). The subject of inspection usually includes review of the formal documentation and their maintenance. The EI conducts also lessons' observations. However, it has limited human resources to cover inspections of event 10% of schools annually. EI also has a hot line service and publishes periodic reports on the results of investigations and observations conducted on the basis of applications received through the hot line.
Other quality assurance processes (e.g. standards for teaching, support services etc)	yes	The is no formal comprehensive quality assurance mechanism. The only one that is functional at the school level is the annual internal evaluation. However, the review of several evaluation reports shows that these are more formal evaluations, rather than critical review of own performance with an aim for learning lessons and developing the operation. Until 2018, there used to be a National Institute of Education which was providing teachers' in-service trainings and support for professional development. However, the NIE was dissolved in early 2019. It was expected that new institution will be established soon to keep on providing educational and development services to teachers. RPPC has the mandate to provide methodological and trainings support to schools for provision of IE. The formal mechanism for quality assurance of the operation of RPPC is not in place either.

Monitoring and evaluation (e.g. data collection on attendance, participation, achievement, funding)	no	The NCET collects and maintains a wide range of data about schools, learners, their attendance and performance. Since no formal M&E mechanism or procedure is in place, these data end up being mechanically collected rather than utilised for M&E and development purposes.

If no, please give further information:

See comments in the table above.

Please describe the general mechanisms for funding schools. Give details on: which institutions provide funding; what they provide; how they provide it and to whom, which mechanisms they use to allocate resources; and their respective roles and responsibilities.

In Armenia public schools receive funding from the state budget as a subsidy. The funds are channelled by the Ministry of Finance through MoESCS, Ministry of Territorial Administration (MoTA) and 10 regional governments (Marzpetarans). MoESCS receive and distribute funding to separate high schools under its supervision. MoTA receives and channel the funding to the Municipality of Yerevan for main schools located in Yerevan. Further, Yerevan Municipality distributes and coordinates expenditure of funding by the main and comprehensive schools in the capital city. The regional schools, including main and comprehensive schools, receive funding from Marzpetarans.

According to the Government decree #1262, from 24 August 2006, within one month after the approval of the state budget of the Republic of Armenia, MoESCS should approve coefficients of per-capita funding formula based on factual indicators, applying corresponding coefficients for the elementary, middle and high schools, as well as additional coefficients for the schools in high mountain, mountainous areas, only schools of the community with up to 400 students, as well as for high schools, as well as minimum number of non-teaching staff positions for schools depends on the total number of learners: up to 100 students, from 101 to 300 and 301 and over.

The current school funding formula was adopted in 2019. The former formula was reported to be inefficient in terms of providing sufficient and adequate funding for small-scale, incomplete schools. To solve the problem, Marzpetarans were allowed to re-distribute funding from bigger to smaller schools. The changes in the formula approved by the Government decree #1503-N, from 31 October 10 2019, were reported to solve the problem through introduction of a new variable – number of classes, for small, incomplete schools. Through this amendment, the right for re-distribution of funds among schools was also eliminated. However, recent decree of the government #240-N from March 5 2020, reincarnated the possibility of re-distribution although entitling MoESCS to approve each case. According to the justification provided by the MoESCS the need for re-distribution still exists due to variety of factors, including building conditions, etc (Attachment #2). All this allows to conclude, that although Armenia officially maintains per-capita school funding approach, however, in reality the funds can be re-distributed among schools as per MoESCS decision. Thus, in addition to authorisation of re-distribution, the concentration of the power of decision making in the MoESCS was also institutionalized by this decision.

Funding mechanisms	Description of who, what, to whom and how
School funding formula for elementary schools with up to 73 learners, main schools with up to 163 learners, comprehensive schools with up to 208 learners, and for high schools and colleges with up to 136 learners **Total = NS x PC1 + (ESc x ESp + MSc x MSp + HSc x HSp) x MTS x 12 + OSe,** Where: "**Total**" is the total amount of annual funding allocated to school "**NS**" is the total number of learners at school "**PC1**" is annual per capita amount per learner (during recent years this amount is usually equal to 124,000 AMD) "**ESc**", "**MSc**", "**HSc**" are the number of classes correspondingly at elementary, middle and high schools "**ESp**", "**MSp**", "**HSp**" are the average number of teaching staff positions correspondingly at elementary, middle and high schools as per the exemplary	Public general schools receive funding from the state budget as a subsidy. The funds are channelled by the Ministry of Finance through MoESCS, Ministry of Territorial Administration (MoTA) and 10 regional governments (Marzpetarans). MoESCS receive and distribute funding to separate high schools under its supervision. MoTA receives and channel the funding to the Municipality of Yerevan for main schools located in Yerevan. Further, Yerevan Municipality distributes and coordinates expenditure of funding by the main and comprehensive schools in the capital city. The regional schools, including main and comprehensive schools, receive funding from Marzpetarans. The acting funding formula was <u>adopted</u> in 2019. The former formula was <u>reported</u> to be inefficient in terms of providing sufficient and adequate funding for small-scale, incomplete schools. To solve the problem, Marzpetarans were allowed to re-distribute funding from bigger to smaller schools. The changes in the formula approved by the <u>Government decree #1503-N</u>, from 31 October 10 2019, were <u>reported</u> to solve the problem through introduction of a new variable – number of classes, for small, incomplete schools. Through this amendment, the right for re-distribution of funds among schools was also eliminated. However, recent decree of the government <u>#240-N</u> from March 5 2020, reincarnated the possibility of re-distribution although entitling MoESCS to approve each case. According to the justification provided by the MoESCS the need for re-distribution still exists due to variety of factors, including building conditions, etc (Attachment #2).

educational plan approved by the MoESCS "**MTS**" is the amount of minimum salary defined for one teaching staff position "**OSe**" are the over school expenses, that include maintenance costs, and the annual salary of non-teaching staff (including pedagogical staff), depending on the number of students	
School funding formula for elementary schools with over 73 learners, main schools with over 163 learners, comprehensive schools with over 208 learners, and for high schools and colleges with over 136 learners **Total = NS x PC1 + OSe** where "**Total**" is the total amount of annual funding allocated to school "**NS**" is the total number of learners at school "**PC2**" is annual per capita amount per learner "**OSe**" are the over school expenses, that include maintenance costs, and the annual salary of non-teaching staff (including pedagogical	

staff), depending on the number of students	
<u>Additional funding formula for learners in need of special educational conditions</u> **AF = AT + AF** **where AT = ATWLD * MS * MONTHS** where "**AF**" stands for additional funding, "**AT**" – annual salary of the assistant teacher, and "**AF**" annual salary of psychologists assisting children with special needs, "**ATWLD**" is the number of workloads of the assistant teacher, "**MS**" – monthly salary of assistant teacher, "**MONTHS**" number of months during the period. Assistant teacher gets 0.5 workload for every 7 children, 1 workload for 15 children and 0.5 workload for each next 7 children. The salary of the assistant teacher is calculated as 80% of teacher salary.	Schools get additional funds to cover costs of education of pupils with special education needs, primarily covering the cost of a teacher assistants and special pedagogues. The costs for school environment adjustments, accommodation of CWD, assistive devices for learning, or personal assistance to learners in need of special educational conditions are not considered and covered by the formula.

Do schools have flexibility to use funding allocations to support the inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒Yes

If yes, please describe the flexibility:

Theoretically schools are flexible to use the funding allocations of central government. School governing boards approve the budget and have the authority to allocate available financial resources in accordance to the factual needs of the schools. In practice, however, schools end-up allocating majority of funds to teachers' salaries and maintenance costs.

If no, please give further information:

Please describe the specific mechanisms for funding the inclusion of vulnerable learners and their families in education (e.g. benefits, cash transfers, scholarships). Give details on: which institutions provide funding; what they provide; how they provide it and to whom, which mechanisms they use to allocate resources; and their respective roles and responsibilities.

Funding mechanisms	Description of the who, what, to whom and how
Compensation of textbooks' renting amounts	Children from poor households are entitled to receive free textbooks, while others should pay renting costs. The compensations are provided by the MoESCS through direct funding of schools.

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 of funding and resourcing relating to inclusive education.

