



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited  
12 July 2010

Original: English

**For discussion**

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### United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

**Second regular session 2010**

7-9 September 2010

Item 6 (c) of the provisional agenda\*

### Summary of midterm reviews of country programmes

#### Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States region

#### *Summary*

This regional summary of midterm reviews of country programmes conducted in 2009 was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8. The Executive Board is invited to comment on the report and provide guidance to the secretariat.

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\* E/ICEF/2010/15.



## **Introduction**

1. During 2009, two countries in the Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States region conducted midterm reviews (MTRs) of country programmes: Croatia and the Republic of Moldova.

2. The two programmes of cooperation operate in very different socio-economic contexts. Croatia is a high-income country with a relatively well-developed social infrastructure that is capable of delivering effective services for children. Moldova is a lower-middle-income country, reliant on economic growth to sustain its levels of social sector investments. Accordingly, country cooperation and operational modalities differ, as shown in this report.

3. Both countries have been affected by the global economic crisis and have experienced economic shrinkage over the last few years. While Croatia is on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, Moldova faces challenges in meeting several of the targets. To different degrees, both countries struggle with social and economic disparities at sub-national levels — between geographic areas, urban and rural areas, and among disadvantaged groups.

4. UNICEF is focused on helping to redress the situation of vulnerable children through two similar strategic and complementary programme approaches: supporting completion of public sector reform aimed at enhancing equity in social protection systems, and strengthening national infrastructures for child rights monitoring and reporting. Both approaches rely heavily on partnerships and collaboration with diverse development actors, including the corporate sector, to support the expansion of public administration and institutional capacities.

## **Midterm reviews**

### **Croatia**

#### **Introduction**

5. The programme of cooperation (2007-2011) was specifically designed as a new UNICEF model. Its objective is to expand the country's ability to promote and protect the rights of children by assisting the public and private sectors to address interrelated issues of disparities, social exclusion and violence against children. This approach was deemed the most appropriate for this relatively well-endowed country, which is also a strong candidate for European Union membership in the near future.

6. When the country programme was prepared, regular resources were not allocated to Croatia because of the country's high gross national income per capita and low under-five mortality rate. Therefore, the programme was set up as a model involving self-funding and other resources. Lessons from this model resulting from the MTR process are therefore extremely valuable for UNICEF. They will help the organization better understand the role it should play and the resources it should commit to programmes in other countries, in support of implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and achieving the Millennium Development Goals with equity.

7. The MTR process, which took place in September and October 2009, was conducted in close cooperation with the main government partners and the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children. Key United Nations partners and civil society organizations were also consulted on relevant components of the programme. The participants discussed achievements against the planned results and suggested some modifications for the second half of the cycle. Participants at the final meeting included representatives of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports; Office of the Ombudsperson for Children; Education and Teacher Training Agency; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration; Ministry of Health and Social Welfare; Child Protection Centre; non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and national experts in areas relevant to the cooperation.

#### **Update of the situation of children and women**

8. The economic crisis that started in mid-2008 and became a deep recession reversed the vigorous growth that Croatia had sustained for almost a decade. The sharpest decline in economic growth (5.8 per cent) was recorded in 2009. A slow but uncertain recovery is projected for 2010-2011, which is also the timeline for completing the accession negotiations with the European Union. As part of the accession process, the Millennium Development Goals are being integrated into national policies, and a government report on their achievement is due in 2010.

9. The latest data indicate that Croatia is on track to achieve the Goals. The basic indicators — under-five mortality rate (6 deaths per 1,000 live births), birth registration (99 per cent) and primary school enrolment (98 per cent) — compare very favourably with those of other countries. The prevalence of HIV remains below 0.1 per cent.

10. However, the situation is more challenging subnationally. It is estimated that the shrinking economy increased poverty rates in Croatia by one third in 2009. Another 155,000 people are likely to fall below the poverty line (equivalent to \$427 per month per adult) mostly because of job losses, which hit families with children especially hard. The incidence of poverty is expected to increase more among children than among the general population due to rising unemployment of parents as well as the escalating cost of education.

11. According to the World Bank, one third of poor children come from households with three or more children under the age of 18. The incidence of poverty is higher (17 per cent) among children living in the rural and urban areas of central and eastern Croatia compared to the northern, western and coastal regions. Despite relatively high overall spending on social assistance and strong targeting of means-tested programmes, coverage for the poorest people remains a challenge. Among the poorest 20 per cent of the population, less than 13 per cent have access to the support allowance programme, and only 37 per cent access the income-tested child allowance programme. Services for the most vulnerable people are unequally distributed around the country. More research is needed into the needs and coping strategies of families to inform the provision of services to complement existing financial and fiscal benefits.

