



CHILDREN AND POVERTY

REPORT OF THE ROUNDTABLE

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 10 July 2002

Consultation for the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP),
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Office of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Coordinator for PRSP
UNICEF
Save the Children UK

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recognising that children must be at the centre of poverty reduction, a roundtable addressing issues of Children and Poverty was held on July 10, 2002, in Sarajevo, jointly organised by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Office of the Coordinator for the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), UNICEF and Save the Children UK. The meeting brought together representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina governmental structures, UN agencies and international and local NGOs with the aim to better understand the issues of childhood poverty in BiH and to identify key issues and recommendations that should be integrated into the PRSP.

The Interim-PRSP does not have many references to children and poverty, but outlines some of the reasons for poverty in BiH as limited economic activity, corruption, and inadequacy of social protection systems. The PRSP process so far has identified several links between poverty and children, in particular: the high risk of poverty for single parent female-headed households, returnee children's lack of access to education and social protection, and special risk factors for Roma children, including lack of integration, low school enrolment, lack of state action to promote inclusion.

BiH's obligations and current frameworks concerning children

Bosnia and Herzegovina has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Thus the Government has obligations to children in the context of the PRSP. It requires a review of the most relevant CRC articles in relation to the PRSP, and how to implement these rights. Of particular importance is the commitment of the State, FBiH and RS to giving primary consideration to the best interests of the child (CRC Art 3). This applies to all actions by private and public institutions - in their policies, programmes and in legislation. BiH also has obligations with respect to other rights that are particularly relevant for the PRSP. **These include children's right to: be free from discrimination, to be registered, to have a name and a nationality of Bosnian and Herzegovina,** to participate in decisions and actions affecting them, to education, to social welfare, to health, to housing, and the protection from child labour.

Specific recommendations were put forward: in order to respect these and other rights, every element within the PRSP must be analysed to ensure that it will not have a negative impact on children. Those elements that are most closely related to the prevention of poverty and to providing basic safety nets for the poorest must be articulated in the final document with clearly defined measures of implementation.

Examination of the fields of social and child protection revealed that BiH spends less on social care for the vulnerable population than any other country in the region – meaning that radical interventions are required in order to promote equality and reduce poverty. The allocations for social and child protection in 2000 were 1,1 **percent** of GDP in the Republika Srpska (RS), and 0,7 **percent** in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH). Neither of the entities supports social protection allowances from the entity budget, while only four of the 10 cantons in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina have allocated funds for this purpose.

The problem of poor co-ordination in the implementation of social and child protection was highlighted. All levels of government and policy-makers must seek to provide all children with similar conditions for their full physical, emotional and social development and to support the family in improving the quality of life. Specific recommendations were put forward with respect to the establishment of child protection funds, monitoring of child protection beneficiaries, elimination of legislative obstacles to the realisation of children's rights, additional attention to children with disability, and the development and support to alternatives to institutional care.

Existing policy frameworks in Bosnia and Herzegovina were considered, including the State Plan of Action for Children, the National Plan of Action against Trafficking and a proposal for creation of a Council for Children. More than 50 laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina need to be amended to ensure compliance with international standards and the CRC.

Critical issues concerning childhood poverty

The discussion of childhood poverty touched on critical issues, including the importance of recognising that poverty is not just an issue of income but includes other dimensions such as social exclusion, limited access to services/resources, and denial of rights. Children are at greater risk of poverty than other groups, and particularly vulnerable to its effects. Therefore children must be a first priority in addressing poverty, and measures to reduce childhood poverty will reduce poverty in the population as a whole. An effective Poverty Reduction Strategy will reflect the different dimensions of poverty, will recognise that investments in children's well-being directly impacts state's savings on well-being of adults, prioritise addressing childhood poverty and include full information and disaggregated data (or the steps to obtain it) on those who are poor. It will also make informed choices about prioritisation of resources based on social impact analyses that predict the outcomes of proposed policies on children before they are finalised and implemented.

Working groups identified those at most risk of discrimination and exclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina; children with disability or from marginalized groups (Roma children, refugee and returnee children), children from families with low/no earnings, and others from inaccessible areas. The need for data and analysis, and participation of affected groups in collecting this information and monitoring the impact of the PRSP was also stressed. Government's responsibilities include collection and public dissemination of data, provision of minimum of basic needs for all children, special protection packages for different groups of vulnerable children, and ensuring equality and equity of social protection for all children in the country. Recommendations for government action were put forward, and the importance of integrating these within the PRSP was highlighted.

Group discussion on fiscal policies that would result in better outcomes for children noted the importance of targeting children in budget reform, the need for an analysis of child-related expenditures in budgets, areas in which expenditure could be reduced and reallocated to children, and the need for social impact analysis regarding proposed macroeconomic policies. Social policies and action for children's rights were also explored and recommendations put forward.