1. EDUCATION BUDGET BRIEF: ARMENIA. UNICEF Armenia. 2019. (Attachment #3)

   ⇒ The budget brief provides for detailed overview of the funding of education sector, key actors and money flow.

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to governance and finance issues in the country?

While a wide range of causalities may result in learning difficulties and may require additional support and intervention, the allocation of extra financing for fulfilment of special needs in education is exclusively linked to the existence of functional disorder. Other causes, such as refugee status or ethnicity that result in language difficulties, lack of necessary equipment to attend the school resulted from the poverty or low socio-economic background of families, are not subject to additional financial allocation under the provision of the LGE, so as not targeted by the IE programs. Thus, children without any medically diagnosed functional disorder, but with specific needs in education that require intervention and support (short-term or long-term) are not visible for the IE policy, their needs are not recognised as SEN, nor assessed and properly addressed by the state.

The one of significant shortfalls of deinstitutionalization, as well as IE reforms in Armenia is that the analysis and assessment of the economic impact of the reforms on families was never undertaken, while it would help introducing comprehensive family and child assistance mechanism that would promote the positive attitude towards those reforms.

Law on Education (Article 4) <u>defines</u> that the basis for organization of education policy in Armenia is the Education Development Strategic Program. Since 2015 there were a number of attempts to adopt the, but all of them were non-successful. The latest draft was prepared by experts' group of ADB but was also declined by the MoESCS. In 2018 USAID solicited two experts to draft Strategic Vision and the Roadmap for Inclusive Education in Armenia for the period of 2019-2015. The draft was submitted to the MoESCS in September 2019. However, it is not yet approved and enacted. The urgent need on policy level is adoption of comprehensive Education Development Strategic Program with relevant thematic sections, such as IE, as well as relevant action plan and budgeting to bring the clarity in the vision of education policy and practice development in upcoming 5-10 years towards advancing equity, quality and inclusion in education, as well as meeting the targets under the SDGs with the main focus on SDG4.

Section 3: Data

What data on inclusion in education is available to understand if progress is being made towards equitable learning opportunities for all learners?

Please indicate if the following frameworks are in place, provide a link and give a brief description of their aims and focus:

Framework	Yes / No	Description
For monitoring and evaluating the implementation of national-level inclusion in education policy	No	There is no formal mechanism in place. So far monitoring and evaluation of implementation of IE in Armenia was conducted by NGOs and international organizations only.
For quality assurance across all levels of the system (national, regional, school)	yes	Education Inspectorate (EI) partly implements activities towards quality assurance at school level. However, given the shortage of human resources, EI is able to cover limited number of schools per year. In 2019 EI conducted visits and observation in 34 mainstream schools across the country. Within the observation mission, EI tested knowledge of Armenian language and Math among students of 7th-11th grades. The results showed that average score for Language test was 5.8 and for Math 4.4 (from 10 scale grading system). Although, EI reports that inclusiveness was also a subject of inspection within the observation mission at mainstream schools, however, the report does no elaborate more on the results. Overall, EI inspection includes more paper check-up, rather than observation of the qualitative aspects of organization of the education process. At school level, the quality assurance is limited to time-to-time observations conducted by the principal and the deputy-principals of the schools. The results of these observations are not reported and available publicly. Another school level quality assurance mechanism is already quoted annual internal evaluations. However, as was mentioned previously, the review of several evaluation reports shows that these are rather formal evaluation, than critical review of own performance with an aim for learning lessons and developing the operation.
Providing guidance on the use of a range of different	yes	NCET takes care of coaching and guiding schools on the use of different data sources. It also creates and trains schools and teachers in using

data sources for evaluation and self-review at different levels (national, regional, school)		different online resources and platforms for self-evaluation, peer-review and exchange of experience. One of such platforms is armedu.am, which contain different resources, reports, as well as educational forum page, where registration is mandatory to participate in different subject forums, post and read articles, etc.

What data is collected on learners from vulnerable groups, how and why?

Three ministries regulate provision of services to children, including children with disabilities, and collect and monitor the progress towards plans and strategies of the GoA in the child protection and care sector are the MoLSA, MoH and MoESCS.

MoLSA regulates and implements assessment and disability determination, including those among children; collects and maintains data on CWD and services provided to them based on recommendations of medical social examination commissions; coordinates development, implementation, and evaluation of the national strategy and action plan on Child Protection and Care; collects and maintains data on children who received care and services at orphanages, night- and day-care institutions; maintains "Manuk" - the main database on children in adversity and adoption; and oversees all aspects of care reform.

MoESCS regulates education of all children, including children with disabilities; oversees the operation of special schools, as well as national and three regional pedagogical-psychological support centers; develops and promotes inclusive education policy, its implementation, and monitoring; regulates assessment of and provisions for special educational needs; coordinates transformation of special schools and oversees deinstitutionalization of children; maintains a database on children at schools, including children with special educational needs.

MOH regulates the child and adolescent health; promotes early screening of new-borns to identify and address child disability; provides free of charge medical and rehabilitation services to children with disabilities at age of 0–7 years, and vulnerable children, who are in the family benefits system; establishes community rehabilitation centres for children with severe disabilities, also within education settings, promotes public education to address malnutrition among children.

Please provide the available data relating to all learners in the compulsory education system and where they are enrolled for their education.

All questions can be answered using the country's own data sources as far as possible. Alternatively, the data can be provided from publicly available international sources e.g. UIS: http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=216 or UOE: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Main_Page

Please give a clear reference to the Source in the column provided.

In the Learners column, as far as possible:

- provide actual numbers as far as possible and not estimates.

- only use 0 when the data is zero.

- use M to indicate missing data.

- use NA to indicate the question is Not Applicable (i.e. the country does not have that type of provision).

All questions refer to ALL learners in the education system, not just those formally identified as belonging to a group that is vulnerable to exclusion.

Please provide notes to clarify any issues with the data and include a specific note on the calendar year and/or school year the data refers to.

Data on learner access to compulsory education	Learners	Notes	Source
(i) What is the *potential population* of learners for the compulsory education system in the country (i.e. how many children are in the country that should, by law, be in some form of compulsory education)?	Total: 567,000 Male: 302,000 Female: 265,000	The figure represents population of Armenia at age 5-19. School age includes 6-18. Unfortunately, the National Statistics Committee provides the following age groups: 5-9, 10-14, 15-19, which makes separation of 6-18 age group impossible.	Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, Yearbook 2019. Data reflects the number of specific age-group population in 2018.
(ii) How many learners are enrolled in all forms of education (i.e. educational settings maintained by the ministry of education or by other authorities such as health, welfare or labour ministries)?	Total: 390,511 Male: 204,319 Female: 186,192	Of them: CWD: 1,385 CWD with assessed SEN: 1,259 LSEN without disability: 6,190 Refugee: 6 Rural: 141,136 Urban, excluded Yerevan: 120,002 Yerevan: 129,373	Data was requested and obtained from the NCET. Data reflects 2028/2019 school year.
(iii) How many learners are out of any form of education (who by law should be in some form of education)?	Total: 233 Male: 164 Female: 69	n/a	NCET data

(iv) How many learners are enrolled in mainstream schools (i.e. all learners, not just those with recognised needs or from vulnerable groups)?	Total: 376,785 Male: 197,025 Female: 179,760	n/a	NCET data
(v) How many learners are enrolled in mainstream schools and spend the majority of their time (i.e. at least 80% or 4 days of the week) in inclusive groups/classes with their peers?	Total: n/a Male: n/a Female: n/a	Such statistics is not maintained and thus available	n/a
(vi) How many learners are enrolled in mainstream schools and spend the majority of their time (i.e. at least 80% or 4 days of the week) in separate, special groups/classes, away from their peers?	Total: n/a Male: n/a Female: n/a	Such statistics is not maintained and thus available	n/a
(vii) How many learners are enrolled in totally separate, special units and/or schools, away from their peers?	Total: 521 Male: 331 Female: 190	Of them: CWD: 288 CWD with assessed SEN: 284 LSEN without disability: 110 Refugee: 0 Rural: 0 Urban, excluded Yerevan: 163 Yerevan: 358	NCET data

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 of data collection and monitoring for inclusion in education.

