

COUNTRY OFFICE ANNUAL REPORT for Serbia



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This has been an important year for consolidating achievements of the current country programme and laying the ground for the new country programme. Of particular note is significant progress achieved in strengthening of the normative framework in the education and social welfare sectors. These ground-breaking new laws, informed by evidence and good practice, and supported by considerable budget allocations, will provide a sound basis for the new Country Programme's emphasis on supporting the implementation and monitoring of system reforms.

UNICEF Serbia's work as a knowledge leader has advanced, with major pieces of research on education inclusion, the impact of proposed taxation reform on vulnerable groups and the development of national social protection indicators proving instrumental in influencing policies and their implementation and monitoring. In addition, the importance of evidence-based policy making has been reinforced with national policy makers through the process of undertaking and discussing these critical research pieces.

2010 saw a major emphasis on building professional and institutional capacities within the child care system. A five year Master-plan for the Transformation of Residential Institutions for Children was finalized and to date, 13 of 22 residential institutions have begun implementing specific transformation plans. A model of health system gate-keeping for children with disability was incorporated into soft-law regulations as a first step towards ensuring its mandatory implementation.

While most planned programme results were achieved, implementation was delayed in some cases, due to protracted finalization of donor agreements or joint programmes. Work at the municipal level, including support to local planning for children and community-based learning centres for Roma children continued, but did not achieve the anticipated expansion and will require more strategic reflection and approaches if a critical mass is to be achieved.

Partnership with Parliament was further strengthened with the institutionalization of a permanent Parliamentary Committee on Child Rights with cross-partisan membership, chaired by the Parliament Speaker. Partnerships with the private sector, including media, have emphasised corporate social responsibility. By mediating and facilitating partnerships between Government and private entities, UNICEF has channelled resources and technological innovation to the benefit of the most vulnerable children and families.

2. COUNTRY SITUATION AS AFFECTING CHILDREN AND WOMEN

Serbia's priority remains the EU accession process which is having a positive impact on accelerating reforms in all sectors. In December 2009, Serbia submitted its membership application and in October 2010 the EU Council of Ministers forwarded it to the European Commission to form its opinion on the basis of a comprehensive questionnaire to be completed by the Government by the end of January 2011. The annual EC Progress Report was issued in November, finding generally good progress.

The impact of the global economic crisis continues to be felt in Serbia. The real GDP growth estimates are 1.5 percent for 2010 and 3 percent for 2011. Inflation increased recently to an estimated 9 percent for 2010, owing to volatile food prices and exchange

rate depreciation. A November IMF mission found that Serbia's performance under the Stand-by Agreement has been broadly on-track. A budget deficit target for 2011 of 4 percent of GDP was fixed and there was consensus on the importance of tighter fiscal policy.

The economic situation has impacted poverty levels, as revealed by the Household Budget Survey: in the first half of 2010, 8.8 percent of the population was living below the relative poverty line (compared to 6.9 percent in 2009). In response to the economic crisis and as a part of the 2010 national budget revision, 16 million additional Euros were allocated to social programmes. Measures included soup kitchens, food and hygiene packages, and urgent cash transfers to the poorest families. In addition, 69 of the least-developed municipalities received grants for provision of social welfare services.

Serbia continued to improve its legislative framework relevant to children's rights. The Law on Preschool Education was adopted, most notably requiring priority access for children with disabilities and from marginalized groups to regular preschool. The Law on the Basis of the Education System (2009) was implemented as of the 2010/2011 school year, bringing innovations related to inclusive education. Findings of a rapid assessment of the law's initial implementation revealed that the number of children with special needs in mainstream schools has increased, but that further efforts are needed to ensure the full inclusion of these children.

Other legislative reforms included the new draft Social Welfare Law which will increase the size and scope of the family allowance, limit institutional placements and introduce community based services supplied by various providers, including NGOs and the private sector. The Law on the Parliament was adopted in February and the new Rule Book formalizes a Parliamentary Committee for Child Rights. The Deputy Ombudsman for Children initiated the drafting of a comprehensive Children's Rights Law.

The [National MDG Report](#), published in 2010, shows that Serbia is largely on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but that disparities remain. The Under-Five Mortality Rate is three times higher for the Roma than the general population. Nearly 50 percent of Roma families are living below the poverty line and unemployment rates are estimated at 28 percent compared with 16.4 percent nationally. Education coverage remains high at 94.8 percent, but the (gross) completion rates are much lower for Roma (28 percent), poor (77 percent) and rural (89 percent) children.

Over the last year, Serbia has witnessed some unfortunate incidents of youth violence. Data from prosecution offices also show an overall rising trend in juvenile offences, including by "younger offenders" aged 14 and 15 years old. Data from the Centres for Social Work also indicates that "children with behavioral problems" are the fastest growing client group. There is growing recognition of the need to provide support mechanisms and services to help adolescents stay 'on-track' and not slip into anti-social behaviour.

In early November, the central Serbian municipality of Kraljevo was struck by an earthquake measuring 5.4 on the Richter scale, resulting in two deaths, significant damage to public infrastructure, and the displacement of families from over 1,000 homes. Local and national authorities were quick to respond, but the widespread damage to schools left over 17,000 students out of school for several weeks. UNICEF coordinated closely with local education officials to assess the damage and needs, and to ensure that within the UNCT and donor community, the response in the education sector was well coordinated and timely.

3. CP ANALYSIS & RESULT

3.1 CP Analysis

3.1.1 CP Overview:

In this last year of the country programme, ground was laid for the new cycle. Continued efforts to strengthen the normative framework saw significant advances. Important pieces of legislation in education and social welfare spheres were finalised. These will form the basis for further cooperation towards strengthening social inclusion. Evidence-based policy making was stepped up, with key pieces of research commissioned namely, (i) analysis of the potential impact of proposed reform of taxation policy and (ii) rapid assessment of the implementation of new inclusive education legislation.

The year was marked by the approval of the new Country Programme Document by the Executive Board and the signing of the Country Programme Action Plan with the Government. These efforts were participatory resulting in a high-degree of ownership by all staff. The main thrust of the new Country Programme (CP) on supporting national efforts for the social inclusion of vulnerable children and families, brings with it a sharper focus on equity and reduction of disparities.

Baseline data for the new CP is being collected through the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) IV, for which field work is now completed. The inclusion of a sub-sample on Roma will provide much-needed data on this particularly vulnerable group. As one of the first countries in the region to undertake this round of MICS, a major effort was required to refine and adapt the questionnaire, thus paving the way for the countries initiating MICS IV in the second wave.