Children's views on childhood poverty in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Children's perspectives on poverty were presented, both in their own words and through a study of the impact of poverty on children's behaviour. Children expressed interest in the issue of poverty, aware that their future depends on the current living conditions and situation in education. Children spoke out on the quality of health care, their possibility to travel, do sports, consume and to create culture. Children living in poverty on a daily basis witness their parents' or guardians' difficult fight for survival. The enormous pressure to meet existential needs affects children's education, health care and the minimum preconditions for a normal life. However every day of their childhood and youth passes by irrevocably and what is missed cannot necessarily be recouped later. Children know this and expressed their views on all of these issues – and expect adults and policy-makers to hear their voices and take their views into account. The PRSP in Bosnia and Herzegovina needs at least to recognise and address these expectations, wishes and needs, for children should be the first to feel prosperity in a society and the last to feel the problems.

The following document includes transcripts of the presentations made during the roundtable, and recommendations from the Roundtable participants. The main message can be summarized by a quote from a 13-year old Bosnian boy. When asked what message would he give to the government on the issue of children and poverty, he said, "I would tell them to invest more money in children, and not to invest it only for their own purposes".

Achieving a truly sustainable development means creating a world that is fit for children. Children are every society's most precious natural resources, and investing in them is one of the most farsighted decisions any leader, government or community can make. Investment in a child benefits the child and the family, but also forms the formulation of sustainable development. Investment in children yields higher economic returns than virtually any other type of public or private investment.

Given the clear importance of macroeconomic policies in enhancing – or damaging - the realisation of children's rights, we hope that policy-makers in BiH will use these recommendations to inform the PRSP and other relevant processes.

BiH Office of the Coordinator for the Poverty Reduction Strategy,
UNICEF,
Save the Children UK.

2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Define poverty in PRSP

- Recognise the different dimensions of poverty: relative as well as absolute poverty.

2.2 Include a separate section on the rights of children in the PRSP

- Commit Government resources to provision of basic services to all Bosnian children
- Identify children most at risk of childhood poverty: Roma, children with disability, children from rural areas, children in collective accommodation, children deprived of parental care...
- Review the most relevant CRC articles and more importantly how PRSP will address implementation of these rights, **including the right to health, the right to education, the right to protection from forced labour and exploitation.**

2.3 Address childhood poverty

- Prioritise allocation of resources on the basis of what will make a significant difference for all children:
 - ✓ **reducing inequality** through equitable social and economic policy and policies / programmes that improve the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable families.
 - ✓ **focusing public expenditure on essential services** - social protection, education, health, and prioritising access for ALL children.

2.4 Allocate funds for collection of appropriate data and analysis

- Poverty-related data should be disaggregated within PRSP (information about incidence, diversity, and special effects of poverty among different particular groups of people and especially children).
- **Analyse every element within the PRSP to ensure that it will not have a negative impact on children.**
- Undertake social impact/child impact analysis to predict outcomes of proposed policies (especially macroeconomic policies) on children affected by poverty before they are finalized and implemented.

2.5 Integrate PRSP with other policies for children

- Ensure integration of the PRSP with the State Plan of Action for Children and social protection strategies that already exist at entity levels.
- Government to establish an information system for education, health and social protection with responsibilities of all members in the process
- Birth registration – government to determine why and how thousands of children are not registered and to take all necessary measures to redress the situation.

2.6 Invest in the well being of children: a savings plan

Right to Health

- Government to investigate the out of pocket expenses for medical care in BiH, which are higher than in any European State, which prevent access to health care of large sectors of the community, particularly children. Examine when and where additional charges are being levied why and by whom, and then take all necessary steps to prevent this.
- Ensure provide free medical care for all children, including for children of unemployed parents and those without health insurance.

2.7 Right to Education

- Provide free primary education for all children, including allocating of additional resources to schools to ensure that children from poor families are not prevented from going to school due to costs of textbooks, school and clothes, which poor families cannot meet.
- Allocate specific resources targeting Roma, disabled and other excluded groups to ensure inclusion into mainstream education system.
- Reform the educational system: harmonize curricula, develop child friendly pedagogical standards on the level of BiH and ensure relevance to prepare children for the labour market.
- Establish a system of monitoring and support for all students.
- Give more importance to programmes of social activities of young people through programmes for prevention of alcoholism and drug abuse. This implies allocation of funds for social activities of young people beneficial for the community, in co-operation with the NGO sector.

2.8 Right to Social Protection and an Adequate Standard of Living

- Government to establish preventative measures and ensure implementation of the criminal law to address all forms of exploitation of children, from begging to sexual exploitation.
- Develop a minimum package of special protection for vulnerable children, including social protection funds targeting children at the state and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina levels.
- Create a new database for monitoring child protection beneficiaries, according to European standards, with constant monitoring of the actual situation in terms of vulnerability of families and children.
- Develop and significantly support alternative forms of childcare, including foster families for children without parental care and specific support for children with special needs (physical and mental disabilities).