12. The Ombudsperson for Children reports that progress for children is being hampered by tax revenue shortfalls and subsequent spending cuts. It is a challenge to tackle the hidden, prolonged effects of the economic crisis on women and children, which include increased violence and insufficient capacities of the State to

provide services for parents and caregivers that promote the well-being of children. Despite overall impressive social gains, Roma children, children living in poverty and children with disabilities remain extremely vulnerable. While many physical adjustments and investments have been made in schools to enable access for children with disabilities, discriminatory practices continue to deprive them of education and opportunities to develop their potential.

13. Preschool enrolment has increased to 52 per cent, but this is still low, and it is even lower among poor and excluded children because preschool is primarily seen as a service for working parents.

14. There are also signs of progress. The number of children in institutions and foster care settings is decreasing, and the most recent data show an improvement in the ratio of children placed in foster care versus institutions (61 to 38). In July 2007, Parliament adopted a law on foster care that introduced compensation for foster families. Data on children with disabilities living in institutions, however, are still difficult to confirm.

15. The Ombudsperson for Children continues to play a key role in the promotion, protection and monitoring of child rights. Since 2007, the Ombudsperson has opened three regional offices, thereby becoming more accessible. Annual reports indicate a continual increase in the number of complaints, mostly relating to custody issues and violence against children. The Ombudsperson's persistent advocacy of child rights in the media has contributed to the adoption of new legislation introducing penalties for violations of child rights in various media such as the Internet.

16. Regular reporting on the National Plan of Activities for the Rights and Interests of Children (2006-2012) indicates progress in many areas, although some activities have been delayed and there is limited child participation in monitoring. Monitoring of the Plan needs strengthening if its goals are to be achieved by 2012. Improved cooperation between sectors at central and local levels would lead to faster achievement of children's rights in Croatia, especially in the area of young child development and child protection.

17. Public awareness of violence against children has increased, and specific measures to monitor it have been introduced. Efforts have been made to reduce violence, but they are of limited scope and are primarily project-based. Efforts have also been made to advance development of a national system to monitor the situation of children. Systematic collection of disaggregated data on children is needed to better support policymaking and improve monitoring of current policies.

18. Only 50 per cent of children are aware of their rights or know about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and more efforts are needed to increase their knowledge. A growing number of Children's City Councils are active, increasing child participation. While child participation is growing at local levels, children and young people need to be consulted more systematically regarding decisions at the national level.

19. Croatia is moving in the right direction, but the recession will probably exacerbate disparities and exclusions and reverse some results achieved. To this end, national priorities remain valid: expand services and improve effectiveness of resource allocation for disadvantaged children at central and local levels, improve

support to parents in coping with crises, strengthen child rights monitoring and promote a systems-based approach to reducing institutionalization and violence.

### **Progress and key results**

20. The overall objective of the UNICEF-Croatia programme of cooperation is to foster innovations and model new standards for children. The partnership pays particular attention to strengthening families and influencing perceptions, social norms and behaviours towards children. This includes parenting practices to assure the healthy, safe, stimulating and emotionally stable development of young children within their families. The programme has three components: child protection from violence, abuse and exploitation; young child development; and policy advocacy and partnerships for children's rights. The country programme also supports increasing the accountability of service providers to deliver high-quality services. For example, UNICEF supported the Government to improve the competencies of service providers and professional associations to increase sensitivity to children's problems, enhance early identification of problems and provide efficient response to child rights violations. By supporting improvements in the sensitivity of social sector referral systems, the programme focused on promulgating standards for violence-free schools and the development of alternatives to residential institutions for vulnerable children.

21. The component on protecting children from violence, abuse and exploitation aims to increase the sensitivity and capacities of families, communities, public services and civil society organizations to protect children from violence, abuse and other harmful practices, including unnecessary and prolonged institutionalization. This component is emphasizing prevention of violence in schools and development of family-based care for vulnerable children deprived of parental care.

22. The National Network of Violence-free Schools was founded after years of sustained effort and collaboration with many schools to reduce peer violence, or bullying. In 2007, criteria were adopted for sustainability and for designation of "violence-free schools". Nearly 30 per cent of schools were involved in the programme, resulting in a tangible reduction in bullying in these schools. The Network endorsed the government's Protocol on Procedures in Cases of Violence against and among Children and Youth.

23. An extensive external assessment (2005) and internal assessments after the initiative began (2008 and 2009) showed that instances of bullying had decreased by half, teachers felt more competent in handling it and parents believed that their children were safer in school. This evidence presented a strong case for scaling up the programme in partnership with the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. The goal is to make the programme part of the curricula and mainstream it into all schools nationwide, thus giving children lessons on peaceful conflict resolution and human rights.

24. In addition, with the aim of increasing prevention-based strategies, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports established a working group in 2008 to draw up a National Plan for the Prevention of Violence and Drug Abuse, which was reinforced by the Government of Croatia and its Youth Council in 2009.