Human rights' reporting was also in focus, with active UNICEF inputs to and participation in the Committee on the Rights of the Child's review of Serbia's initial reports on the two Optional Protocols. In addition, inputs were provided to a UNCT submission to the UN Committee on Human Rights related to Serbia's implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Partnership with the EU Delegation was further strengthened especially with regard to social inclusion of children with disabilities. The space for children's rights was also safeguarded in key EU progress reports and planning documents.

3.1.2 Programme Strategy

3.1.2.1 Capacity Development:

A key area of focus, capacity development aims at strengthening capacities of professionals and human resource management to ensure that services respond to newly adopted laws and by-laws, and broader institutional strengthening.

2010 saw a major emphasis on building professional capacities in the child care sector. Within the master plan on the transformation of residential care institutions the mapping of professionals identified the potential roles they could play in the transformed child care system. The mapping was followed by the design of specialized training enabling relevant staff to upgrade their skills for rendering improved quality of care and for supporting new family-based care alternatives. The major challenge ahead will be to develop human resource management mechanisms, including revision of job descriptions, continuing professional education, and performance indicators.

Efforts for institutional strengthening continued with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to enable it to take over the responsibility for the management and monitoring of the 'School Without Violence' initiative. These included the mainstreaming of standards for inspections into the regular system, and improved monitoring, prevention and response mechanisms.

Municipal capacities were also in focus. For example, in the most socio-economically disadvantaged region of Southern Serbia, an assessment of municipal skills in monitoring and evaluation showed limited capacities and understanding of M & E concepts. In 2011, efforts will be invested to increase knowledge of municipal authorities on availability and practical use of data, including through the use of DevInfo. To ensure sustainability of local planning for children, UNICEF enabled the municipalities that have adopted local plans of action for children, to participate in workshops, coaching and peer exchange, thereby helping to enhance their social mobilization, communication and fundraising skills.

3.1.2.2 Effective Advocacy:

Advocacy has taken a variety of forms in 2010, ranging from media campaigns to change public attitudes, to more focused influencing of policy. A major advocacy campaign on inclusion of children with disabilities was developed based on evidence generated through an opinion poll conducted in 2009. The findings of the poll were used to develop a multi-dimensional media campaign, carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLSP) and the Serbian Public Television network which has generated interest of private companies, media outlets and individuals.

In order to inform and guide the development of a draft Law on Children's Rights, UNICEF, in partnership with the Republic Ombudsman's Office, brought together Government, civil society, national and international legal experts. The two-pronged approach encompassed (a) sound analysis of the existing legal framework in collaboration with the Centre for Child Rights and (b) examination of experience and lessons learned from other countries with similar legal traditions.

Specific advocacy targeting specified policy components yielded some impressive results. In response to indications that the economic crisis was pushing more families into poverty, a 2009 research study supported by UNICEF showed that the size and scope of the principal means-tested social benefit for poor families (MOP) was insufficient to reduce poverty. In early 2010, this evidence was used to advocate with high-level policy makers in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLSP) to ensure that the new draft law on Social Welfare expands the coverage and increases the nominal value of the MOP.

Unfortunately the submission of the law was delayed by several months due to fiscal restrictions requiring zero-growth in public spending. However, UNICEF's strong advocacy with the World Bank (WB) and the MoLSP eventually had the desired effect, and in December the law was approved for submission to the Parliament, with its adoption expected in early 2011.

3.1.2.3 Strategic Partnerships:

Strategic partnerships continued to expand in 2010, with particular emphasis on UNICEF's role in facilitating government and other players to form productive partnerships. UNICEF has drawn important lessons from these experiences, particularly concerning the amount of time that needs to be invested in making the partnerships work and the results that can be achieved without funds flowing to or from UNICEF.

With regard to corporate partners, 2010 saw continuing cooperation with Telenor (a Norwegian mobile phone company) which contributed its ICT know-how to support the work of the Ministry of Health's Roma Health Mediators (RHM). The RHMs were provided with mobile phones and laptops to facilitate communication with Roma clients and health centres. Telenor also developed software and training that enables the RHMs and health centres to work closely together to monitor the health status of Roma families and track service coverage.

Partnership with civil society is also evolving, with new forms of partnership established based on shared interests and aims. In 2010 the NGO "Mother Courage" became a key partner in the field of maternity care. The NGO's creative and pro-active approach to monitoring the quality of maternity ward services through blogs, on-line opinion polls, TV chat shows and support lines for new mothers has made them a legitimate voice for women whose rights may be violated by hospital staff. UNICEF has been able to play a critical connecting role to ensure that this NGO has space to express their views to key policy makers and can influence the reform of maternity care services. The experience is a model for approaches planned in the new CP which begins in 2011.

Partnership with Parliament was further strengthened with the institutionalization (in the Parliamentary Rule-book) of a permanent Parliamentary Committee on Child Rights with cross-partisan membership, chaired by the Parliament Speaker. An important exchange visit to the German Bundestag served to further build capacities of the members of the Child Rights Working Group.

3.1.2.4 Knowledge Management:

Knowledge management has continued to be an important strategy in the country programme. In 2010, this included analysis of the impact of proposed taxation changes on vulnerable families and children, a rapid assessment of the implementation of new education legislation requiring inclusion of children with disabilities and others previously excluded from mainstream schools, and the strengthening of administrative data collection systems through support to the development of social protection indicators. Work has also begun to analyse the costing and financing of inclusive education. In all cases, these efforts aim to enhance Serbia's own evidence-based policy making capacities and outcomes.

Work to develop social protection indicators has enhanced awareness of stakeholders of what good indicators are and how they can be used to monitor and inform policy. It is expected that the indicators will be finalized early next year and then UNICEF will support the development of a first annual analytical report on the implementation of the new law on Social Welfare.

UNICEF supported the ex-ante analysis of the impact of proposed taxation reform on the most vulnerable, including its anticipated effects on families with children. The results and ensuing dialogue with top policy makers, finance-sector advisors and international financial institutions generated heated debate but more importantly, fostered recognition of the critical importance of such analysis prior to adopting any major policy reform.

In addition, meta-research on Roma early childhood was conducted, coordinated by the Regional Office, in collaboration with Roma Education Fund and Fund for an Open Society, which brought together a variety of data sources and information on young Roma children into one comprehensive document. The research will be finalized in 2011, and will serve as a basis for defining national recommendations to strengthen ECD policies and programmes for Roma children.

3.1.2.5 C4D Communication for Development:

School Without Violence (SWV) is recognized in Serbia as a well evolved C4D approach to preventing and addressing peer violence in schools. The programme, increasingly led by the Ministry of Education, is multi-faceted involving a combination of participatory research, direct engagement of children and adolescents, mobilization of various stakeholders (government, UNICEF National Ambassadors, business sector, local communities, CSOs, sports organizations, opinion leaders and media), and a mass media component.