UNICEF Armenia. 2018. Data Gap Analysis: Availability and Cross-Sectoral Exchange of Data on Children with Disabilities in Armenia (Attachment #4)

The report was prepared by the Enabling Social Impact Consulting Group within the framework of UNICEF-funded consultancy project on "Harmonization of Disability Measurement Tools and Methodology, and Developing Electronic Data Exchange and Cross-Sectoral Data Management on Children with Disabilities". The report provides an overview of data and information on children with disabilities available through administrative and publicly open sources and provides recommendations for improving the data presentation practices. It also reviews the data exchange practices

between the three target ministries: MoLSA, MoES, and MoH, and suggests new options for data exchange and communication to track the recorded needs and provision of services to children with disabilities.

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to data collection issues in the country?

Armenia has a stand-alone institution (NCET) that collects and maintains wide range of data on education, including about special needs in education. It also creates and teaches schools, RPPC and TPPSCs to use ICT in assessment of special needs in education, as well as follow up the process of implementation of individual learning plans. However, the major challenge is that the interest towards data and data-based policy making is very low among responsible officials and policy makers. Policies in education sector are rarely driven by deep and though analysis of available research and statistics data.

Another challenge is that officials at school level often demonstrate lack of attention and responsibility towards proper collection and input of data in existing systems that cause further difficulties in maintaining them.

Section 4: Curricula, learning materials and assessment

To what extent are curricula, learning materials and different assessment processes and procedures adapted to the principles of inclusive education?

Curriculum

a. Does the curriculum content include and represent all learners?

☒No ☐ No information available ☐ Partially☐ Yes

If yes or partially, please provide a description and available links, including to underpinning values and principles.

If no, please give further information:

The General Education Curriculum is more of a declarative documents that outlines general principals of education content, subjects to be taught at mainstream schools. It defines, that the content of general education programs is presented through subject programs and includes transfer of knowledge that matches the goals of general education, pedagogically and psychologically defined-adapted social experience, cultural, moral, national and universal values. Regarding the LSEN, it prescribes that general education program should be adjusted to their intellectual and comprehension abilities.

One of the causes of inequity and discrimination in public education is widespread gender-insensitive content of school textbooks and gender-biased attitude widely demonstrated by school-teachers. The analysis of Civics textbooks shows that available texts give a strong preference to men in all forms of representation. The substantial difference is in verbal representation, where male characters and personalities are mentioned about 5 times more than female ones (about 83% vs. 17%). The analysis of quotations shows that virtually only men are quoted, while not a single woman is quoted in epigraphs. Furthermore, men outnumber women in all forms of verbal and graphic representation. In addition, men are presented as active doers and authority figures, especially when shown as fathers and/or husbands, whereas, women are portrayed in more passive, secondary, and at times submissive roles, such as cooking, sewing, washing, nurturing, and cleaning the house.

The Armenian History textbooks for 10th to 12th grades are characterized by a gender imbalance. Overall, women's characters make up just 3-5% of the total characters. Women are less likely to be displayed in pictures (around 13%) than men (around 78%). The textbook content emphasizes the role of men in history, while women remain in the shadows, thus contributing to less visibility of women in contemporary social life. Such norms are further replicated in teachers' attitudes, who believe that boys have superior physical and mental abilities. Another research witnesses that teachers largely promote male students' leadership and courage, while striving to instil obedience and modesty in girls. Thus, in Armenian schools, gender insensitive content reproduces the current patriarchal system making students identify themselves in traditional gender roles.

The subject of Christian Education was introduced in the elementary classes of general education in 2013 (in middle and high school curricula it continues as the "History of the Armenian Church"). The textbooks are drafted and printed

by the Christian Education Centre of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is also responsible for training the teachers of this subject. The _review_ of middle- and high-school textbooks of the "History of the Armenian Church" subject indicates that the textbooks present the Armenian Apostolic Church as having an exceptional position and significance, while other religious denominations are presented in negative light.

Overall, the curriculum content is not inclusive enough to represent different groups of learners, including children with disability, rural children, ethnic minorities. The illustrations in textbooks, as well as the texts do not contain pictures, visualization and content that would represent and describe the life of different groups of population.

b. Does the process of curriculum development involve the participation and contribution of different stakeholders?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes **but with reservations described below**

If yes, please provide information on stakeholder involvement.

If no, please give further information:

MoESCS has recently (in Fall 2018) initiated a comprehensive revision of the general education curriculum and subject standards. The announcement for engagement in working groups per subjects were made openly and subject teachers and experts were encouraged to apply. In September-October 2019 MoESCS initiated "public discussions" of the draft curriculum. But the process was not transparent and participatory. The draft curriculum was not published openly. To receive the draft of the curriculum and attend the discussion one was obliged to apply through completing the interest form and submitting detailed CV that would witness the thematic expertise of applying person. The draft that was presented for discussion was not developed based on UDL standards, it contained too excessive competencies and academic requirements that would be difficult to achieve event for a normally developing. According to representatives of the MoESCS, after the first round of "public discussions" the document was revised significantly. However, there is no evidence of this statement so far, since the second draft is not yet made public.

c. Is there guidance/procedures for schools to ensure that the curriculum content takes account of all learners (e.g. using flexibility to address differences due to gender, culture, religions, the ethnicities/nations living in the country, their history and culture, differences related to disability and socio-economic background, LGBT community).

☒ No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description and examples of this flexibility.

If no, please give further information:

No guidance or procedure is available. The content of in-service teachers' trainings on IE includes predominantly information about international conventions and declarations, as well as about the ideology of inclusive education with the focus on CWD. In 2019 MoESCS with support of the UNICEF Armenia and the NGO Teach for Armenia initiated a pilot project for long-term mentorship and training of school teachers. Within the project Concept for Continuous Development of Teachers' Professional Capacities and Mentoring Support, Learning Modules and Mentorship Toolkits were developed and piloted. A pool of mentor-teachers was trained to support and coach teachers at classroom in adjustment of the learning and teaching process to divers needs of children at classroom. Although, the

comprehensive evaluation of the pilot was not conducted yet, the project has already proved its efficiency and the MoESCS plans to extend it to all general schools of Armenia.

d. If individual education plans (IEPs) are used, please describe the procedure for developing (who is involved and how), what they focus on (specific curriculum areas; cross curricular competences; support strategies etc.) and how IEPs are implemented, used across the school?

The process of development of IEPs is an indispensable part of provision of pedagogical-psychological services (PPS) prescribed by the regulation #370-A/2. At school level PPS is provided to those learners who are assessed in accordance with the defined procedure and are recognized as learners in need of special educational conditions. Only learners with moderate, severe and profound functional disorder are entitled to be recognized as LSEN and their education is organized on the basis of IEP. In 15-day period after completion of SEN assessment at school level the support group of the school with participation of a parent of a child develops the IEP, which includes the list and amount of support services to be provided to a child, their term and duration. The usual practice shows that these are predominantly rehabilitation services provided to a child based on her/his functional disorder, rather than support for comprehension of academic program/curricula. According to the procedure, support services should be provided after lessons in accordance with IEP but not more than 1,5 hours daily. Support group should conduct daily observations of at least 3 classes, adjust learning materials and provide suggestions for next day teaching plans. The support group write down description of undertaken intervention on a daily basis.

However, very often the schools don't have permanent functioning in-school support groups. The process of assessment of the need in special educational conditions is often end up in assessment of the level of functional disorder and accordingly provision of extra-curricular rehabilitation services, rather than reflects the needs of adjustment of educational plans, teaching methods and the content. Teachers perceive IEPs as additional paper work rather than see their added value in effective organization of education process of LSEN. In most of the cases subject teachers don't even fill responsible for completion of IEPs or for following up of the progress of a child in accordance to the goals set up in IEPs. It is usually perceived to be the share of responsibility of support group which consist of special pedagogies and different therapists.

e. Are there different curricula or programmes for specific groups of learners at risk of exclusion (e.g. ethnic minorities or minority language groups)

☒ No☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description of the main characteristics/organisation.