25. The development of family-based care for vulnerable children deprived of parental care, through the "Every Child Needs a Family" campaign, along with other

innovations, provided the impetus to change national policies and legislation. The Law on Foster Care was adopted by Parliament in 2007, regulating foster care for the first time in Croatia. UNICEF played a direct role by providing the Government with advisory services and technical assistance. This reform reduced the number of children in institutions and improved support for and monitoring of children in foster care. Since children under 3 years old are still placed in institutions, while many families are waiting to adopt or foster young children, the programme worked together with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, which issued a recommendation to prioritize placement of these children in foster families.

26. Court backlogs and a lack of trained judges has been detrimental to children, particularly for families at risk of separation and dealing with unpaid alimony. Experts and judges are divided on how to interpret the Family Law, which makes the decision-making process even more difficult and time consuming. To improve this situation and facilitate understanding and awareness among judges, UNICEF — in partnership with the Ombudsperson for Children and the Judicial Academy of the Ministry of Justice and Faculty of Law — initiated educational activities to help families at risk of separation, thus further contributing to the prevention of institutionalization.

27. In 2009, the country programme supported the drafting of policy recommendations to improve foster care in Croatia as well as public discussion of the recommendations. The emphasis was on synchronization of all national documents to support the best interests of children when planning and providing services. Sustainable community-based social services for children without parental care were developed, along with corresponding tools for family assessment, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. This contributed to social welfare reform.

28. Through the programme of cooperation, evidence-based data on corporal punishment of children was made available and used for policy discussion. This contributed to the adoption of the Rules of Procedure in Cases of Family Violence (in 2008) and the National Campaign against Corporal Punishment (in 2009), launched by the Ministry of the Family, Veterans and Intergenerational Solidarity. It also aided in enforcement of the Law on Protection from Family Violence (2004).

29. The young child development component aims at strengthening the ability of parents to provide positive parenting and ensure healthy, safe, stimulating and emotionally stable development for young children within their families. With a special emphasis on parenting skills, this programme component was upgraded and implemented in maternity wards, primary health care facilities, kindergartens, civil society organizations and the mass media, achieving extensive coverage nationwide.

30. The programme was vital in improving the understanding of early childhood development, child-rearing practices and healthy lifestyles for children and in creating new services to support parents. Educational material on positive parenting was made available across the country, reaching 70 per cent of parents with young children. Priority was given to educating health workers, including primary health care doctors and district nurses. As crèches and kindergartens have great potential to support parents, during 2008-2009 the programme developed an educational package, “Growing up Together”. After initial piloting, extensive evaluation and very positive results, the Education and Teacher Training Agency took over national coordination of the package, incorporating it into the 2010 annual educational

programme for kindergarten professionals. As a result the package is now completely system-supported and mainstreamed.

31. The country programme worked to enhance social inclusion of children with disabilities, supported good practices in early intervention and urged the development of nationwide early intervention support networks. In the long term this will enhance the knowledge of health care professionals and improve how hospitals communicate with parents of children with disabilities, thus preventing their institutionalization. This will be complemented by development of a professional network focused on early childhood intervention, making use of technology to share information among parents and early childhood professionals.

32. The component on policy advocacy and partnership for children's rights aims to build commitments and partnerships, public support and financial resources to fulfil child rights. The key expected results are a stronger knowledge base about children, improved monitoring of child rights and greater allocation of public funds for children. In addition, the aim is to increase the willingness of Croatian citizens to aid children in other countries.

33. A noteworthy achievement in 2008 was the introduction of a national scheme to increase financial support for parents of young children. It includes more generous child allowances and flexible paid maternity and paternity leave, including prolonged paid leave for parents of children with disabilities. The scheme supports regular surveys that contribute to policy reform in young child development, parental practices, development of quality foster care and child participation.

34. Since UNICEF Croatia did not receive regular resources, the country programme was financed through innovative approaches, which were branded "Resource Mobilization for Children in Croatia" and "Advocacy and Resource Mobilization for Children in Emergencies". For example, UNICEF successfully integrated programme, advocacy and fundraising by working with cities and municipalities in the child-friendly cities initiative. Good practices became sustainable and were fully supported by cities in Croatia. The number of child-friendly cities and municipalities is growing steadily; to keep up the momentum, the MTR recommended that UNICEF continue to support the alliance of NGOs implementing the initiative.

35. All programme activities in Croatia have been funded by mobilizing resources among the private sector, so relationships with various stakeholders were further developed, including corporate and individual supporters. As during the previous programme period, 70 per cent of funds were raised from individuals and 30 per cent from the corporate sector. The programme has also contributed to UNICEF international emergency appeals and to selected international initiatives, in both cases reaching the ceiling specified in the country programme document.

36. A major emphasis of the first period of the programme was consolidating the support of existing donors, both individuals and corporate. The gradual expansion of fundraising has ensured the stable flow and growth of income since 2007, which has now stabilized. An additional 25,000 individual donors were recruited between 2007 and September 2009, bringing the total to 55,000 donors and 32 corporate partnership agreements. In addition, the "Schools for Africa" project combines education for development with fundraising, activating 85,000 school-aged children while contributing to UNICEF international programmes.