In 2010, the focus was on implementing the results of the 2009 evaluation, which found that in most cases schools involved in SWV had successfully reduced violence levels among pupils. Recognizing SWV as good practice, the Ministry has allocated funds from a major World Bank loan programme to create a sustained peer network among SWV schools.

The experience of adapting SWV to secondary schools has been ongoing for almost one school year, and will soon be assessed to determine if the approach works effectively for older children and what further adaptations would be required to make it relevant for teenagers. This is particularly important, as youth violence is becoming more evident and at times involves children as young as 14 and 15. Working with older teenagers on violence prevention is considered an important priority by both Government and civil society.

3.1.3 Normative Principles

3.1.3.1 Human Rights Based Approach to Cooperation:

UNICEF adopted a strong human rights-based approach in developing the new CP. Beginning with a thorough analysis of data to clearly see disparities and be able to focus attention on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, a capacity gap analysis was undertaken to identify key strengths and weaknesses of duty bearers and assess the degree to which rights holders are able to demand their rights.

In the process a participatory approach was applied through wide-ranging consultations. Discussions were held among UNICEF staff in order to define the major strategies for the new CP, which were then fine-tuned through consultation with key partners from government, civil society sector and development partners. The goal was to support national efforts towards social inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized families and children, in line with international human and child rights standards and national goals/strategies.

The CP recognizes that the Government needs further support in its system reform process, with particular emphasis on the operationalization of new legal frameworks that are built on principles of equity and inclusion. At the same time, it acknowledges a vital role for non-governmental duty bearers, namely civil society, the private sector, independent institutions and the media, particularly when it comes to empowering rights holders to demand their rights and entitlements and in monitoring how well the government is delivering on its legal obligations toward the most vulnerable.

A critical theme running throughout the process of developing the country programme was accountability. The need was recognized for strengthening the mechanisms to hold public institutions and service providers accountable for the provision of quality services in accordance with legal obligations and for the fair treatment of all clients. Such mechanisms may include professional standards, stronger performance monitoring,

inspection, and evidence-based reporting on results and performance. At the same time, UNICEF will facilitate and support the strengthening of independent monitoring and advocacy to improve accountability. This will involve work with the Republic Ombudsman and Commissioner for Equality, Parliament, civil society, media and the private sector.

3.1.3.2 Gender Equality and Mainstreaming:

The CO conducted a gender assessment in 2010 to review progress in mainstreaming gender. Through the assessment process, which was participatory, the CO identified a few selected areas that will require a defined gender-specific approach in the next CP. These include strengthening the role of fathers in early childhood development; gender-related differences in violence against children; and gender based differences that affect reasons for and extent of school drop-out and that need to be accounted for in strategies preventing school drop-out.

Additionally, to improve gender mainstreaming, the CO will use internal mechanisms such as the NGO Committee and peer reviews of TORs more effectively in order to explicitly and systematically assess the degree to which gender dimensions and impacts have been taken into account in the design of collaborative activities and research.

3.1.3.3 Environmental Sustainability:

3.2 Programme Components:

Title: *Social policy reform for children*

Purpose:

The main objective of this component is to strengthen the national legal and social policy framework for children in Serbia. The key expected outcomes by the end of 2010 included:

- Regulatory frameworks for inclusive education and child care further developed and endorsed
- Policy options developed for improved mother, child, adolescent-friendly health services
- Indicators for monitoring children’s well-being designed and refined
- Data on the status of children and impact of the economic crisis collected and analysed
- Capacity of national and local authorities to collect and use data for monitoring and policy development is increased.

Resources Used:

Donors: Government of Ireland, Government of Italy, European Commission, Swiss Agency for Development, Netherlands Committee for UNICEF, corporate and private donors in Serbia.

Donors for JPs: Government of Norway, Government of Spain - MDG Fund, Swiss Agency for Development, SIDA Sweden.

Other Sources of Funds: Global Thematic Fund (education, child protection, policy advocacy and partnership), 7% Set-Aside Fund.

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| Total approved budget for 2010 as per CPD (in USD) | 1,270,000 |
| Summary of funds available to the Programme Component in 2010 from RR and OR | 1,128,118 |

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| - RR | 132,119 |
| - OR | 995,999 |

Result Achieved:

Work in this programme component focused on contributing to the development of normative frameworks and the generation of knowledge for policy making.

Building on the documented good practice in child care system reform, UNICEF provided key contributions to the finalization of the law on Social Welfare. This law brings major innovations by banning institutionalization of children under-3 years, prioritizing community care, and transforming the role of Centres for Social Work (CSWs) to become focused on gate keeping and case management and rely more on non-state actors as direct service providers. The law also stipulates mechanisms for earmarked transfers for financing community services, and increases coverage and nominal value of MOP. To accelerate the implementation of this law UNICEF supported the development of by-laws, which will continue in 2011.

Despite good progress on the content of the law, the major constraint is its delayed adoption, which is expected in early 2011.

The definition of priority services for families of children with disabilities has moved forward through a tripartite partnership between the MoLSP, EU and UNICEF. Agreed services are now the focus of harmonized support through UNICEF technical assistance and an EU-administered grants scheme which will continue in 2011.

As regards education legislation, UNICEF provided inputs to the 2010 Law on Preschool Education, which ensures that marginalized children have priority in preschool enrolment. With very short preparation time, implementation of the new inclusive education laws began in September 2010. In order to better understand and respond to implementation challenges, UNICEF supported MoE by conducting a rapid assessment and developing practical monitoring tools. Findings will be used by MoE to make adjustments as early as January 2011.

Work also began in the area of education financing, as part of a broad reform of the financing system supported by the WB. UNICEF is providing concrete evidence and recommendations for the costing and financing of inclusive education that will inform the planned per-pupil funding formula. Other education sector reforms include the optimization of the school network which is building on research conducted by UNICEF in 2002. The optimization work, led by the WB, is using the recommendations of the UNICEF study to help define optimal models for the school network.

Evidence from research on most at-risk adolescents (MARA) informed the new National HIV/AIDS Strategy (2011-2015), prompting fuller recognition of MARA among those at-risk. UNICEF's participation in strategy development was instrumental in ensuring that roles of social welfare and education sectors are recognized in HIV prevention and care. In the health field, evidence generated in the 2009 Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) evaluation convinced the Ministry of Health to initiate a process of introducing baby-friendly standards into the regular standards of maternity hospitals. New guidelines for the health care of women, children and youth were developed, using international standards and guides to ensure that they incorporate early childhood development approaches, refer to children with disability, and strengthen prevention and early identification of health risks among adolescents.