If no, please give further information:

There are no such programs. There is limited number of schools in minority ethnic communities where education of minority native language, as well as certain subjects organized on minority native language, but in line with the general education curricula and program.

Learning materials

a. Is there autonomy for schools and teachers to select learning material/textbooks etc?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Schools are provided a choice of two alternative textbooks and according to official procedure they are free to choose the textbook they want to. However, assessment conducted by the Transparency International Armenia shows that very often schools are provided the textbooks they didn't choose and/or vote for.

Schools or teachers have an option of not using the textbooks but develop in alternative teaching materials in line with the national curricula framework. Such materials, however, should be approved and authorised by the MoESCS. In practice, most often teachers prefer using the official textbooks printed and distributed by the MoESCS.

If no, please give further information:

b. Are there policies to ensure the availability of textbooks/materials that promote the inclusion of learners from different vulnerable groups? (e.g. resources relevant to different ethnic groups etc.)

☐No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

MoESCS have the responsibility of producing textbooks on minority languages (Yezidi, Russian, etc.) as well as the textbooks and other learning materials for children with hearing and visual impairments. In practice, a some of the minority communities (Russian, Greek) support their minority schools with providing textbooks and learning materials in their native language.

c. Is there guidance/procedures to help schools to make learning materials accessible for all learners? (e.g. Braille/large print for learners with visual impairment, materials in other languages).

☒ No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

There is no specific guideline. MoESCS print out limited number of Braille textbooks which are provided predominantly to the Special school for children with visual impairments #14. The school itself initiates re-printing of new textbooks within different donor-funded projects. Recently the 6 subject textbooks were printed and provided to school within the assistance program funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency – JICA. Until 2018 the Open Society Foundation – Armenia funded publication and printing of textbook Braille textbooks for the Special school for children with visual impairments #14.

d. Is ICT used to improve access to materials for vulnerable groups?

☒No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

There used to be a web platform aniedu.am where the "speaking" textbooks for people with visual impairments were uploaded. The web-page does not exist anymore service is not available now. There is a multi-language software called

"Arev" which is aimed at enabling people with visual impairments to use computers in learning process. The program is set up in a number of libraries, as well as in the Special school for children with visual impairments #14. No information/statistics is available on usage of the program in mainstream schools across the Armenia. At the same time, rapid inquiries among beneficiaries of the system shows that the program is outdated and is not in line with the modern trends of academic learning and research. Instead, there are alternative international programs that are not taught in schools.

e. Are there specific financial and practical resources available for textbooks/materials/ICT for different vulnerable groups?

☒No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

No such resources available for vulnerable children. Only children from poor households are entitle to receive free textbooks, while others should pay renting costs. The compensation is provided by the MoESCS through direct funding of schools.

Assessment

a. Is there a national/local assessment framework that includes all learners?

☐No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

The assessment of LSEN is conducted in accordance with the IEP by the leading role of multi-professional team members (special pedagogues, therapists, etc who work with the LSEN directly). All other learners are assessed based on general assessment procedure. 10-scale assessment system is applied to all three levels of general education. Scores from 4 to 10 allow transition to next grade. In practice, assessment is usually a subjective process since there are no clear guidelines on application of 10-scale system. Different subject standards outline the academic scope of each of the scale. The criteria of application of 10-scale grading is vague and unclear. It should be noticed that 10 grades are granted very rarely. There is informal agreement within the schools not to grade 10 or do it only in exceptional cases which are not defined as well.

If no, please give further information:

b. Is there guidance for teachers on how to use curriculum-based assessment to identify all learning needs in the classroom?

☒No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

There is no universal comprehensive guideline for the assessment of different learning needs of all learners at classroom. In practice, assessment of learning needs of only LSEN is conducted and the process is regulated. In case of all other learners, there is no formal mechanism to assess their needs in education.

c. Is there guidance/procedures on providing access to tests/examinations when learners need additional support/reasonable adjustments?(e.g. adapted materials, extra time etc.)

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Final exams at 4th, 9th and 12th grades are conducted based on corresponding procedure defined by the decree of the Minister of ESCS. It defines that LSEN should be provided additional 40 minutes in addition to 1 hour provided to all learners for completion of tests.

If no, please give further information:

d. Are there specific arrangements and/or formal procedures to support the assessment of the specific needs of learners who need additional support in their learning? (e.g. those with disabilities)

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒Yes

If yes, please give a description, including clear information on the focus of needs identification procedures and who is involved in the procedures (learners, parents, professionals):

The decree mentioned in previous paragraph defines only that LSEN should be provided a possibility to choose the place of the exam; they can pass the exam either together with other learners in centralized examination station or at their schools. Transition of children with mental disability to next grade is conducted based on the progress they made in accordance to their IEP. No other information is available.

If no, please give further information:

e. Is ICT used in the assessment of vulnerable groups?

☐No ☒ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

There is no information available on this question.

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, studies, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 relating to issues around curricula, learning materials and assessment processes.

Inclusive Education in Armenia: Stock-taking Exercise. UNICEF Armenia. October, 2016. (Attachment #5)

The report was produced at the request of UNICEF Armenia with the goal to determine changes in the realization of Inclusive Education in Armenia, as compared to the Evaluation of IE Policies and Programs in Armenia conducted in 2009, by the same consultant (Paula Frederica Hunt). The consultancy took place from 10 to 21 October, 2016. It

documents the progress and provides detailed guidance and recommendation to UNICEF Armenia and other stakeholders on ways forward. The report includes the following sections: Policy and Implementation, Programs and Professionals, Piloting of Inclusive Education, Inclusive Schools, Special Schools/Resource Centers, Professionals. It also provides analysis of associated programs, such as Pension reform based on ICF, Education-needs assessment based on ICF-CY functional profiles and Deinstitutionalization.

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to curricula, learning materials and assessment processes in the country?

Traditions in practices of IE that focus on the categorization of CWD according to a medical model are still highly prevalent, and there is still an over-reliance on a direct-service delivery model of services for children with disabilities that is the full responsibility of specialists. Further, the practices in the field are still aimed at fitting children (with disabilities and others) within an existing system (integration model), rather than making changes to the system in order to respond to the needs of all students (inclusion model).

Specialists who are generally associated with service delivery to children with disabilities are still seen as entirely and solely responsible for the education outcomes of children with disabilities. Education specialists (special pedagogues, psychologist, speech therapists, occupational therapists, etc.) are still considered to be the most (often the only) appropriate professionals to determine the education capability and needed support to children with disabilities, irrespective of their educational setting. Even in "inclusive schools", children with disabilities are often pulled out of their mainstreamed education classroom to receive educational support individually or in small groups, provided by an education specialist (in the form of therapy).

As an opportunity it worth mentioning the revision of General Education Curricula, that is on-going now. Although, the first draft was not reflective of the UDL standards, representatives of the MoESCS claim, that after the first round of "public discussions" the document was revised and amended substantially. More conclusions would be possible once the second draft is published.

Section 5: Teachers and support personnel

How are staff in schools prepared to accommodate students of all abilities and backgrounds, in terms of their initial training, continuing professional development and their attitudes to inclusion?

