

MEASURE Evaluation

ALTERNATIVE CARE FOR CHILDREN

Newsletter

March 2019

Note from MEASURE Evaluation

Welcome to the third Alternative Care for Children Newsletter. This issue provides updates on country-level activities conducted since October 2018:

- The use of findings from the national care reform assessments
- Mentorship activities related to monitoring and evaluation (M&E)
- Insights from select countries on the contributions of field-level site visits, to allow an understanding of challenges in data quality and use
- Updates on information systems work

Progress on Use of Assessment Findings

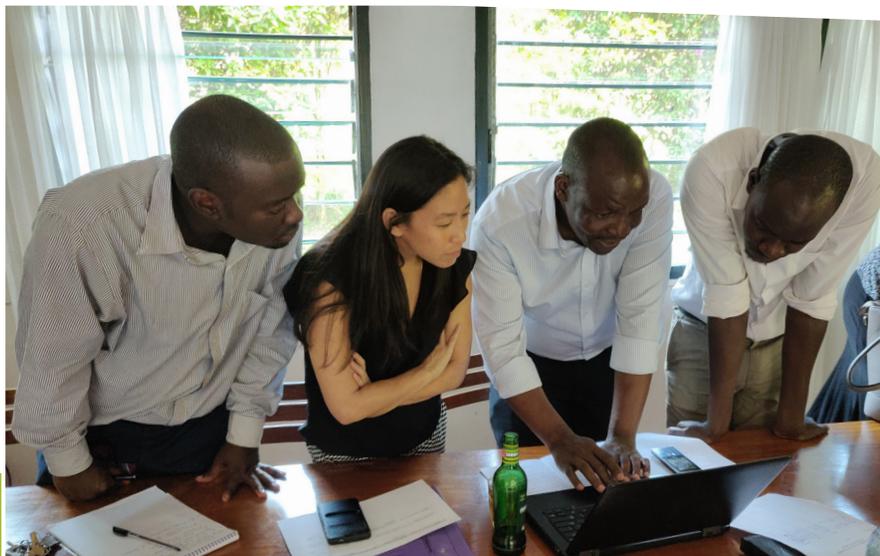
Following the participatory self-assessments of the alternative care systems conducted in Armenia, Ghana, Moldova, and Uganda, MEASURE Evaluation has tracked the implementation of recommendations in each country over the past year. The project continues to document examples of the

use of findings from the assessments. A summary of progress to date in each country and follow-up conducted since the assessments is provided below.

Uganda: Building on recommendations from the assessment, the Keeping Children in Healthy and Protective Families (KCHPF) project, is supporting the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) to develop a road map and guidelines for closure of unapproved children's homes. A MGLSD directive calls for closure of all unapproved homes, and the road map and guidelines are intended to streamline the closure process and ensure that proper case management procedures guide the removal of children from residential care in a way that minimizes risk of harm and ensures positive outcomes for children.

Second, based on a recommendation from the participatory assessment, UNICEF is supporting the MGLSD to revise the National Framework for Alternative Care (NFAC) to ensure that it reflects the following:

- The guiding principles set forth in the United Nations Guidelines on Alternative Care and other related guidance documents



Reviewing data collection and management processes at a residential care facility in Uganda.
Photo: Ismael Ddumba-Nyanzi, MEASURE Evaluation.



Meeting at Aravot, Vanadzor City, Armenia.
Photo: Hasmik Ghukasyan, MEASURE Evaluation.

- Recent changes in the policy and legal framework for alternative care in Uganda (including the amendment of the Children Act, Cap 59)
- Emerging evidence on keeping children in healthy and protective families, family reintegration, and the provision of appropriate alternative family-based care
- Global and local best practices and standards

To ensure the framework's approval by the Cabinet of Uganda, it is necessary to develop a plan of action and a regulatory impact assessment report. To meet these requirements, KCHPF is supporting the MGLSD to refine and further develop the action plan originally developed by MEASURE Evaluation. MEASURE Evaluation will support the development of M&E sections both for the framework and the plan.