37. In the area of corporate alliances, the strategy was to build strong, innovative, long-term, integrated alliances that will not only generate resources from corporate donors but also benefit from the private sector's fundraising and communication skills. In addition, UNICEF continued to mobilize substantial in-kind contributions, particularly free media air time and pro-bono advertising and public relations services, the value of which has exceeded \$1 million per year since 2007. These activities have helped UNICEF Croatia position itself as a desirable corporate and social partner.

38. The UNICEF name has been further strengthened through integrating public campaigns, fundraising and sales activities and through the work of UNICEF National Ambassadors. UNICEF is now the best-known humanitarian organization in Croatia, according to recent surveys conducted by UNICEF. Between 2007 and (May) 2009, the number of respondents who cited UNICEF first as a recognized humanitarian and aid organization nearly tripled.

### **Resources used**

39. As of the end of 2009, the office had succeeded in mobilizing \$5,748,631 of the approved ceiling of \$7,800,000 for other resources for the country programme. The total amount mobilized included a contribution of \$133,414 for 2009 from the Millennium Development Goals Fund for joint programmes. In addition, the country office raised approximately \$600,000 for UNICEF international emergency appeals between 2007 and 2009. At the end of 2009, the total expenditure was \$3,751,148, distributed as follows: \$977,916 for child protection, \$1,000,421 for young child development, \$595,107 for policy advocacy and partnerships for child rights, and \$1,177,704 for cross-sectoral costs.

### **Constraints and opportunities affecting progress**

40. Croatia has succeeded in developing a solid legal framework while integrating important international standards. There is now a clear opportunity to ensure the implementation and enforcement of this progressive legislation throughout the system. National strategies have also been adopted; they now need to be adequately budgeted and monitored. Inter-sectoral coordination needs incentives for strengthening. To that end, the programme will continue to provide a platform for governmental and non-governmental partners to meet to coordinate and develop policy options.

41. Decentralization is in progress. The country can now move forward on normative frameworks, fiscal decentralization and strategic planning capacity at the local level. A wide range of service providers is essential to achieve social sector reforms, so the participation of non-State actors needs to be secured and regulated, which requires accreditation and licensing mechanisms.

42. Lessons have been learned concerning the self-funding model. A focused, in-country fundraising approach demands a transparent and quick response that can demonstrate the ability to address child rights gaps. While this approach has been successful in generating support for programme implementation, by highlighting best practices that lead to system-wide policy change, funding for upstream policy work was limited. Also, resource mobilization has been strained by the very limited management capacity. This will need strengthening for the remainder of the programme if self-funding is to be sustained.

### Adjustments made

43. The MTR process did not recommend significant changes, as the programme objectives were still deemed appropriate. Some adjustments were proposed to shift attention to system change through provision of technical advice, especially to support the Government in mitigating the impacts of the economic crisis on children.

44. One challenge facing the young child development component is that preschools are primarily seen as a service for employed parents rather than centres focused on child development. Primarily in partnership with cities and municipalities, the programme will continue to work to redefine the role of preschools as institutions where children prepare for primary school.

45. In cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, the programme will continue to support the right to education and to increase child participation. It will also consolidate the child-friendly cities initiative within the context of extensive decentralization. UNICEF will continue to support the alliance of NGOs implementing the initiative.

46. Based on the economic growth forecast, 2010 and 2011 are expected to be very difficult years, with long-term effects on the labour market and rising unemployment. The country programme will support research on child poverty as a contribution to knowledge about the effects of the global economic and financial crisis on children. This will broaden the government's policy choices and measurement tools. For example, research will be conducted on living standards, families' coping strategies, children's well-being (with data disaggregated by age and sex) and special needs and ethnicity. The programme will continue to provide technical advice, particularly focused on excluded groups, thus continuing the policy dialogue on cost-effectiveness of social benefits in particular. Family policy goals and child well-being formed a portion of the Joint Inclusion Memorandum drawn up during the crisis, so the programme will help Croatia to remain on course with the goals of the Memorandum, implementation of which is for the period 2007-2009. The Memorandum is the first step in the application of European Union common goals in the fight against poverty and social exclusion through national policy.

47. Fundraising efforts will build on direct mailings to the general public, which has been a major strategy since 2003. In the coming period, the focus will shift to regular giving from individuals. New business models for product sales will be sought to maximize profitability. Thus, sustainability will be strengthened and the office will contribute to UNICEF regular resources, in line with the current strategic goals of the UNICEF Private Fundraising and Partnership Division.