Please list type of staff, their numbers and required level of education for the position in different type of educational institutions

Type of staff	Number	Required education	Comment
Mainstream schools			
Teachers	Total: 31371 Female: 27856	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding subject. All currently employed have higher education.	These group of professionals includes classroom and subject teachers. In accordance to the LGE, they should have higher pedagogical education. The list of pedagogical staff, as well as the roles and responsibilities, are defined by the Decree of GoA #1391-N.
Psychologist	Total: 493 Female: 484 Male: 9	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding profession. All currently employed have higher education. 483 of currently employed special pedagogues have higher education, 10 have incomplete higher education.	These group of professionals should have higher education degree in psychology. Schools are not mandated to have psychologist. In general practice, only inclusive and special schools employ psychologists as a member to the multi-professional teams to work with CWD or SEN.
Social Pedagogue	Total: 220 Female: 213 Male: 7	Higher education (bachelor degree) in	There is a department of social pedagogy in the Armenian State

		corresponding profession. All currently employed have higher education. 218 of currently employed special pedagogues have higher education, 1 has incomplete higher and 1 has vocational education.	Pedagogical University. These group of professionals should be graduates of that department. Similar to psychologists, only inclusive and special schools employ social pedagogues as a member to the multi-professional teams to work with CWD or SEN.
Speech therapist	Total: 173 Female: 171 Male: 2	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding profession. All currently employed have higher education.	There is a faculty of Special and inclusive education in the Armenian State Pedagogical University which comprises departments of speech, deaf-and-dumb, thyphlo, ergo and oligophreno pedagogy. All these professions are the heritage from soviet era, when the only mean of organization f education of children with disability were special schools. These and below groups of professionals should be graduates of that faculty. Only inclusive and special schools employ these

			professional as a member to the multi-professional teams to work with CWD or SEN.
Deaf-and-dumb pedagogy	Total: 8 Female: 6 Male: 2	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding profession. All currently employed have higher education.	See comment above
Thyphlo pedagogue	Total: 10 Female: 10 Male:0	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding profession. All currently employed have higher education.	See comment above
Educator/preceptor (inclusive)	Total: 234 Female: 231 Male:3	Higher education (bachelor degree) with no specification of professional background. 150 of currently employed special pedagogues have higher education, 4 have incomplete higher and 80 have vocational education.	See comment above
Ergo therapist	Total: 1 Female: 1 Male: 0	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding profession. All currently employed have higher education.	See comment above
Special Pedagogue	Total: 195 Female: 194 Male:1	Higher education (bachelor degree) in	See comment above

		corresponding profession. 189 of currently employed special pedagogues have higher education, 5 have incomplete higher and 1 has vocational education.	
Pedagogue providing pedagogical-psychological assistance	Total: 42 Female: 41 Male:1	Higher education (bachelor degree) with no specification of professional background. All currently employed have higher education.	This group is also a part of the multi-professional teams at inclusive or special schools. However, in this case the professional background is not specified. The only requirement is the pedagogical higher education defined by LGE.
Coordinator of inclusive program	Total: 11 Female: 11 Male: 0	Higher education (bachelor degree) with no specification of professional background. From currently employed coordinators 9 have higher education, 2 vocational education	This group is also a part of the multi-professional teams at inclusive or special schools. For this group of professionals is the only higher education is defined as requirement without specifying the profession.
Teacher Assistants (specify role and add rows as required)	Total: 863 Female: 851 Male:12	The position of teacher's assistant, that was recently introduced in schools, is reported to be a position to support	In accordance to the decree of the GoA #1391-N teacher's assistant should have higher pedagogical

| | | teachers to develop and follow up IEP of children with SEN. However, only 3 out of 14 responsibilities of teacher's assistants listed in the <u>job description</u> imply assisting teachers in development and follow up of child's SEN and IEP. Higher education (bachelor degree) is required for this position with no specification on the professional background. 846 out of 863 currently employed teachers' assistants have higher education, while 15 have incomplete higher education and 7 have only secondary education. | education or higher education and at least 3 years of work experience as pedagogical staff within last 10 years. The same decree provides for comprehensive description of the role of teacher's assistant. Overall, the role includes: support teachers' in planning and organization of education process of learners in accordance to the national curricula and subject standards, as well as assist to ensure that all learners comprehend the knowledge as per the educational standards, including those whose education is organized on the basis of IEPs, support teachers in development and implementation of IEPs, conducts class observations and provide school management and teachers with the analysis of the results of observations, assists |

			teachers in preparation of learning materials, including for LSEN, participates in lesson planning conducted by teachers, together with teachers identifies barriers for effective learning including those that have psycho-pedagogical causes, etc. Complete list of duties is available here.
Special schools			
Teachers	n/a	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding subject. All currently employed have higher education.	Same as above
Psychologist	Total: 11 Female: 11 Male: 0	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding specialisation. All currently employed have higher education.	Same as above
Social Pedagogue	Total: 7 Female: 7 Male: 0	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding specialisation. 6 of currently employed special pedagogues have higher education, 1 has incomplete higher education.	Same as above
Speech therapist	Total: 7 Female: 7	Higher education (bachelor degree) in	Same as above

	Male: 0	corresponding specialisation. 6 of currently employed special pedagogues have higher education, 1 has incomplete higher education.	
Dactologist	Total: 1 Female: 1 Male: 1	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding specialisation. All currently employed have higher education.	Same as above
deaf-and-dumb pedagogy	Total: 1 Female: 1 Male: 1	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding specialisation. All currently employed have higher education.	Same as above
Methodist of Therapeutic Physical Education	Total: 1 Female: 0 Male: 1	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding specialisation. All currently employed have higher education.	Same as above
Special Pedagogue	Total: 7 Female:7 Male:0	Higher education (bachelor degree) in corresponding specialisation. 6 of currently employed special pedagogues have higher education, 1 has vocational education.	Same as above
Educator/preceptor (inclusive)	Total: 54 Female: 54 Male: 0	Higher education (bachelor degree) is required for this position	Same as above

		with no specification on the professional background. 46 of currently employed special pedagogues have higher education, 8 have vocational education.	
Teacher Assistants (specify role and add rows as required)	Total: 5 Female: 5 Male: 0	Higher education (bachelor degree) is required for this position with no specification on the professional background. All currently employed have higher education.	Same as above
Other institutions offering education if they exist (i.e. children's homes, young offenders institutions etc). Information is not available			
Teachers	Information is not available		
Professional staff (psychologists, pedagogues, social pedagogues, speech and other types of therapists)	Information is not available		
Teacher Assistants (specify role and add rows as required)	Information is not available		
Others (please specify and add rows as required)	Information is not available		

Please indicate if education/training on inclusion in education is available for the following groups of professionals.

Type of staff	Yes	No	No inform-ation	If yes please state if pre- or in-service, mandatory or optional, who provides education/training and summary of content
Head teachers/School directors	X			There is an MA program on education management. But it is not mandatory for becoming school principal. The MA program is provided by the state Economic

				University. The course does not include separate credits on IE.
				For being allowed to apply for the open position of a school principal the candidate should take a mandatory training and pass the certification exams. After successful completion of both trainings and certification exam the candidates receive a certificate which is valid for 5 years. During this period a candidate can apply for open position of school principal. Given there are questions on IE in the certification exam, the mandatory trainings should also cover the topic. However, since the mandatory trainings for certification are organized by private entities, their content is not controlled by the MoESCS. Thus, there is no standard or rule on the number of hours provided for separate topics, including IE, in mandatory training programs.
				For practicing principals, as well as for other professionals working at school level, trainings on IE are predominantly organized within donor-funded projects by local and international NGOs. Former NIE was also partly covering the IE topic in its mandatory trainings. However, as was already mentioned, the NIE does not operate for about two years and the news institutions to take the responsibility of professional development of teachers and other teaching and professional staff at schools in not established yet.
				RPPC provides capacity building for schools that are in transition process towards becoming inclusive. But the trainings by RPPC predominantly cover the topic of assessment of special needs in education with the focus on functional disorder.
Teachers	x			Consistent in-service teachers' trainings are not provided by any governmental institution. As in case of other professionals, trainings on IE are predominantly organized within donor-funded projects by local and international NGOs.

				In all departments of the State Pedagogical University of Armenia there are four subjects that cover IE issues, 2 in MA and 2 in BA. Two subjects are mandatory, two are selected. In BA 3rd grade the mandatory subject is "Theory and practice of inclusive education", selective subject is "Psycho-pedagogical assistance in the context of inclusive education". In MA 1st grade the mandatory subject is "Organization of inclusive education", selective subject is "Assessment in the context of inclusive education". Each subject give comprises two credits. The information was obtained from the representatives of the Department of Special and Inclusive Education through online interview.
Teacher Assistants	x			The position of teacher assistants is relatively new and was introduced last two years when NIE was already dissolved. There is no formal requirement to professional background of teachers' assistants. The practice shows that professional staff of former special schools that were transformed into TPPSCs, or former members of multi-professional teams at inclusive schools become assistants to teachers. Trainings in IE for this group of professionals are also predominantly organized local NGOs and international organizations within donor-funded projects.
Professional Staff				Trainings in IE for this group of professionals are also predominantly organized local NGOs and international organizations within donor-funded projects.
Inspectors				Trainings in IE for this group of professionals are also predominantly organized local NGOs and international organizations within donor-funded projects.
Teacher Trainers				Trainings in IE for this group of professionals are also predominantly organized local NGOs and international organizations within donor-funded projects.
Others (please list add rows as required)				n/a

a. If you answered no to any of the above, please provide further information:

Before 2018, there used to be a National Institute of Education (NIE) which was providing teachers' in-service trainings and support for professional development. The institute was conducting mandatory trainings of subject teachers. As part of that trainings, certain aspects of IE were taught. However, the training program was focused mainly on the ideology of IE, its legal regulations in Armenia, international conventions and declarations, etc. No methodological training and support for adjustment of classroom practice and teaching was never the part of these trainings.