Moldova: In response to a recommendation of the self-assessment to institutionalize a training mechanism for social assistance staff, Moldova has approved a regulation for the organization and functioning of the initial and continuous training system for staff working in the area of social assistance. One of the findings of the self-assessment was the uneven development of family support services across the country and hence the recommendation addressed to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection (MOHL-SP) to establish a minimum social services package to be financed by the state budget. Through the adoption of

the Government Decision no. 800/1.08.2018, the minimum package of social services was established, including two services relevant to children in adversity: support for families with children and personal assistance for children with disabilities. All rayons in Moldova now have family support services, which are instrumental for prevention of separation and reintegration. In response to a recommendation to ensure proper protection of children in informal care arrangements, Moldova is also preparing legislation on custodial placement, to provide support services to children in informal kinship care and their carers.

Armenia: The results of the participatory care reform assessment continue to be used. A representative from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) reported on a group of workshop participants from the MOJ, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the human rights defender's office. The human rights defender initiated an advocacy campaign, with the goal of promoting permanent child specialist positions at the community level. This campaign worked to improve the provision of support to families at risk of separation—an initiative that is directly linked to the recommendations in Armenia's self-assessment report. An assessment participant, Mrs. Margarita Shahverdyan—director of the NGO, Aravot, and a professor at Vanadzor State University—included the assessment tool and method in her training module for young sociologists as an example of an international best practice, demonstrating a successful adaptation to the country context.



DSW and UNICEF, Action Planning Workshop, Ghana. Photo: Mari Hickmann, MEASURE Evaluation.

Ghana: In December 2018, the self-assessment findings were used during an action planning workshop in Dodowa to develop priority recommendations and an action plan document that represents all system components. A total of 20 people attended from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; Department of Social Welfare (DSW); USAID/Ghana; UNICEF; and the University of Ghana. MEASURE Evaluation will work with the DSW to finalize the action plan document and will circulate it in early 2019. This will be the first national action plan for strengthening the alternative care system in Ghana. The project will also support the DSW to track progress in the implementation of the action plan in the coming year.

Strengthening Capacity in Monitoring and Evaluation

MEASURE Evaluation continues to provide M&E capacity strengthening to government partners and relevant stakeholders working in alternative care. Updates for each country are provided below.

Uganda: In November 2018, MEASURE Evaluation and the MGLSD brought together stakeholders at the national level to review dataflow, management, and quality for alternative care in Uganda. A team comprising MGLSD and MEASURE Evaluation staff subsequently conducted field visits to three districts and interviewed stakeholders from residential care facilities and district probation and social welfare officers to review current tools and processes for the routine collection, management, and reporting of data on alternative care. Findings from the site visits

showed a range in the quality of the case files kept at the residential care facilities, unclear mechanisms and processes for reporting data on alternative care, a lack of demand for data on foster care and adoption services, and few data-informed meetings at which data are reviewed and interpreted.

Based on recommendations from the site visits, MEASURE Evaluation is currently supporting MGLSD in the following activities:

- Review and standardize specific data-collection tools across different alternative care options. The tools include the child care record (initial record), the six-monthly home report, and the foster child case record.
- Improve the reporting templates (e.g., six-monthly home report) and develop standard quarterly reporting templates for the probation and social welfare officers to facilitate reporting to the district community development officer and the MGLSD.
- Develop a manual for routine monitoring of alternative care, including guidelines on indicators, data collection, dataflow and data quality, data analysis and reporting procedures, and data dissemination and use.

In the coming months, capacity strengthening activities will continue, including a training plan on data quality assurance (DQA) and a subsequent training of trainers on DQA processes. We also plan to develop and implement



Data visualization group work at the DDU and visualization training Armenia. Photo: Hasmik Ghukasyan, MEASURE Evaluation.