48. The unique feature of the current country programme is its reliance on local social mobilization, including by generating broad public support and free expert and media services, as well as the leveraging of funds to achieve results. Therefore, in addition to the usual partners, UNICEF Croatia facilitated partnerships with a wide variety of supporters, including individual citizens, the corporate sector, celebrities and the mass media. Parents and children were also very actively involved in gathering support and generating broader national awareness for child rights.

49. The Croatian model of mobilizing support and achieving results for children is very successful as it pertains to the development of programmes resulting in good practices that later translate into system-wide changes for children. However, it is more difficult to generate support from the private sector for office support functions and upstream policy work. Though cross-sectoral policy work is evident throughout implementation, the programme relies on funds raised solely through private and corporate fundraising — in a way pre-determining the orientation of the programme. This runs the risk of focusing on projects rather than on policy and advocacy.

## **Republic of Moldova**

### **Introduction**

50. The MTR process for the Moldova country programme (2007-2011) culminated in a high-level meeting on 30 October 2009, led by the MTR Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Head of the Policy and External Division in the Prime Minister's Office and the UNICEF Representative. Youth consultations, including with vulnerable young people, were also conducted and documented. Participants included representatives from line ministries, the Ministry of Finance, donors and civil society. Programme reviews were conducted both sectorally and inter-sectorally by respective ministries and UNICEF in close consultations with key partners and the United Nations system. Topical reviews took place in education, youth health and development, and community-based services.

### **Update of the situation of children and women**

51. Moldova has been hit very hard by the global financial crisis, with a 6.5 per cent drop in gross domestic product just in 2009. However, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates 2.5 per cent growth in gross domestic product in 2010. Overseas remittances decreased by one third in 2009 compared to 2008, which hampered progress on Millennium Development Goal 1. The overall poverty rate was 26.4 per cent in 2008, and 27.2 per cent of children were living in poverty, including 3.7 per cent in extreme poverty. The most disadvantaged are those in rural areas, where the child poverty rate is nearly 35 per cent, compared to 14 per cent in urban areas. While the rate of malnutrition among children under 5 years old declined from 16.7 per cent in 2007 to 11 per cent in 2008, a reversal is expected due to the effects of the global economic crisis and its impact on food security

52. The crisis has also exacerbated social gaps. Education disparities are significant between urban and rural areas and among disadvantaged groups. Gross enrolment in primary education (Goal 2) declined from almost universal coverage in 2001 to 93.5 per cent in 2009, with rural enrolment rates at only 88.9 per cent. The preschool gross enrolment rate was 75.5 per cent in 2008. The situation is worse for Roma children; 43 per cent of Roma children 7 to 15 years old are not enrolled in school.

53. Similar trends are observed regarding Goal 4 on child survival. Based on the international definition of live birth (newly adopted in Moldova), infant and under-five mortality rates (national averages) improved to 12.1 and 14.4 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively, in 2008. Despite this encouraging progress, inequalities in infant mortality rates are still very high among various cohorts, ranging between 4

and 18 deaths per 1,000 live births. While inequities among ethnic groups are not well known, a 2007 report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicates an infant mortality rate among Roma infants of 29 deaths per 1,000 live births, more than double the national average. With 38.4 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2008, Moldova is not on track to achieve Goal 5.

54. In terms of HIV and AIDS, the country is still classified as a concentrated/low prevalence country, with the epidemic concentrated among injecting drug users. But there are signs of the disease spreading to the general population. In 2008, 795 new cases were reported, the highest so far, of which 343 were registered in Transnistria, which has a higher prevalence rate than the rest of the country. Since 1987 almost 5,000 cases have been confirmed, but the estimated number is much higher.

55. On average, only 37 per cent of children live in dwellings equipped with safe water facilities and 30 per cent with improved sanitation (Goal 7). The rate is much lower for children from poor families; only 16 per cent have access to safe water inside their dwellings, and only 13 per cent have improved sanitation facilities. This makes people highly prone to water-borne and infectious diseases. About 60 per cent of children suffering from infectious diseases live in dwellings without sanitation. More than 61 per cent of school children face health risks at school because of poor water quality.

56. Progress has been made in child protection, but many challenges remain. For example, while the number of children living in institutions decreased from 11,544 at the end of 2006 to 8,992 by mid-2009, the institutionalization rate remains one of the highest in the region. The number of children in prison and pre-trial detention decreased by two thirds in the past two years due to a one-time amnesty, although the number had fallen prior to the amnesty. Corporal punishment is widely accepted, by children themselves as well as parents and teachers.

57. In recent months, and with support from international donors and participation from civil society, the Government has engaged in a number of initiatives to address the economic crisis, particularly its impact on the most vulnerable populations, and to reform the social protection, justice, health and education systems. The Government presented its combined second and third reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 2009, and NGOs sent an alternative report. The Committee's Concluding Observations are being reviewed by the Government (especially through the National Council on the Protection of Child Rights, recently revived with key support from UNICEF), as well as Parliament, civil society and international partners. Moldova ratified the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography in 2007.