In 2019 Teach for Armenia, in collaboration with UNICEF Armenia and MoESCS, launched the project with the title of "Developing Inclusive Education Teacher Training and Mentoring Capacities". The purpose of this 6-months project was to development/ improvement of teachers' and mentors' competence to educate diverse children with diversity of needs in education. More details about the project, as successful case, ca be fund in the last section of this questionnaire "Vignette".

Is education and training of teachers aligned with national policy goals on inclusive education?

☒No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

IE is a state policy defined by the LGE. However, the comprehensive up-to-date assessment of in-service and pre-service education programs on IE, including university decrees, teacher training programs offered by state and private entities, is not available to make data-driven conclusions on the topic. It is worth noticing that the former Department of Special Education at the State Pedagogical University of Armenia has been recently renamed into the Department of Special and Inclusive Education which is not fully in line with the policy of IE and Deinstitutionalisation. The Soviet times heritage Oligophrenic pedagogy, which contradicts to the principals of CRPD and rights-based approach to disability, is still taught as a separate subject at the State Pedagogical University of Armenia.

If no, please give further information:

With respect to the main initial teacher education programmes, describe how inclusion in education is addressed in it (i.e. requirement for number of academic credits under European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), subjects and topics covered, focus etc).

In all departments of the State Pedagogical University of Armenia there are four subjects that cover IE issues, 2 in MA and 2 in BA. Two subjects are mandatory, two are selected.

In BA 3rd grade the mandatory subject is "Theory and practice of inclusive education", selective subject is "Psycho-pedagogical assistance in the context of inclusive education". In MA 1st grade the mandatory subject is "Organization of inclusive education", selective subject is "Assessment in the context of inclusive education". Each subject give comprises two credits. The information was obtained from the representatives of the Department of Special and Inclusive Education through online interview.

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 relating to initial teacher education and/or professional development issues.

1.Inclusive Education in Armenia: Stock-taking Exercise. UNICEF Armenia. October, 2016. (Attachment #7)

2.The report was produced at the request of UNICEF Armenia with the goal to determine changes in the realization of Inclusive Education in Armenia, as compared to the Evaluation of IE Policies and Programs in Armenia conducted in 2009, by the same consultant (Paula Frederica Hunt). The consultancy took place from 10 to 21 October, 2016. It documents the progress and provides detailed guidance and recommendation to UNICEF Armenia and other stakeholders on ways forward. The report includes the following sections: Policy and Implementation, Programs and Professionals, Piloting of Inclusive Education, Inclusive Schools, Special Schools/Resource Centers, Professionals. It also provides analysis of associated programs, such as Pension reform based on ICF, Education-needs assessment based on ICF-CY functional profiles and Deinstitutionalization. Main conclusions are as follows:

3.Since 2009, GoA has re-formulated educational policies into a cohesive and single set of guidelines with Inclusive Education as its main overarching construct. However, and despite current legislation and policies, practices in the field are still inadequate for the appropriate implementation of an Inclusive Education system.

4.Specialists who are generally associated with service delivery to children with disabilities are still seen as entirely and solely responsible for the education outcomes of children with disabilities. Special pedagogues, psychologist, speech therapists, etc. are still considered to be the most (often the only) appropriate professionals to determine the education capability and needed support to children with disabilities, irrespective of their educational setting.

5.Even in inclusive schools, children with disabilities are often pulled out of their mainstreamed education classroom to receive educational support individually or in small groups, provided by an education specialist (in the form of therapy). There is no practice of transfer of skills or knowledges across settings, either in children, or among professionals (general education teacher and specialist).

6.There is still a general lack of clarity as to the practical differences between having a special education system and an Inclusive Education system. For most stakeholders interviewed, IE is seen for a very reductive lens and subsumes itself to giving children with disabilities access to mainstream schools. When pressed to define inclusive education practices for children with disabilities in Armenia, most stakeholders describe a special education needs system.

7.Mainstream teachers do not see IE as systemic reform that directly impacts the ways in which their professional role is perceived, or expected to change, but simply as a different modality of service-provision to children with disabilities – mainstream teachers have no responsibility in IE other than providing space for children with disabilities in a mainstream classroom and allowing the "specialist" to guide the students' instruction.

8.No other research reports are available.

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to teachers and support personnel in the country?

9.One of the issues that impedes quality realization of IE is shortage of properly trained professional staff at schools to provide individual support to CWD. With introduction of universal inclusiveness in four provinces of Armenia and introduction of new assessment and funding mechanisms for the need in special conditions in education the existence of multi-professional teams in inclusive schools became challenging due to limited financial resources. TPPSCs are meant to fill the gap. However, having limited human resources, they cannot serve all schools on a daily basis. The position of teacher's assistant, that was recently introduced in schools, is reported to be a position to support teachers to develop and follow up individual learning plan of children with SEN. However, only 3 out of 14 responsibilities of teacher's assistants listed in the job description imply assisting teachers in development and follow up of LSEN and individual learning plan. Thus, the effectiveness and relevance of TPPSC and the position of teacher's assistants remains questionable.

As an opportunity, the new joint initiative of MoESCS, UNICEF Armenia and the NGO Teach for Armenia is worth mentioning. The project implies long-term on-the-job mentorship and training support to teachers at mainstream classrooms. More information on this project is provided in the Vignette section.

Section 6: Schools

How does the work of schools, school management and leadership impact on access, participation and provision of equitable opportunities for all learners?

Who is excluded from attending any form of school?

Please give reasons for this group being excluded from attending school and describe any form of alternative provision made for them?

There is no specific group of children that would be totally excluded from attending any type schools in Armenia. But there are groups of children at risk of being excluded. Those are children from rural areas and from families with low socio-economic backgrounds, children with disability, ethnic minority children and girls.

As was mentioned, compulsory general education system in Armenia comprises three levels: elementary, middle and high school. For the third level of education there are two alternatives: separate high schools and 12-year comprehensive schools. High schools that are located mainly in urban areas (96%) and provide only the 3rd level of compulsory general education, while 12-year Comprehensive schools that are located predominantly in rural communities (92%) and provide all three levels of compulsory general education. High schools get more funding from state budget, in comparison to high grades of 12-year comprehensive schools. They are better equipped with teaching staff and technical capacities, such as labs and other materials. Within World Bank funded Education Improvement loan Project there have been a lot of investments in high schools, including renovations and infrastructural developments. Recent amendments to LGE prescribed the introduction of credits system in high schools. All this focus and investments in high schools make graduates of this institutions more competitive in comparison with their rural peers who study in 12-year comprehensive schools which are out of such extra support and have weaker infrastructure, technical and teaching resources. In fact, children at rural areas are formally included in 12-year schooling, but excluded from quality high school education because of lack of school capacities, teaching force and infrastructure.

Education attainment of children is linked to poverty status of their families. Non-poor families spend two to three times more on general education of their children than poor families. Differences in education spending among poor and non-poor families at middle school level are significant, while average monthly expenditure on education increases more than twice from elementary school to high school. Students from non-poor families spend 48.9% of their expenses on private tutoring and 20.9% on textbooks, while those with poor background use only 11.1% expenditures for private tutoring and 45.2% on textbooks. Families leaving in extreme poverty allocate 58.7% to textbooks and no expenses on private tutoring. Given that private tutoring is essential for university admission, higher education enrolment is skewed in favour of children from non-poor or rich backgrounds. Not-surprisingly, in 2017, the gross enrolment rates of children at age 18-22 from poor and non-poor households in higher education institutions was 29% and 53% respectively, while the enrolment rate of children from extreme poor households was 0% (Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia, 2019).