An ex-ante analysis of the impact of suggested taxation reform on vulnerable children and families, conducted by UNICEF, was recognized as good practice when it comes to evidence-based policy making processes. Experts in the field and decision makers agreed that all major policy proposals should include the assessment of their potential impact on poverty, inequality and employment before final decision is made.

The generation of essential data on progress and disparities when it comes to children's well-being continued in 2010 with the implementation of MICS 4 in partnership with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS). As this was the first time that SORS is implementing the MICS independently, additional capacity building was provided in the planning phases. Data collection was scheduled for completion in December and analysis and report writing will take place in early 2011.

Although awareness on a need to have disaggregated data has increased among public authorities, capacity to collect and analyze these data remains a serious constraint. One significant breakthrough came with the definition of social protection indicators that will be the basis for revision of administrative data collection. This will enable the collection of key data for monitoring ongoing reform, appropriately disaggregated to reveal disparities. The challenge ahead is to pursue similar approaches in other sectors.

Future Workplan:

Priorities for 2011 include the following:

- technical assistance in the development of services for families of children with disabilities within the framework of the EU funded project and grants scheme
- support to the MoE in implementing the recommendations of the rapid assessment on inclusive education and in contributing to the education financing reform process with inputs on inclusive education
- support to the MoH in introducing baby-friendly standards into regular standards of maternity hospitals
- analyses of potential impact on vulnerable persons of potential future policy changes
- analysis and publication of MICS 4 findings
- development of indicators disaggregated to reveal disparities in relevant sectors.

Title: *System and institution building*

Purpose:

This programme component aims to ensure access to quality and child-centred social services, especially for poor and excluded children. The main objectives and expected outcomes by the end of 2010 were:

- Access to services for the most socially excluded children is increased
- Professional capacities for child protection are developed in line with revised policies and accredited programmes on child care reform, violence and juvenile justice
- Professional capacities in the education sector are increased to enhance implementation of the Basic Law on Education for inclusive, child-centered and safe schools
- Quality of professional standards for health care of children, adolescents and women are further developed, endorsed and packaged for implementation.

Resources Used:

Donors: Government of Ireland, Government of Italy, European Commission, Swiss Agency for Development, corporate and private donors in Serbia.

Donors for JPs: Government of Norway, Government of Spain - MDG Fund, Swiss Agency for Development, SIDA Sweden.

Other sources of funds: Global Thematic Fund (education, child protection).

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| Total approved budget for 2010 as per CPD (in USD) | 1,320,000 |
| Summary of funds available to the Programme Component in 2010 from RR and OR | 1,638,514 |
| - RR | 140,000 |
| - OR | 1,498,514 |

Result Achieved:

Institution-building efforts continued in 2010, focused on key areas where reform is ongoing.

Work on the prevention of institutionalization/exclusion of children with disability focused on transforming the practices of residential institutions, enhancing the fostering system so that it is accessible for children with disability, and building capacities in the health system so that it provides socially inclusive support to parents of newborns. Field monitoring undertaken during 2010 showed that 13 of 22 residential institutions for children have started developing community services, fostering of children with disability has experienced a modest beginning, and the health system has integrated procedures into national guidelines.

Significant challenges remain. Shifting the mandate and practice of the CSWs from service provision to gate keeping in line with the draft Social Welfare Law, requires much more systematic and strategic engagement directly with the CSWs and at the national level where their work-priorities are defined. It is also clear that sustainability requires synchronization with policy reform. In anticipation of the new Social Welfare Law, institution-building was carried out in advance of the corresponding policy changes.

Expanding access to education was realized through an innovative collaboration between the MoE, Roma Education Fund, OSCE and UNICEF which focuses on increasing Roma children's enrolment in the one-year obligatory preparatory pre-school programme (PPP). The collaboration resulted in increased awareness of municipal authorities and community leaders in the 35 municipalities with largest Roma populations. Emphasis was placed on the obligation to send all children to PPP and enhancing capacity to identify out-of-school children.

Institution building related to violence protection has advanced in the education sector. Based on findings of the 2009 School without Violence evaluation and with support of UNICEF, the MoE has mainstreamed violence prevention procedures into a binding by-law. The evaluation also informed the development of indicators to monitor violence occurrences and responses, but their full institutionalization within the education sector is pending. As of the 2010 school year, 17.5% of all primary schools in Serbia are completing steps toward becoming "schools without violence".

A continuing challenge is from the insufficient coordination of violence-protection responses among actors at the local level. Although the police and the education sector have made progress by integrating procedures into their mainstream regulations, very little data is available on the application of violence prevention procedures in health, social protection and justice systems. Future focus will be on mainstreaming these

practices in the social welfare and health systems, and in developing adequate data collection and monitoring systems.

The assessment of the implementation of key elements of the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Law, currently being finalised, will serve as the basis of a three-year JJ reform initiative of the Ministry of Justice. UNICEF is committed to take the lead in defining procedures/ standards for at least three diversionary schemes and to assist in improving the JJ data-management system.

The research on MARA has been critical to guiding the development of new programmes with civil society organizations. These include outreach services for adolescents living on the streets and HIV prevention programmes for young injecting drug users (IDUs). The good practice from these projects is being fed into the development of service standards for outreach work and assistance to IDUs. Accreditation of these services within the social welfare system is expected in 2011. Partnering with the Global Fund for Tuberculosis, AIDS and Malaria (GFTAM) project implementers, UNICEF ensured that adolescents are given higher priority.

Geographically focused efforts to improve access to services for the most vulnerable began in the ethnically diverse and economically poor region of South Serbia through a joint UN programme. Despite significant delays in start-up, due primarily to challenges of inter-agency cooperation, work began in 13 municipalities, with a focus on civil registration support services, access to health and education services, strengthening municipal capacity for monitoring and usage of data, and collaboration with youth organizations to promote inter-cultural cohesion.

Future Workplan:

Priorities for 2011 will include the following:

- further institution-building in line with the new Social Welfare Law, expected to be adopted in 2011
- institutionalisation of indicators on violence in the education sector
- mainstreaming violence-protection responses and monitoring, especially in social welfare and health sectors
- support in defining procedures/standards for at least three diversionary schemes and improving data-management within the reform of the juvenile justice system of the Ministry of Justice
- defining the costs and financing of services, and strengthening the role of community-based providers to apply new standards developed within the ongoing child-care reform.

Title: *Community mobilization*

Purpose:

The objective of this programme component for 2005-2010 was to ensure that children, their families and communities were aware of, and given the means to participate in, decisions and processes affecting their lives. The expected outcomes by the end of 2010 were:

- Models of enhanced cooperation between public institutions and civil society organizations developed.
- The concept of and minimum standards for "municipalities fit for children" developed and packaged, based on documentation of experience of LPA

- Institutional and individual capacities for social engagement of children and youth strengthened.