### **Progress and key results**

58. The programme of cooperation as approved in 2006 had four components: child protection; HIV/AIDS and vulnerable adolescents; equitable access to quality services; and social policy and child rights. It has registered some impressive results in key areas, such as deinstitutionalization and juvenile justice, thanks to governmental commitment to reform of the child care system. This focused on establishing legal and policy frameworks and regulations, creating modern structures and enhancing existing ones, and building national capacities to address the complex nature of child protection. These results were achieved in partnership

with the European Union, United Kingdom Department for International Development, and Swedish International Development Agency.

59. The number of children living in institutions fell by 22 per cent and is on track to reach the 30 per cent target for 2011. The decrease can be attributed to UNICEF support to the 2007-2012 National Strategy and Action Plan for Deinstitutionalization, which focuses on prevention and reintegration, including through the nationwide network of community-based social workers and gatekeeping committees. There has been an expansion of alternatives to residential care and preventive community-based interventions — such as community-based family support services and family substitute services like foster care, guardianship and small group homes.

60. The programme of cooperation provided critical technical assistance to strengthen the normative framework to improve the quality of youth-friendly health services and promote outreach services for these adolescents. Information on risky behaviours has been made available to most-at-risk adolescents in Balti, Chisinau and Tiraspol, the three areas most affected by HIV. More than 100,000 adolescents and youth were informed and provided with services through a network of 12 youth-friendly health services centres and 3,000 peer educators. UNICEF supported increasing the capacity of the health system to aid prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV for marginalized children and women. This included voluntary counselling and testing, referral services and antiretroviral treatment for pregnant women and children.

61. However, the key result on HIV prevention and vulnerable adolescents needs to be reconfigured more strategically. Providing access to information and services to reduce adolescents' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS has had limited success: only 38.3 per cent of 15- to 19-year-olds have correct knowledge on HIV and AIDS, very much below the 2011 target of 80 per cent. The extent of behaviour change to reduce their vulnerability still needs to be ascertained.

62. Some progress has been made in prioritizing vulnerable children in national efforts to address poverty and social exclusion, but more direct and system-wide targeting of interventions is needed. The new law on social aid provides the basis for a targeted social protection system, which is beginning to reach the most vulnerable children. This system coexists with other family allowances, including a means-tested monthly child care allowance. UNICEF participated in the drafting committee and provided technical assistance and international expertise.

63. More work is needed to encourage application of positive care practices; the proportion of parents applying such practices is 14.5 percentage points below the 2011 target of 20 per cent. Of the three indicators used, only the indicator on "parents playing with their children" exceeded the target for 2011. The numbers actually fell on the indicators of "knowing danger signs" and "reading with children". About 50 per cent of families who have children with disabilities do not accept their children's disabilities and prefer to keep them in boarding schools. The need to further strengthen parental skills to take care of young children and adolescents was identified as a priority in the MTR.

64. In health and nutrition, an important achievement was adoption of the international "live birth" definition, after years of joint work by UNICEF and the World Health Organization. Coverage of Integrated Management of Childhood

Illness is now nationwide, including in the Transnistria region. This serves as an entry point for other child-related activities in the area. The draft law on universal salt iodization was not passed, but efforts are continuing.

65. The country programme supported reform of the education sector and its related strategy, as well as development and implementation of the Ministry of Education's Consolidated Action Plan. An assessment of the basic education system from the perspective of inclusive education and child-friendly schools provided data and evidence for the elaboration and further promotion of the inclusive education concept. It also stimulated a review of the school curriculum and standards to identify the main priorities for intervention. Pedagogical institutions now have inclusive and child-centred approaches in their curricula and analytical programmes. UNICEF actively supports development of the Code of Education, a legal milestone in this sector.

66. The Education for All Fast Track Initiative, with an \$8.8 million grant in the early child development sub-sector from the World Bank, is being managed by UNICEF in coordination with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It largely accounts for the increase in preschool enrolment, which reached 74.4 per cent in 2008. New early childhood development policies and child-centred didactic materials have been adopted in more than 90 per cent of preschool institutions. Alternative arrangements for early education services in communities (using community centres) have been included in the draft Code of Education.

67. In economic and social policy, almost all mayors and local secretaries have been sensitized to child rights and social issues, in partnership with the Academy of Public Administration. UNICEF partnered with French Cooperation to leverage European Commission funding for a Twinning Project with the Academy (contributing to the process of approximating legislation, norms and standards in Moldova to those of the European Union). Budget and functional analyses were supported in the ministries of Education, Health and Social Protection to inform their institutional development plans as part of public administration reform. The meta assessment on the impact of the financial and economic crisis was jointly supported by UNDP, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration and the World Bank. The ongoing community-based monitoring of the impact (supported by UNICEF, UNDP and the United Nations Development Fund for Women and its successor organization) provides data for decision-makers and local authorities to monitor the impact of the crisis on children and families and take targeted action.