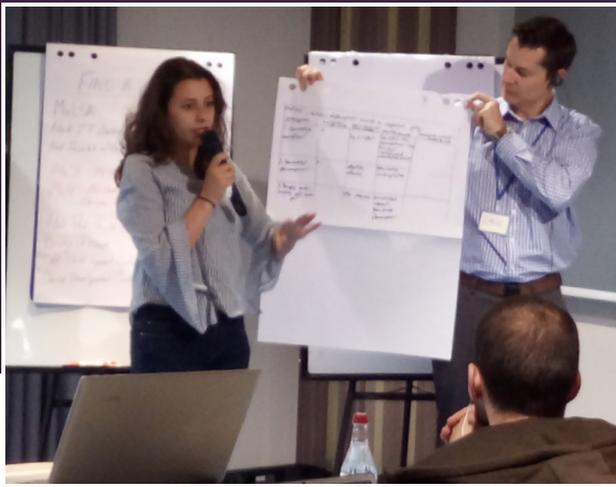
a training on data demand and use (DDU) and, in collaboration with UNICEF, support the MGLSD to use data from the study on Mapping and Enumeration of Children in Residential Care Facilities in Uganda, through the implementation of data to action workshops.

Moldova: MEASURE Evaluation conducted field visits in the Causeni and Singerei Rayons on September 27–28, 2018, including workshops with community social workers and residential care staff, roundtables with decision makers (e.g., mayors, rayon counselors, and heads of rayon social assistance directorates), and interviews with staff members of rayon social assistance and education directorates. Work in the rayons gradually shifted from MEASURE Evaluation facilitation to facilitation by the lead directorate within the MOHLSP, based on previously developed facilitation guides and on-site mentoring provided by MEASURE Evaluation. The purpose of these field visits was to validate the draft list of indicators and understand more about dataflow, data sources, data quality, and data use. In November 2018, MEASURE Evaluation engaged a local consultant to conduct additional field visits and interviews with the social assistance and family protection directorates in Falesti and Soroca Rayons, and the Municipal Directorate for Child Rights Protection in Chisinau. The field visits aimed to check information on primary data sources, methods, and registers at the community and rayon levels and dataflows to inform the development of indicator reference sheet(s) (IRS) and guidelines for data quality and data use. This exercise helped

the MOHLSP understand at the national level the various dataflows and the value of documenting them to ensure higher quality data. The exercise has also led to the fine-tuning of routine monitoring indicators and the drafting of IRS for 23 indicators.

Moving forward, MEASURE Evaluation will mentor the directorate in the MOHLSP to further develop and fine-tune the IRS for all agreed-on indicators, based on the results of several working meetings of the M&E focal group, which met in February 2019.

The MOHLSP launched a post-training survey in cooperation with MEASURE Evaluation to understand to what extent the training courses and mentoring workshop provided by MEASURE Evaluation in March, April, and June 2018 were useful for the work of the trainees and to inform further capacity strengthening activities. The results of the survey show that the trainees used the acquired knowledge and skills in the following ways: (1) to draft or revise the M&E framework of the policy documents and related indicators (e.g., the National Development Strategy of Moldova 2030, National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Intersectoral Strategy for the Development of Parenting Skills and Competences 2016–2022, Roadmap and Action Plan for Ensuring the Safety of Children, Pupils and Students in Educational Facilities 2018–2019, Programme for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, Anti-Corruption Action Plan in the field of Healthcare and Health Insurance for 2018–2020, Code of Audio-Visual Media



DDU and Visualization training, Eric Geerse of MEASURE Evaluation presents DDU session, Armenia.
Photo: Hasmik Ghukasyan, MEASURE Evaluation.

Services, Action Plan Concerning the Implementation of the National Strategy “Diaspora 2025”); (2) to improve the quality of reporting (e.g., Social Report, Report on the Health Care Provided to Mother and Child, Monitoring Report of the Implementation of the Programme for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, Activity Report of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection for 2018, Report on the Implementation of the European Social Charter ratified by the Republic of Moldova); (3) to carry out a more efficient monitoring of existing strategies and action plans; and (4) to improve the data collection processes (e.g., indicators for the statistical report CER 103 and 103 A; data for the national indicators related to the United Nations’ Agenda for Sustainable Development).