Resources Used:

Donors: Government of Italy, European Commission, Swiss Agency for Development, USAID.

Donors for JPs: Government of Norway, Government of Spain - MDG Fund, Swiss Agency for Development, SIDA Sweden.

Other sources of funds: Global Thematic Funds (child protection).

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| Total approved budget for 2010 as per CPD (in USD) | 1,270,000 |
| Summary of funds available to the Programme Component in 2010 from RR and OR | 293,707 |
| - RR | 25,952 |
| - OR | 267,755 |

Result Achieved:

Efforts in 2010 prioritized local partners’ networking and the mainstreaming of approaches to social inclusion at local level.

UNICEF supported the establishment of a Network of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) working with children. The process was crowned with a national conference that gathered 43 CSOs who adopted the Platform for Children, committing to work for the realization of the rights of all children. UNICEF is committed to systematically develop capacities, particularly in the areas of monitoring and in use of evidence to influence policy changes.

Through continuing support to Development Education Centres (DEC), a community-based model, social inclusion of Roma children was supported in 10 municipalities in south Serbia with the key aim of supporting early learning. As a result, in some municipalities up to 50 percent more Roma children enrolled to the one-year compulsory Preparatory Preschool Programme (PPP) and primary school attendance increased by 20 percent. In addition, support was provided to Roma communities for the procurement of personal documents and information campaigns conducted for parents, community leaders on new legal provisions supporting social inclusion.

The DECs have been recognized by the Government’s Roma Council as a successful model for reaching the Roma Decade Goals and by the MoE as good-practice in non-formal education efforts. Three new DECs were established by municipalities in 2010. It is expected that municipalities will take full ownership for the running and financing of the DECs in 2011, and that UNICEF support will be limited to the provision of capacity building and facilitation of networking.

Children from socially deprived families and other marginalised children were at the heart of Local Plans for Action for Children (LPA) in 21 municipalities. In 2010, efforts of LPA inter-sectoral teams, local authorities and NGOs resulted in 1,000 children receiving administrative, logistic, pedagogical and financial support to enroll in schools and access other public services, and 257 children with special needs supported to enroll in mainstream education. A system for monitoring school attendance of vulnerable children was established. Regular fora provided space for children and youth to express their views and influence decision-making.

Related work with youth was done through municipal Youth Offices under the umbrella of joint UN programmes, with efforts focused on strengthening their capacity to reach out to and involve disadvantaged and excluded youth.

Post-emergency support was provided to Kraljevo municipality, in response to the earthquake. UNICEF coordinated closely with local education officials to assess the damage and needs, and to ensure that within the UNCT and donor community, the response in the education sector was well coordinated and timely. UNICEF procured needed teaching aides, sports equipment and hygiene materials for 10,000 children in primary schools and school supplies for 10% of primary students.

With regard to LPAs (Local Plans of Action), the main constraint continues to be the small scale and limited coverage of the initiative. While one new municipality decided in 2010 to develop an LPA and received peer-support from other municipalities, the approach continues to be applied in very few localities and benefits a relatively small number of children. The promotion of child-focused local planning will continue through existing networks such as the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities and relevant NGO networks.

Future Workplan:

Priorities for 2011 include the following:

- Cooperation with the newly established NGO Network will continue, with particular emphasis on enhancing their independent monitoring and their capacities to influence policy making in an evidence-based manner.
- Greater focus will be placed on inter-sectoral cooperation at local level, including upgrading of capacities of the newly established municipal commissions for inclusion responsible for assessment, referral and case-review.
- Continued work with local youth service providers and actors namely, Youth Offices and civil society organizations, supporting them to advocate for and develop inclusive programmes with and for vulnerable youth.

Title: *Partnership for child rights*

Purpose:

The objective of the 2005-2010 programme is to raise awareness of children’s and women’s rights in the country and to create a national commitment for their realization. The expected main results by end of 2010 were:

- Child rights are promoted amongst the general public, decision-makers and private sector, with a special focus on social inclusion of children with disabilities
- Knowledge is generated on the potentials and pitfalls of new media to promote and protect children’s rights
- Monitoring capacities of statutory child rights bodies are upgraded
- Partnerships expanded to foster child-focused responsibility in both the media and the corporate sector.

Resources Used:

Donors: Government of Italy, corporate and private donors in Serbia

Other sources of funds: Global Thematic Fund (child protection, policy advocacy and partnership)

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| Total approved budget for 2010 as per CPD (in USD) | 310,000 |
| Summary of funds available to | 282,467 |

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| the Programme Component in 2010 from RR and OR | |
| - RR | 84,424 |
| - OR | 198,043 |

Result Achieved:

UNICEF's two-year partnership with the Serbian Parliament resulted in the institutionalization of a permanent Parliamentary Committee on Child Rights. UNICEF continues to facilitate peer exchange, public hearings and draft law presentations by Government. In 2010 this included hearings on the draft pre-school law, health education and an annual report presentation by the Deputy Ombudsman for children. UNICEF's engagement with Parliament attracted the interest of other countries and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and has been cited as a "good practice".

Other partnership results included an expert consultation on the draft Law on Children's Rights organized with the Deputy Ombudsman for children and the development of a new National Plan of Action for Children (NPA) led by the Council for Child Rights. The new NPA was drafted in a highly participatory manner, through a series of workshops and consultations with national and local stakeholders and is expected to be adopted in early 2011.

Engagement with the media has resulted in enhanced interest by media organizations to strengthen their child-focused corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices. The most tangible result is the cooperation established with Serbia's National public service television (RTS) and the MoLSP for a three month campaign on the social inclusion of children with disability. In addition to the standard campaigning practices, RTS' mainstreaming of the topic through regular programming (news, public debates, magazine and morning programmes) led to substantial coverage of the issue and generated interest by individuals, media companies and private sector.

Partnership with national Ambassadors for UNICEF energized fundraising campaigns and the promotion of conflict prevention and fair play. For example, Ana Ivanovic, a Serbian tennis champion, played an active role in promoting the values and achievements of schools without violence, and got high-profile media coverage.

With a national Strategy for CSR adopted in 2010, UNICEF expanded its work with the corporate sector to promote child-focused CSR. Together with leading business media and business associations, UNICEF co-organized a conference "Media, Corporate Sector and CSR", with participation of leading business people, editors of media outlets, and the presence of the President of Serbia. Partnership with Ekonom-east Media Group further fostered the promotion of child-focused CSR.