68. Through partnerships with the National Bureau of Statistics and other stakeholders, information on the situation of children in Moldova is regularly updated and shared with governmental and other partners. Methodological aspects of education statistics are being improved with the development of a series of indicators fully harmonized with the standards of UNESCO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Eurostat. DevInfo, updated with 2008 data, will facilitate the monitoring of progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. UNICEF has taken the lead in promoting the joint United Nations initiative on DevInfo for Millennium Development Goals monitoring.

69. In close coordination with the United Nations system and with funding from the World Bank, Austrian Development Agency and Merck-USA, UNICEF provided

support for emergency situations that resulted in: (i) a nationwide awareness campaign aimed at prevention of avian flu and H1N1 flu; (ii) improving the communication skills of family doctors and the health system's emergency communication system; (iii) providing funds to ensure education for 1,097 child flood victims, including children from Transnistria; (iv) immunizing children aged 13 to 18 against measles, mumps and rubella during a mumps outbreak; and (v) providing food to more than 17,000 children to mitigate the impact of the food and economic crises in 2008. Technical assistance was provided to the Department of Emergency and Civil Protection to increase its capacity and help it plan for psychosocial support to children affected by emergencies. The university curricula for future journalists, communicators and health specialists now reflect emergencies and related issues and response mechanisms.

### **Resources used**

70. The approved budget for the five-year country programme was \$24,345,000, comprised of \$3,595,000 from regular resources and \$20,750,000 from other resources. By 1 June 2010, total expenditures amounted to \$13,845,075, of which \$5,462,775 was spent on child protection; \$2,053,947 on HIV/AIDS and vulnerable adolescents; \$3,670,266 on equitable access to quality services; \$2,094,901 on social policy and child rights; and \$563,186 for cross-sectoral costs.

### **Constraints and opportunities affecting progress**

71. Economic and social factors — such as family separation due to migration or dysfunctional relationships, lack of parental knowledge and negative attitudes and practices — weaken parents' capacities to employ good parenting skills and properly care for their children. Parenting education previously focused on early child care. It does not address the complex problems of adolescence, such as substance abuse and risky sexual behaviours, which can lead to sexually transmitted infections and HIV, unwanted pregnancies, mental health issues including suicide, conflict with the law and school drop-out.

72. The problems confronting adolescents require a holistic and cross-sectoral approach. In the first half of the country programme, the emphasis was on HIV and AIDS, leaving out other key concerns described by young people themselves. Future adolescent programme work should address education, health, social protection services and participation. The government's vertical structures make cross-sector coordination difficult, and inter-sectoral referral is fragmented at both the policy level and service delivery points. Prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, for example, could be better addressed through the existing maternal and child health system.

73. The monitoring and evaluation system still needs to be more integrated, systematic and aligned with international standards. The lack of reliable and internationally comparable data in social protection, HIV/AIDS, nutrition and education undermines the capacity of line ministries to accumulate evidence to inform policies and budgets. A multiple indicator cluster survey planned for 2010 will generate updated evidence for addressing the impact of the economic crisis.

74. Emergency assistance to offset the effect of high food prices offered a valuable opportunity for collaboration among national and local authorities from the health and social sectors and local administrations in identifying the most vulnerable

children and mothers. With support from the World Bank, the avian flu and H1N1 flu outbreaks have been used as opportunities to keep pandemic preparedness and response high on the public agenda and raise awareness about the importance of emergency preparedness. UNICEF and UNDP plan to continue their joint work with the Government in improving its disaster risk reduction efforts.

75. The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument is providing strong and ongoing support for children's rights. Further support is expected particularly for justice and the rule of law. Given the commitment from the European Union to reform of child care and social protection, the EU Delegation Commission is expected to invest further in this area. The interest of donors in water and sanitation, including the EU delegation, Austrian Development Agency and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, can aid cooperation and partnership for concentrated efforts and leveraging of resources. Monitoring and response to the economic crisis create opportunities to further strengthen collaboration with the World Bank, IMF, United Nations agencies and other key development actors in the country.

### **Adjustments made**

76. To further strengthen alignment with government development plans and targets and to synchronize with the one-year extension of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the programme will be extended to 2012. Joint United Nations preparation for a new Common Country Assessment/UNDAF cycle will start in 2011.

77. As a result of the MTR it was decided to retain the two original key results on deinstitutionalization and children in detention for the remainder of the country programme. The other key results were adjusted; the revised results are: (i) the incidence of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents (10-19 years old) has fallen by 10 per cent; (ii) legal and normative documents most relevant for child well-being are operational and being applied to the most vulnerable (including the Law on Social Aid, Law on Social Services, Law on Local Public Finance, Code of Education and the Law on Domestic Violence, as well as the National HIV/AIDS Programme); (iii) the gross enrolment rate in general and secondary education (grades 1 to 9) has increased to 96 per cent; and (iv) the under-five mortality rate has been reduced by 10 per cent by 2011. These adjustments better reflect the role of the programme in contributing to agreed-upon national goals.