Ghana: Ghana continues to operationalize routine monitoring in alternative care. MEASURE Evaluation conducted site visits to residential homes for children (RHCs) in September 2018 and documented the findings. In December 2018, in collaboration with staff from the DSW and UNICEF, MEASURE Evaluation used the findings from these site visits to inform a participatory review and revision of indicator definitions, dataflow, data collection tools, and next steps for capacity strengthening. The project’s M&E capacity strengthening activities are included in the draft action plan that was developed. Moreover, MEASURE Evaluation is supporting the DSW in developing an M&E Manual for Alternative Care to provide standard guidance for routine monitoring indicators, data collection tools, dataflow, data quality, and data use for the DSW and RHCs. The aim is for the DSW’s district and regional offices to use the manual as a reference document for routine monitoring standards and to train select DSW staff on the manual to support its rollout. Additional capacity strengthening activities will address gaps in the routine dissemination of data to stakeholders, and additional

mentorship for the DSW to monitor data quality and conduct quarterly supportive supervision visits.

Field Site Visits: Reactions from the Field

In addition to Uganda’s and Ghana’s implementation of site visits, MEASURE Evaluation also supported site visits in Moldova and Armenia based on the field visit guide, which aimed to support national governments to learn about dataflow, data quality, and data use at the subnational level. Lessons learned from the field visits have helped identify how critical it is to clarify dataflow for all stakeholders and to verify data quality.

Uganda: MEASURE Evaluation continues to work with the MGLSD to improve data quality and reporting processes for routine monitoring following the site visits in November 2018. The MGLSD’s Principal Probation and Welfare Officer shared his reaction to the site visits in the statement below.

“The site visits unearthed several alternative care data management gaps at [the] district level. Without appropriate tools and measures in place to collect sound data . . . we will do the same things over and over again, and you know what Einstein says. For us, the site visit was a wake-up call. There is [a] need to urgently strengthen capacity to collect and report on children in alternative care. This is essential to develop evidence-based services and policy responses.” —Principal Probation and Welfare Officer, Uganda

The team is currently working to address these gaps and standardize data collection and reporting tools, as well as draft a routine monitoring manual for the country.





Anush Stepanyan, administrator of Manuk Database, conducting a data quality check with specialists from the Vanadzor day care center, Armenia. Photo: Hasmik Ghukasyan, MEASURE Evaluation.

Armenia: In November and December 2018, MEASURE Evaluation conducted four site visits to regions and strengthened the capacity of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA) to conduct data quality checks and improve data use practices. Data quality checks conducted during the marz visits revealed that regional staff do not use the Manuk database for reporting and policy decision making, because they are not trained to generate output tables. During the meetings with regional staff of Marzpetaran Units of Family, Women, and Child Protection (CPUs), day care centers, and Aravot, the Manuk administrator trained relevant users on generating tables and reports to support decision making at the regional level. The recommendations from the site visits will direct the MOLSA's short-term, mid-term, and long-term action plans to address data quality and data use gaps.

“The marz visits were very productive for me, as they helped me to see the real snapshot of the care reform system from another angle: the challenges and problems the marz and community social workers and staff are facing on a routine basis. This especially relates to data collection and entering information in the Manuk database and using the data. All the findings served as a basis for me to initiate several amendments to and the design of new legal acts, which will improve the situation.” –Mrs. Lena Hayrapetyan, Head of Division, MOLSA, Children-Related Issues, Armenia



“The marz visits organized by the MEASURE Evaluation project were very productive for me, because they revealed issues and challenges faced by the regional staff with the Manuk database, which were never voiced during regular meetings. It also revealed that the data entered in the database did not always match the paper documentation, that poor Internet and old computers hinder the quality and timeliness of the data reported, and the difficulty staff face in accessing output tables and using the data in the database. I am confident that the steps we have initiated during and after these visits will improve the quality of the data and stimulate more active data entry and use. I highly value such support and hope this will improve the data and information of the care system as a whole.” – Anush Stepanyan, Administrator, Manuk database, from Nork Information Center Foundation of the MOLSA, Armenia





Longitudinal Case Management Information System Workshop, MEASURE Evaluation, Partnerships for Every Child, Lumos, CCF, Moldova.
Photo: Camelia Georghe, MEASURE Evaluation.