Furthermore, UNICEF set the ground for the establishment of a child rights working group within the Serbian Global Compact Network (GCN). While there is great enthusiasm on the part of GCN members, it will be a challenge in 2011 to ensure that UNICEF is able to deliver relevant, high quality tools and guidance. In this regard, some knowledge will be generated by a survey of 40 large companies in Serbia on the corporate sector's child-related CSR practices and their perception of current collaboration with UNICEF.

Corporate partnerships aimed at leveraging resources also expanded, ensuring investment in deprived communities and innovative solutions for children. Collaboration between MoH, UNICEF and Telenor, resulted in more efficient health services for Roma

families and generation of quality data on Roma health using specially developed software.

In 2010, UNICEF Serbia conducted its first international fundraising campaign for Haiti emergency, raising more than 20,000 Euro. The small scale campaign confirmed the in-country potential for fundraising for international causes. Closer to home, fundraising efforts for the Kraljevo earthquake response, focused on procurement of educational and hygiene materials, proved successful, with financial and in-kind contributions secured in a timely manner.

The main constraint to fundraising continues to be the lack of banking facilities for receipt of contributions of private individuals and corporate sector. To overcome this barrier, UNICEF started negotiations with another bank that could facilitate credit cards payments.

Future Workplan:

Priorities for 2011 will include the following:

- Continued partnership with the Serbian Parliament with a focus on the monitoring and oversight functions of the Parliamentary Committee for Child Rights.
- Use of the findings from a corporate survey to expand CSR-focused alliances with the private sector, including through the Serbian Global Compact Network.
- Expansion of pledge programmes and corporate partnerships, involving innovative ways to leverage resources.
- Capacity building of the media to improve reporting on children and establish monitoring systems, including through integration of child rights into the Journalism University curriculum.

Title: *Cross sectoral costs*

Purpose:

Cross-sectoral costs cover salaries of cross-cutting staff, travel, training and equipment, as necessary, as well as additional operational support to country office management and administration.

Resources Used:

Donors: Government of Italy, European Commission, Swiss Agency for Development.

Donors for JPS: Government of Norway, Government of Spain - MDG Fund, Swiss Agency for Development, SIDA Sweden

Other sources of funds: UNICEF product sale.

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Total approved budget for 2010 as per CPD (in USD) | 480,000 |
| Summary of funds available to the Programme Component in 2010 from RR and OR | 251,842 |
| - RR | 125,104 |
| - OR | 126,738 |

Result Achieved:

Due to the nature of this component, specific outcomes are not defined. Achievement of results is described above within the framework of the relevant programme component.

Future Workplan:

Future priorities are linked to activities defined in the other four programme components and will encompass, as before, support to the implementation of the Country Programme in 2011.

4. OPERATIONS & MANAGEMENT

4.1 Governance & Systems

4.1.1 Governance Structure:

Based on the CPD approved in 2010, the CPMP process was completed with active engagement and participation of the whole office, Staff Association and with technical support from the RO. Following the CPMP, the office embarked on the CPAP development process, engaging all programme staff and consulting with Government and civil society partners.

A refresher training course on CCCs is planned for 2011.

The CO (office) actively participated in the global organisational processes of development and introduction of OneERP-Vision through providing inputs, feedback and reports. The IPSAS implementation process was supported through the CO comprehensive review of globally proposed Chart of Accounts and feedback provided to HQ - DFAM.

The AMP for 2010 includes five programme and five management priorities. Advances were made in all programme areas, with slower progress in addressing the quality of education. On the management side, there were some delays in the preparation for change management and business improvement plan implementation due to postponed roll-out plans. Mid-year and end-of-year reviews of programme and AMP progress were conducted.

The effective functioning of office governance bodies is monitored by CMT. Standards for committee functions place emphasis on participation, quality and timeliness of review. CRC and CRB committees are established at Area office level to review submissions for both Croatia and Serbia offices.

In 2010, CMT approved the streamlining of travel process and standards related to NGO committee and a new PCA format.

CMT has streamlined performance indicators, reviewing the standards for planning processes, programme implementation, emergency preparedness, FR, private funding and partnership, donor reporting and M&E, with focus on macro-level monitoring, overall coherence with global standards, and with completed quality review of standards of HACT field visits and spot checks.

CMT regularly met and monitored management indicators, based on OMR and in-house Monthly Management Reports (MMR).

4.1.2 Strategic Risk Management:

In 2010, the ERM process identified and analyzed ten major risks, including four strategic (government accountability, access to OR funding, knowledge generation, governance structures), three programmatic (performance metrics, joint projects and decision making) and operational and financial risks (confidence in knowledge of organisational policies, and funding and resource management). Following the assessment of risks, the RCSA (risk control self-assessment exercise) was completed and Risk Control Library built and endorsed by CMT. ERM tools and objectives will be included in the 2011 AMP.

Intranet-based Early Warning Early Action for emergency preparedness and the office business continuity plan were regularly updated, to ensure adequate level of readiness, timely response in relation to potential emergency situation and business continuity standards.

In view of the above, the CO was able to respond quickly and efficiently to the emergency situation caused by the earthquake that hit the municipality of Kraljevo in central Serbia on 3 November 2010.

4.1.3 Evaluation:

The Annual IMEP was developed on the basis of the 5-year IMEP and revisited during the mid-year review process. While several evaluations were finalized in 2009 and used to inform the development of the new Country Programme for 2011 -2015, no evaluations were planned for 2010.

MICS 4 was initiated in 2010, with data collection completed. A review was undertaken in order to assess gender mainstreaming in the 2005-2010 country programme and to improve performance in the new CP.

Findings and recommendations of the 2009 evaluation of BFHI+ were translated by the Ministry of Health (MoH) into a plan for introducing new standards. The results of the 2009 School Without Violence Evaluation informed a new by-law adopted by the MoE, and further improved the methodology of the School without Violence initiative.

4.1.4 Information Technology and Communication:

ICT resources and services are in line with UNICEF policies and industry standards, as one of business objectives is to prioritize high quality of IT resources in support of achievement of CP results. Within this framework, the office procured necessary hardware to support implementation of the Windows 7 operating system and Microsoft Office 2010 Suite. The quality standards equally include continued availability of all IT resources, remote access via citrix accessed by all users, efficient user support, effective business continuity and IT disaster recovery plan and hosting of IT resources for Croatia office. IT disaster recovery plan was updated and back-up procedures were performed regularly.

The office internet connection was migrated to a fiber-optic link in preparation for the future introduction of SAP/VISION, Microsoft Exchange (messaging), Microsoft SharePoint and Unified Communications. To ensure business continuity, additional ADSL backup link continues to be available. In addition, the ProMS application was upgraded to 9.1.