78. In line with the law on decentralization and administrative reform, the MTR recommended that the country programme focus on empowering local authorities by further developing their capacities in governance for children, service improvement and quality, budgeting, efficiency in use of funds, data collection and use (including DevInfo), and accountability for results. This will be done in coordination with the United Nations system and in partnership with donors. Efficient and successfully tested models of integrated services at the local level will be rolled out for nationwide replication. In Transnistria, the programme will intensify efforts in health, adolescent development, HIV/AIDS prevention and social protection.

79. System strengthening will include support to cross-cutting and inter-sectoral strategies at various levels as well as institutional development in order to address broader child well-being concerns. UNICEF will continue to support the National Council for Child Rights Protection, which can spearhead inter-sectoral

collaboration. Inter-sectoral approaches will be adopted in the two new areas of the country programme: childhood disability and injury prevention.

80. The MTR also advised that the programme of cooperation should promote social change for children among parents and communities. Parent education will be expanded and made integral to all components, with the aim of improving parenting skills in areas, such as strengthening family foundations and adolescent development. The goal is to provide parents with capacities to participate actively in community development for their children's well-being.

81. To more effectively manage the revised results, the programme structure will be adjusted and will include the following components: child protection, equitable access to quality services, social policy and child rights.

82. The MTR identified adolescent development as a key area of work. It will be broadened and incorporated into the various components: (i) child protection, as adolescents need social protection, referral, case management and specialized services, especially for the most-at-risk groups; (ii) health and education, both preventive care and treatment measures for healthy lifestyles; and (iii) social policy, engaging adolescents as informed participants in community development and issues affecting their lives.

83. The MTR called for a more comprehensive approach to HIV/AIDS. The health and medical aspects of prevention, care and treatment — such as prevention of mother-to-child transmission and youth-friendly health services — will be incorporated in the component on equitable access to quality services. The health sector has the mandate, responsibility, infrastructure and technical expertise in this regard. These health aspects will be supported by age-appropriate education and information. The child-friendly school initiative already incorporates development of life skills.

84. Child protection will have two more broadly defined sub-components: first, the child protection system and family and adolescent services will now include family support, alternative child care and most-at-risk adolescents; and second, justice reforms will include a strategy for holistic justice for children, including adolescents and youth, focused not only on those in conflict with the law but also those in contact with the law, such as by serving as witnesses or being victims themselves.

85. Similarly, the programme components addressing equitable access to quality services will be strengthened. Child and adolescent health, in addition to early childhood development and micronutrients, will add youth-friendly health services and work in water, sanitation and hygiene to prevent various risks including water-borne diseases. Basic education will now include life skills-based education and prevention of violence in schools.

86. Given the lessons learned so far, the MTR requested that the programme continue to focus its social policy and advocacy on monitoring, evaluating and responding to the impact of the economic crisis on vulnerable families, especially children. Particular attention will be paid to strengthening social assistance, to ensure that the most vulnerable families and children are not left outside the new system. This will be done in close collaboration with development partners, including the World Bank, IMF, EU delegation and United Nations agencies. Child and adolescent participation will now be part of this programme component,

expanding on earlier achievements in developing local youth councils and youth resource centres.

87. These adjustments should enhance the ability of the country programme to assist in redirecting and expanding reforms to effectively reach the most marginalized children and their families. This in turn should enable them to benefit from social budgets and better prevention services through expanded community-based family support systems. Another objective of the cooperation is to improve national data systems and evidence-based practices, with emphasis on generating knowledge and quality assessments on disparities. This will inform social policies and help to guide decision-makers in reviewing and adopting good practices and innovative programmes for the most disadvantaged children.

### **Conclusion**

88. In the region, UNICEF pursues its mandate, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in increasingly diverse development environments. Even in countries with high levels of national wealth, social sector reforms are often lagging behind, and economic and social gaps persist. The nascent infrastructure for monitoring child rights has yet to take hold in civil society. Deeply rooted social exclusion remains unchallenged, and accelerated efforts are needed to combat old mindsets. The programme of cooperation in Croatia has provided some insightful lessons on how this could be done.

89. With the financial and economic crisis continuing to affect the region, there is a real risk that the Millennium Development Goals may not be achieved. This is especially true at sub-national levels and among children in special situations — children of minorities, children with disabilities and children living in rural or marginal urban areas. As partners increasingly take on the child rights agenda, a critical role for UNICEF in middle-income countries is to advise governments and the public about emerging issues that are affecting children but are not yet considered a priority. The programme of cooperation in Moldova offers concrete solutions based on innovations that have demonstrated how to ensure the inclusion of excluded children, protect vulnerable children and create environments conducive to development of modern policies and public systems. These should lead to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for all boys and girls.

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