Electronic Solutions: A Work in Progress

MEASURE Evaluation launched an alternative care webinar series in the summer of 2018. These webinars provide a platform for the four countries to share knowledge, openly discuss successes and challenges related to alternative care, and exchange country-specific examples of care reform. Interest generated led to a second webinar in January 2019 that focused on Armenia's Manuk database and the strengths and weaknesses in data quality and use. The Armenia CCT led this webinar. Additional country examples from Moldova and Uganda are presented below.

Moldova: In February 2019, MEASURE Evaluation conducted a workshop for a proof of concept of a Longitudinal Case Management Information System that is able to capture both performance and child-level indicators. Participants were the MOHLSP, the Prime Minister's State Chancellery Office, the Ministry of the Interior, National Bureau of Statistics, two rayons (Sângerei and Căușeni), key NGOs (P4EC, Lumos, CCF/HHC, and the National Centre for Prevention of Child Abuse), UNICEF Moldova, and the USAID mission.

Uganda: In October 2018, MEASURE Evaluation conducted an assessment of the pilot implementation of the Children First Software (CFS), a management information system developed by Both Ends Believing and Tyler Technologies. The software aims to provide governments with information to move children from institutional care and safely place them with families. The assessment provided the primary stakeholder—the MGLSD—with findings and recommendations on the

CFS's ability to address priority information needs for the alternative care context in Uganda; the provision of effective privacy controls; and information technology infrastructure, resources, and capacity for the system. The final assessment report will be disseminated to the MGLSD and in-country stakeholders next month.

Supporting Other Global Initiatives

At the central level, the MEASURE Evaluation team continues to collaborate with the Better Care Network (BCN). BCN staff interviewed the project's four country-level consultants—Camelia Gheorghe (Moldova), Hasmik Ghukasyan (Armenia), Bashiru Adams (Ghana), and Ismael Ddumba-Nyanzi (Uganda)—to learn more about the national care reform assessment process in each country to inform the use of BCN's online tracking tool. MEASURE Evaluation also provided support to the newly funded Changing the Way We Care initiative, which is led by Catholic Relief Services, Maestral, and the Lumos Foundation. In December 2018, MEASURE Evaluation's team lead went over the approach we used in the four countries to help inform their future work in Guatemala and Kenya. MEASURE Evaluation's Mari Hickmann presented an Ignite session (a short, rapid-fire slideshow presentation) at the American Evaluation Association conference in November 2018. The title of the presentation was Participatory Self-Evaluation: Balancing Rigor with Real-Time Use of Findings to Improve Child Care Reform in Four Countries. More than 80 participants attended the presentation.



Longitudinal Case Management Information System workshop participants, Moldova. Photo by Camelia Gheorghe, MEASURE Evaluation.

Resources

MEASURE Evaluation worked to build the capacity of Armenia's MOLSA staff to develop 20 indicators for routine monitoring of the alternative care system and their indicator reference sheets. The following resources helped the team in this initiative:

A Solid Investment: Integrating Children Without Parental Care Into the Post-2015 Development Framework (available at <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/8a36a9f5-8a14-43ea-a80c-4f1d936d4f85/A-Solid-Investment-Integrating-Children-Into-Post-2015-Framework.pdf>)

UNICEF's Manual for the Measurement of Indicators for Children in Formal Care (available at <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/5016/pdf/5016.pdf>)

For information on MEASURE Evaluation, please visit www.measureevaluation.org.

For information on alternative care for children, please visit <https://www.measureevaluation.org/our-work/youth-and-adolescents/alternative-care/alternative-care-for-children>.

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