The office was selected and successfully participated in two open pilot projects: ASDM (Adaptive Security Device Manager) CISCO Network Monitoring Tool for monitoring and analyzing of network traffic and project for testing of and providing the recommendation for implementation Branch Cash feature of Windows 2008 R2 with Hyper-V (virtualization technology based server).

Functioning IT equipment that was written off was donated to implementing partners while out-of-order equipment was disposed in an environmentally secure manner or recycled.

Anticipating future needs of the office, IT staff was trained in Microsoft Certified Information Technology Professional (MCITP) Enterprise Administrator 2008.

4.2 Fin Res & Stewardship

4.2.1 Fund-raising & Donor Relations:

All donor reports were sent on time and reviewed for quality by the Deputy Representative. One donor, SDC provided positive feedback on our report.

Of the approved OR ceiling for 2010 (4.2M), 81% of funds were raised (3.4M). Activities in all sectors, foreseen in the annual workplans for 2010, were funded.

All PBAs were fully utilized and funds management closely monitored by the CMT and in programme section meetings, through monthly management reports and participatory review and discussions.

The findings of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) for Serbia were presented and discussed in early 2010. While UNICEF performed strongly in most areas, including strategic management, knowledge management and many aspects of operational and relationship management, performance was merely adequate when it came to perceived transparency in aid allocation decisions and in using country systems. The CMT took these findings seriously and took measures to improve transparency of recruitment, contracting, etc.

Work with the private sector was marked by the continuation of collaboration with the Norwegian mobile phone company Telenor on the joint project of the Ministry of Health and UNICEF. Mobile phones and laptops were provided to Roma health mediators to facilitate communication with Roma clients and health centers. Furthermore, Telenor developed a software and training for easier monitoring of the health status of Roma families and tracking of service coverage.

4.2.2 Management of Financial and Other Assets:

The CMT regularly monitored contributions management, programme implementation and DCT management through a set of management reports. In addition to the OMR and in-house MMR, a tracking tool was developed to monitor expenditure by planned results in each programme area and summaries discussed by CMT. Regular feedback was provided during the all-staff meetings.

In 2010, the office did not have any DCTs outstanding more than 9 months and had two outstanding DCTs over 6 months in the first quarter, which were rapidly liquidated at the beginning of the second quarter.

The significant fall of the local currency in relation to the Euro affected budgets, procurement processes, and contracts, as vendors continued to respond to offers in

Euro, payable in RSD. Coupled with the recession, the general decline of business activity, relatively high inflation and liquidity issues, this contributed to overall business instability.

Closer cooperation with UNDP was achieved in HACT implementation, as UNDP prioritized HACT as one of the objectives for 2010. The macro-assessment of the Serbian Public Finance Management system was completed, revealing opportunities to strengthen the system and government capacity for audit and assurance activities in project implementation. Micro-assessments of partners were finalized by UNICEF. As per the HACT assurance plan, 9 out of 12 NGO partners were assessed through 25 field and spot check visits, and 11 of 26 governmental partners through 12 visits.

The CO supported Croatia office in a self-assessment exercise in preparation for the audit in Q4 of 2010.

Bank reconciliations and month and year end closures were completed in a timely manner.

Expenditure rates for 2010 are 100% each for RR, OR and SB. All expiring PBAs were fully expended.

A building maintenance plan was prepared and implemented, funded from RCF, to ensure appropriate maintenance, enhance the quality of space and meet standards of UNICEF premises.

Regarding cost savings, the office stayed within reduced support budget allotments, envisaged by the 2009 savings plan, and saved an additional US\$2,500 in 2010.

4.2.3 Supply:

The total value of procurements (supply requisition component) amounts to USD 135,227.

The office has completed 72 market research processes and 6 ITB processes for local procurements.

The total value of institutional service contracts in 2010 amounts to US\$ 474,184.82 in 64 institutional contracts for translation services, photocopy services, logistic support, distribution centre/warehouse management, telemarketing services, press clipping, communications material designer services, travel, accommodation, conference organization, maintenance services for premises, vehicles and equipment, security services, internet connectivity and other services.

In 2010, the supply component consisted largely of printing of programme publications and promotional materials for fundraising and sales campaigns. Procurements also included purchasing of supplies for conferences, office stationery and miscellaneous supplies. The office purchased new computers to align with IT standards and technological requirements for migration to Win 2008 server.

Emergency procurement of education supplies and furniture was completed for Kraljevo earthquake affected schools.

A number of service contracts were arranged for, including premises security, ancillary services and regular maintenance and renovations of the building.

A review of the management and sales of PFP goods resulted in a reduction and consolidation of stock and warehouse space. The management of PFP supplies is systematized with regular reporting enabling UNICEF to maintain better oversight.

4.3 Human Resource Capacity:

The 2010 CPMP process helped the office reflect on the requirements for the new country programme and identify opportunities to build and strengthen new competencies. During the process, existing competencies were carefully assessed and matched with needs. Based on this analysis, additional job profiles were prepared and some functions upgraded and professionalised. Several higher level positions were established and support roles streamlined through consolidation, merging, re-distribution of some functions and outsourcing.

In preparation for the new CP, four recruitments were completed for UNICEF Serbia using CBI tools and methodology. In addition, assistance was provided for two recruitments for UNICEF's Croatia office.

KAs and PERs were completed, with regular performance discussions taking place throughout the year.

The CRB is established at area level and reviews cases for Croatia and Serbia offices. EPRP and BC envisage staff roles, required capacities and engagement in case of emergency.

The Local Staff Development Committee played a significant role in identifying competency gaps and supporting staff training. Individual and group trainings were organized to respond to requirements of the CP.

At an all office retreat, staff was trained in ethics and integrity as part of a piloting of global training being developed by the Principal Ethics Advisor. The retreat was also an opportunity for staff to enhance their communications skills through a half-day workshop facilitated by a local expert.

In 2010, the office held refresher training on the minimum standards for HIV in the workplace. The elected peer support volunteer continued to be available for staff.

Staff Association actively contributed to the CPMP process and played a role in diverse team building events.

4.4 Other Issues

4.4.1 Management Areas Requiring Improvement:

UN common services agreements included contracts for banking services, GSM telecommunications, courier, procurement of toner, cleaning supplies, photocopiers maintenance etc, providing for efficiencies in bargaining power, use of staff time and better rates.

The management of cards/product sales in Serbia and Croatia is under review to reduce transaction costs and optimize efficiency. A comprehensive review of inventory was conducted whereby the volume of stock was significantly reduced. Warehousing and logistics costs were reduced by 40% to ensure higher net income.