The underlined comparative analysis of TIMSS 2003/2015 datasets for Armenia shows that education inequity in Armenia increased from 2003 to 2015. Students from higher socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds perform better in both mathematics and science than students from lower SES backgrounds. The gap in performance between these two groups of students on average amounts to 15.67% and 20.25% of a standard deviation in achievement for mathematics and 14.97% and 20.88% for science in 2003 and 2015. Thus, students living below the poverty line performed worse academically in secondary school. According to the same analysis, students from rural community schools performed worse in mathematics and science than students from urban areas. The gap between the performance of urban and rural students reduced in 2015 compared to 2011 for both mathematics (from 35.57% to 25.23%) and science (from 24.5% to 23.30%). Although the gap did not widen from 2011 to 2015, it still exists and requires mitigation. In the Armenian contexts, the gap is explained by the school size and teaching quality differences in urban and rural regions (smaller schools with limited teaching force in rural areas).

Children of ethnic minorities also face inequity in access to quality education. Armenia is the most ethnically homogeneous of the three South Caucasus republics: ethnic Armenians constitute over 98% of the population (Armenia in figures, 2019). According to the Law on Language, Armenian is the only official state language. Only a few schools throughout the country offer Yazidi, Assyrian, Kurdish and Greek language classes at primary and secondary level. The number of these classes is usually very limited. A common problem is the lack of qualified teachers and available textbooks on native language. The school located in the Yezidi (the largest ethnic minority group leaving in Armenia) and other minority communities often lack subject teachers who speak native language of the minority group. Thus, the realization of the right to education of children of ethnic minority groups in Armenia is at high risk.

As was mentioned already, IE reforms in Armenia are predominantly focused on deinstitutionalization of CWD and their placement in mainstream public schools rather than creating an education environment where divers needs of every child would be visible and addressable to enable quality and inclusive learning process for very child. However, so far, the criteria for learning disabilities (including linguistic minorities) are vague and ambiguous resulting in no specific service provision for children in need. Inclusive schools prefer to admit those "inclusive" children who bring additional funding to school but, at the same time, do not cause them too much additional work. Public inclusive schools fail to provide effective and sufficient support to children with hearing and visual impairments. There's also a lack of local research, knowledge and experience for education of children with mental retardation, severe and multiple disabilities in mainstream inclusive schools.

The lack of reasonable accommodations, including basic physical accessibility in buildings, relevant trained staff and a lack of individualized approach to children's education and development is reported to impede the ability of many children with disabilities to enjoy a quality education. Children with disabilities enrolled in inclusive schools may attend school for only a few hours a day, or not all days of the week. Despite attending the inclusive schools, children with disabilities often do not attend classes with other children or are present at classrooms but do not participate in an academic curriculum. Their education often consists of primarily or exclusively one hour or shorter individual sessions once or a few times a week. Another issue that impedes quality realization of IE is shortage of properly trained professional staff at schools to provide individual support to CWD.

Another cause of inequity and discrimination in public education is widespread gender-insensitive content of school textbooks and gender-biased attitude widely demonstrated by school-teachers. For more details, please refer to Section 4 of this questionnaire.

Are there issues around the over- and under-representation of different vulnerable groups in different school settings?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description and provide any data/evidence that is available

Only in Yezidi communities, where mainly this minority group children are at schools.

If no, please give further information:

Please give details on the main admissions criteria for schools.

a. Highlight any issues with the national polices.

There are no formal admission criteria to public mainstream schools. There is a procedure of registration. Before 2019, the admission was done based on the application of the parent submitted to school with document such as Passport of parent, birth certificate or passport of a child. Last year MoESCS introduced a system of early registration to elementary schools. The system was piloted in Yerevan in 2019 and will be disseminated through the country in 2020. The purpose behind introduction of this system was overcoming the illicit practice in registration of children in schools, such as bribes, illicit agreements between parents and principles, exceeding a number of accepted children required by the license, etc. In 2020 this system will be extended to all regions of Armenia. The process of registration to 1st grade will be almost fully automatized, including submission of paper applications now will be done online. While registering a child, one of the parents needs to enter her/his name, mobile phone number, social security number (SSN) and SSN of a child (or, in case of not having SSN, a number of justification document). The system will check the relevance through the SSN and will allow submitting registration form if connection between parent and child is approved via SSN system. After successful registration of a child, parents will have two-week time (this time slot will be prolonged this year) to submit application to school, which is also done in the system and does not require visiting school.

Admission to specialized schools, such as sport, music, art, as well as to special boarding schools of children with disability (CWD) is not done through this system. The specialized schools usually have their own admission procedure, which include specific exams and preparation stage.

Admission to special schools is limited now in most of the regions as the result of deinstitutionalization reforms and introduction of universal inclusive education. Only children with severe and profound disability can be admitted to special schools based on parents' choice. Other CWD should be admitted to mainstream schools.

Private schools are entitled to have their own admission procedures, which is often similar to mainstream schools except for several schools, where admission exams are compulsory. Such schools are located on Yerevan and their number does not exceed total of five to ten schools.

b. Where schools set their own admissions criteria, please outline any impact on inclusion.

This might be a case for 2-3 private schools which practice admission exams and/or other rules, such as interview, etc. Given that these are private schools, state does not regulate and oblige them to be as inclusive as public mainstream schools are. According to non-official information, however, these schools provide for certain sits for children from vulnerable groups, including from socially vulnerable family background, rural children, CWD.

Please provide information on the different forms of support that are available to learners in schools.

a. Inclusive pedagogy, personalised learning and universal design approaches

☐No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Until 2018, all inclusive schools across the Armenia had multi-professional teams of specialists (psychologists, social pedagogues, speech and other therapists) who were entitled to work with CWD or LSEN in and out of the classroom. After amendments to the funding mechanism of the IE the funding of inclusive schools was significantly cut down. As the result, currently only those school having big number of learners with assessed SEN (moderate, severe and/or profound functional disorder) have the practical possibility of having specialised support groups who will work with CWD and might also help subject teachers in adjusting the teaching process, curricula and ensuring individualised learning process. Majority of schools are out of such possibility.

TPPSSs are entitled to support schools with regard to better organization of inclusive teaching and learning process. But as was already mentioned, the resources of TPPSCs are limited and they don't have practical possibility to provide daily support to all schools assigned to them.

If no, please give further information:

b. counselling and mentoring possibilities

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒Yes

If yes, please give a description.

In 2019 MoESCS with support of the UNICEF Armenia and the NGO Teach for Armenia initiated a pilot project for long-term mentorship and training of school teachers. Within the project Concept for Continuous Development of Teachers' Professional Capacities and Mentoring Support, Learning Modules and Mentorship Toolkits were developed and piloted. A pool of mentor-teachers was trained to support and coach teachers at classroom in adjustment of the learning and teaching process to divers needs of children at classroom. Although, the comprehensive evaluation of the pilot was not conducted yet, the project has already proved its efficiency and the MoESCS plans to extend it to all general schools of Armenia.

TPPSCs and RPPC also provide counselling and mentorship to school in organization of IE, methodological and coaching support in conducting school-level assessment of SEN.

If no, please give further information:

c. input from specialist teachers/therapists

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒Yes

If yes, please give a description.

In some school it is done by the multi-professional teams, if they exist. In other cases, all support comes from TPPSCs and RPPC only.

If no, please give further information

d. input from learning support assistants

☒ No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

No information about such practice is available.

e. availability of ICT/ assistive technology

☒No ☐ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

No information about such practice is available.

f. Please describe any other forms of support available.

n/a

Please give a description of the strategies in place for practically supporting mainstream school staff teams to increase their capacity to be inclusive and to improve access, participation and achievement for all learners.