4.4.2 Changes in AMP:

The 2011 AMP will follow the thrust of the new CPAP and introduce VISION-like management tools and indicators. The ERM process will facilitate more elaborate assessment of risks in participatory manner, review of quality of risk management systems, and set grounds for staff training to enable full-fledged introduction of enterprise risk management as business approach. Based on the review of 2010 AMP, CMT will further refine management indicators.

5. STUDIES, SURVEYS, EVALUATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

5.1 List of Studies, Surveys & Evaluations:

- 1. Rapid Assessment on the First Experiences of Inclusive Education in the Republic of Serbia*
- 2. An Analysis of the Effects of the Proposed Tax Changes on Poverty and Vulnerable Groups*
- 3. MICS Country Survey Plan*
- 4. Social Protection Indicators*
- 5. Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in UNICEF's Serbia Programme*

5.2 List of Other Publications

- 1. Guide for Governing Boards of Residential Institutions for Children*
- 2. Manual for Work with Families of Children with Disabilities in Community Settings*
- 3. Handbook for Operational Planning in Centres for Social Work*
- 4. Child's Place is in the Family - A Guide for Health Care Professionals in Counselling Families of Infants with Disabilities*

6. INNOVATION & LESSONS LEARNED

Title: *Transforming Residential Institutions for Children and Developing Sustainable Alternatives*

Contact Person: Judita Reichenberg, jreichenberg@unicef.org

Abstract:

UNICEF Serbia's strong partnership with Government over the past three years has contributed to significant progress toward the transformation of residential institutions for children, with the ratio of children in institutional care versus those in foster care reversed from 2:1 to 1:2. While more work is needed, particularly for children with severe disabilities who represent two-thirds of those in institutional care, the experience has demonstrated that with strong political will, a well-coordinated and evidence-based approach, and strong advocacy, dramatic change is possible.

The approach has also managed to seize opportunity in a time of economic crisis, by using the pressure for the rationalization of resources to push for cost-effectiveness as a key driver of change in favour of deinstitutionalisation. At the same time, through sustained advocacy, demand was mobilized for deinstitutionalization and better care for

children by placing them in family environments with supportive community-based services.

Innovation or Lessons Learned:

Although still on-going, the process is generating useful lessons and innovations.

1. It reaffirms the importance of strong and persistent commitment among top policy makers to translating policies into actions, and the essential role that UNICEF can play, using evidence-based advocacy to mobilize commitment.
2. The process is demonstrating the importance of involving local-level managers and practitioners, who are the most directly affected by reforms. While it is time consuming and challenging, their participation in the design and implementation of reforms is essential to build ownership and overcome possible resistance to change.
3. A key innovation was finding opportunities in economic adversity, by using the pressure for rationalization of public budgets as a lever for change. By providing compelling evidence that the proposed changes were both feasible and cost effective, UNICEF is helping the Government *to do more for children with fewer resources*.

Potential Application:

This approach can be instructive to other country offices in CEE/CIS region and beyond. The challenges faced by many countries to adopt and implement policies which prioritize family and community care over institutionalization are immense. In Serbia's case, the combination of strategies used and opportunities seized resulted in tangible progress. In many countries a key obstacle is the lack of understanding amongst policy-makers and the general public of the costs of institutionalization to the child, society and the economy. Evidence on the societal returns of family-based care for children should be the basis for persistent advocacy in order to create a facilitative environment which is a pre-requisite for reforms to take root.

Issue/Background:

The placement of disadvantaged children in residential institutions was the leading paradigm of child care in Serbia until 2005, when the Government slowly began to articulate reform of institutional care. In 2007, the NGO, Mental Disability Rights International (MDRI) published a widely reported investigation into the treatment of children with disabilities living in Serbian institutions. The government increased its effort to address the situation, opening space for UNICEF to engage with the responsible Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and push for immediate measures to be taken.

Strategy and Implementation:

The strategy has been multi-dimensional, including advocacy, evidence-based planning, participation and partnership. The initial focus was on persistent advocacy as a means of mobilizing political will at the highest levels. Following the MDRI report, UNICEF pushed firmly for Government recognition of the need to reform institutions and for decisive action.

An evidence-based approach was essential to gain government support and conviction. Advocacy, strategies and plans were all informed by proof of the negative impact on children's development and the high financial costs of institutionalization. These two streams of compelling evidence drove the creation of synergistic solutions that were both good for children and cost effective.

Also critical to the strategy was creating a supportive societal environment that facilitates change. At the same time, the support of workers and managers at all levels

of the child care system was critical, as they had the largest stake in the reform. This was facilitated through a strategy of ensuring their active participation and engagement at each step of the process.

Building inter-sectoral collaboration and synergy between the social welfare and health sectors was another key element and strength of the strategy.

Progress and Results:

A five year Master-plan for the Transformation of Residential Institutions for Children has been finalized by the MoLSP, covering deinstitutionalization, fostering and the roles and responsibilities of related sectors. By pushing the reforms forward in a comprehensive manner nationwide, it aims to enable smaller and poorer municipalities to work together to develop common, co-financed services that are more cost effective. To date, 9 of 22 residential institutions have begun implementing their transformation.

In line with the Master-plan, the new draft Law on Social Welfare explicitly ends the practice of admitting children under-3 years to institutions, introduces small, family-like placements, recognizes the transformation of institutions as a criteria for earmarked grants for local self governments, and includes provisions on community services and inter-sectoral cooperation.

A model of health system gate-keeping for children with disability was incorporated into soft-law regulations, as a first step towards ensuring its mandatory implementation. Although the debate around the Social Welfare Law triggered more active dialogue between the health and social welfare sectors on their respective roles and methods of cooperation, synchronizing the policy and practice of the two sectors remains a challenge.

Next Steps:

UNICEF and its partners are already working on the next steps, building on the current initiative. The development of community services for families with children with disability is now at centre stage. The approach, in line with the draft Social Welfare Law, emphasises standard setting, licensing and financing of community-service provision and it is expected that the transformed residential institutions will be well-placed to become local level service providers.

7. SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

In June 2010, a one week study visit for an Armenian Government delegation was organized by UNICEF Serbia. The purpose of the visit was to familiarize the delegation with the management and use of the DevInfo data base for monitoring of the situation of children and women, and the methodology and lessons learned in the development of the Local Plans of Action (LPA) for children. This visit was also an opportunity for UNICEF Serbia to learn from Armenia's experiences. Following the visit, the Government of Armenia plans to enlarge ArmeniaInfo by creating databases with the Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia, DHS, Census and the Regional Action plans, and monitoring data at the national and regional levels to effectively analyze and target the most vulnerable.