Strategy	Description of the focus
Mentorship program	In 2019 MoESCS with support of the UNICEF Armenia and the NGO Teach for Armenia initiated a pilot project for long-term mentorship and training of school teachers. Within the project Concept for Continuous Development of Teachers' Professional Capacities and Mentoring Support, Learning Modules and Mentorship Toolkits were developed and piloted. A pool of mentor-teachers was trained to support and coach teachers at classroom in adjustment of the learning and teaching process to divers needs of children at classroom. Although, the comprehensive evaluation of the pilot was not conducted yet, the project has already proved its efficiency and the MoESCS plans to extend it to all general schools of Armenia.

Please provide information regarding school buildings and infrastructure.

a. Are there schools that face infrastructure issues that are barriers to inclusion?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒Yes

If yes, please give a description and provide information on what barriers, how they are monitored and any data/evidence that is available.

No official statistics available about school accessibility. However, different assessments conducted by international organizations (HRW, UNICEF) witness the lack of infrastructural adjustments with particular focus on children with mobility problems.

The lack of effective gender-responsive policy making in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector is another major obstacle that prevent girls' full participation in learning process. Although, there is no comprehensive data available for Armenia, but many observations at general schools across Armenia allow to conclude that the majority of schools lack proper sport facilities, including dressing rooms and toilets, for organization of physical activities of children, and particularly girls, at schools. This shortage is specifically essential during the period of puberty among girls. For girls who are able to continue attending and participating in school, the widespread reality of poor sanitary facilities, ignorance about menstruating girls' needs and experiences, can mean that the schooling experience is far from a positive one.

If no, please give further information:

b. Are there strategies and/or initiatives to improve school buildings and infrastructure?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒Yes

If yes, please describe the strategies, their aim and focus.

Strategy	Description of the focus
ADB-funded loan	Improvement of seismic safety of schools. The exact number of schools to receive seismic safety improvement is not clear. However, different experts mentioned a number of about 46 schools per year.
WB-funded loan	Renovation of up to 8 high schools. There is no clarity about the application of UDL as a must procedure for renovation.
State budget funding	Construction of 22 small modular schools based on UDL.

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) from any recent reports, systematic evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015of the school system, potentially drawing on information from school inspections and / or school self-review work.

Ad-Hoc Public Report on Ensuring the Right of Access to Water and Sanitation in Preschools and Schools. Office of Human Rights Defender. 2019.

In the period of May-June 2018 the group of experts of Office of Human Rights Defender conducted monitoring and assessment of water and sanitation in 121 schools and 80 kindergartens across the Armenia. The main findings are as follows:

- only 8 out of 121 schools had bathrooms accessible for persons with mobility problems,
- in 71% of schools, bathrooms are not equipped with liquid soap,
- only 7% of school bathrooms are provided with electric appliances or paper towels for drying hands,
- 86% of schools lack hot water supply,
- in 61% of schools, students drink water mainly from faucets, either by hand or by a common cup, which is the greatest risk of spread of diseases and infections;
- In 35% of schools, there are no separate toilets for girls and boys on each floor of buildings.

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to schools in the country?

Over the years, before the Velvet Revolution in 2018, the widespread speculations on the quality of education and various falsifications in the assessment of students' achievement have inevitably led to a gradual decline in the quality of education. As a result, the scores of almost 50% of the Armenian students in TIMSS-2015 assessment were either low or equal to the established minimum level, while only 2% of the pupils succeeded to overcome the set maximum threshold. It was also recorded that about 10% of youth (aged 19-20) in Armenia have a low level of functional literacy. The recent publication of the WB reiterate the problem of learning poverty among children at age 10. According to WB data, 35% of children at age 10 in Armenia have learning poverty, which means being unable to read and understand a short, age-appropriate text by age 10.

For many years the former government supported implementation of the National Program for Educational Excellence (NPEE), which became a major obstacle to reinforcement of equity and social justice in education even after the Velvet Revolution. The purpose behind the program was establishment of excellence centres in 21 separate high schools in Yerevan and other urban cities. Within each of the schools, the program targeted only the students with excellent academic achievements in education, leaving behind those with lower performance, including CWD and LSEN. Although the current government eliminated this program right after the Revolution in 2018, the overall aspiration for excellence in academic performance remains the top priority for schools, as well as still considered as a major performance indicator of schools applied by the MoESCS.

The need for prioritization of soft skills at schools, promotion of equity, social justice and inclusion and access to quality education and schooling for all learners is of vital for the system. To overcome the issues with functional illiteracy and learning poverty, the institutionalised extracurricular activities should be prioritised for those learners who are dropped-out of quality education while being formally included in schools.

Section 7: Communities, parents and students

How far does the wider school community support learners to access and benefit from education opportunities?

Have there been any campaigns to raise awareness of inclusion in education at national or local level?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

There have been two campaigns, one organized by <u>UNICEF Armenia</u>, as well as the one by <u>MoESCS</u> conducted last year in social networks (FB mainly). Both were targeted to children with disability. The key massages were aimed at breaking the stereotypes about organization of education of children with disability in mainstream settings through presentation of success stories.

If no, please give further information:

Does legislation/policy support parental involvement in schools?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Parents are involved in governing boards of mainstream schools, as well as have a right to conduct observations at classrooms. However, there is certain passiveness among parents. In cased on CWD parents are active part of the process of assessment of SEN, as well as implementation and monitoring of IEP.

If no, please give further information:

Does legislation/policy support collaboration between schools and stakeholders in their local communities (e.g. services/employers)?

☐ No ☐ No information available ☒Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Legislation does not prevent such cooperation. There are fragmental cases of cooperation between local schools and NGOs operating in grassroots level. Different NGOs, such as Jinishian Memorial Foundation, World Vision Armenia, Save the Children Armenia, NGO Bridge of Hope, etc conduct projects that imply involvement with schools at local level. Usual procedure of such projects' implementation is that the NGOs apply to the MoESCS with the request for cooperation/involvement with the schools in certain areas. After authorisation of the MoESCS, the projects can be implemented. MoESCS usually does not follow up or monitor the process unless the implementing NGO invites or involves MoESCS staff in specific activities.

If no, please give further information:

Does legislation/policy support the development of learning communities in local/regional areas e.g.support for schools to work together; involvement with universities, support services to provide research evidence and development of innovative practice?

☐ No ☒ No information available ☐Yes

Policy rather does not prevent than support such practice. There are very few cases of such cooperation and very limited, usually anecdotal information about it.

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

Does legislation/policy set out a role for NGOs, DPOs, or other organisations representing vulnerable groups?

☒ No ☐ No information available ☐Yes

If yes, please describe the role. Specify which non-governmental actors are particularly active in inclusion in education and how they operate.

If no, please give further information:

The policy does not clearly define, describe or prescribe any role to NGOs or DPO or any other organizations. There are groups of NGO who work in certain thematic fields, such as child right, social protection, or disability rights. So far, the most active NGOs promoting IE in Armenia are: Bridge of Hope, Save the Children, World Vision, Agate, Armenian Caritas, Agate, Disability info, etc.

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) from any recent reports, systematic evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 of parental and wider community involvement in the work of schools.

No information is available

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to communities, parents and students in the country?

Historically, NGOs and international organization had crucial role in promotion of IE and implementation of reforms in Armenia. The best international practice brought to Armenia through the intensive fundraising, advocacy and program implementation of civil society and international organization. Among them it is worth highlighting the role of UNICEF Armenia, USAID, NGO Bridge of Hope and the Danish Charity organization Mission East, Open society Foundations – Armenia and others, who consistently supported GoA and institutions, build up their capacities in policy development and implementation. Success of IE in Armenia is largely due to their effective support and collaboration with the government.

At the same time, for past 15 and more years there was no strong quality assurance mechanism applied by the GoA to ensure consistency of different donor-funded initiatives. Many local and international organizations conducted in-service teachers' trainings at schools while there was no formal mechanism in place to check and follow up the content of trainings, their consistency with the policy, possible overlaps and repetitions in the efforts, as well as the possible differences in quality standards pushed forward by different donors.

As the country approaches 2022 when all schools across the country will formally become inclusive and 2025 when the policy framework will be finalised to accommodate effective quality education execution, it's time for policy makers to develop and ensure smooth operation of the strong M&E and quality assurance system based on the lessons learnt from the comprehensive assessment of IE practice since its introduction.