2.9 Prioritise legal reform to harmonise laws with CRC

- Government to revise existing laws and harmonize them with the international conventions and standards, in particular the CRC.
- Promote legal reform that defines and obliges Government expenditure on minimum standards for ALL children.
- Eliminate the existing legislative and legal obstacles to the exercise of children's rights, in particular for disabled children in the sectors of education, health, spatial planning and urbanism, finances, etc., and pass legislation and regulations to uphold more strict legal sanctions for violations of children's rights.
- In the context of improving child protection, pass and amend the following laws in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska: the Family Law; the Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code; the Law on Criminal Procedure; amendments to the Law on Allocation of Public Revenues and Financing; amendments to the Law on Lottery and Games of Chance; amendments to the Laws on Internal Affairs, Law on Protection Against Violence, Child's Allowance Law.

2.10 Invest in children and reallocate existing budget to benefit children

- Allocate resources for the implementation of the State Plan of Action for Children
- Conduct budget analysis related to spending on children.
- Reallocate the existing funds within the Entity Budgets to ensure more funds for child welfare (Social protection, Health Care and Education).
- Reduce defence expenditure and explore other areas where reduction can be made for the benefit of children.

2.11 Ensure monitoring of the PRSP implementation and Government's accountability towards children and their future

- Develop forecast tracking mechanism for the implementation of the PRSP and its impact on children.
- Ensure results are then used to revise policy; disseminate results with Ombuds Offices and NGOs.
- Identify what measures have already been undertaken to reduce childhood poverty.
- International community/international organisations are also responsible to ensure policies they are promoting do not have adverse effects on the status of children
- Progress should be monitored in close cooperation between government and NGOs.

3. INTRODUCTION

Helena Eversole, UNICEF Representative

I have the honour and pleasure of chairing this morning session of the PRSP Roundtable on Children and Poverty with some most distinguished speakers who I will introduce to you in a minute. What these speakers will be doing with us this morning is clearly laying out for us the importance of putting children – NOT just as beneficiaries of economic reform – but at the centre of poverty reduction.

- Poverty reduction has become the main objective of development cooperation
- In 1996, development ministries and heads of aid agencies from donor countries agreed on specific and time-bound goals for halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty (less than 1\$/day) in 1990 (1,3 billion) by 2015. This would mean decreasing it to some 1 billion – or a relatively modest reduction of 1% per year.
- UNICEF estimates that children make up at least half of the worlds poor. This means some 600 million children under the age of 18, struggle for survival every day on less than 1 \$. No other age group is more vulnerable to poverty than children are.
- Most analyst and policy makers recognise that poverty has many dimensions including income and basic needs elements and also non-measurable attributes such as the right to dignity, non-discrimination and social inclusion.
- Indeed, during the 1990s, much of the world saw increased growth and in some cases recovery from the 'lost decade' of development in 80s. But progress for children has not kept pace with promises. The UN Special Session on Children highlighted the successes and failures of keeping those promises. Among the many reasons for the shortfall, one stands out: under-investment in basic social services.
- Without universal access to these services, children's rights cannot be guaranteed and poverty will not be reduced. Basic social services usually do not involve high-level technical advice or technologically sophisticated equipment. It does require government commitment and investment and donor support.

So today, we hope for a few outcomes:

1. That we better understand the situation of children in BIH in relation to the many dimensions of poverty
2. That we identify key issues that must be addressed in the PRSP to ensure children rights and best interests are given priority
3. That we make recommendations to the Government of BIH on how to ensure that public spending does not by-pass the poor, but is made more efficient in addressing poverty reduction

4. PRSP PROCESS AND CHILDREN

Zlatko Hurtic, PRSP Coordinator

- ⊕ Interim-PRSP does not have too many references to children and poverty.
- ⊕ Interim-PRSP, however, does outline reasons for poverty in BiH, which include:
 - lack of economic activity and weak production,
 - corruption,
 - inadequacy of social protection system (e.g. high percentage of social protection payments going to war veterans at the expense of other groups, including children),
 - violation of human rights, in particular discrimination against returnees.
- ⊕ Link between poverty and children identified so far in the PRSP process:
 - single headed female households are most at danger of being poor,
 - children of returnees – lack of access to education and social protection,
 - Roma children – lack of integration and low school enrolment, lack of state action to include Roma children.
- ⊕ Expectation from this roundtable – that discussions and recommendations will assist in which direction to take in relation to ensuring integration of children's concerns and rights in the preparation of the PRSP.

5. THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AND STATE OBLIGATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRSP

Madeleine Rees, Head of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Introduction

To better understand how to utilise the rights contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as they relate to the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the following should be considered:

- ⊕ What international law is and how it interrelates with national law,
- ⊕ What are the obligations and responsibilities it imposes on States,
- ⊕ What rights it confers,
- ⊕ The relationship between rights and poverty reduction,
- ⊕ The legal responsibilities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to address some of the elements, which would cause a child to experience poverty or to be a risk of experiencing poverty.

International Law

There are many, and not just in governments, who do not like having to pay attention to Law, particularly international law. One of the main reasons is that it is seen as obscure, irrelevant, or at best a wish list with no resonance for the community. This would be to ignore the role of international law in providing a framework for the conduct of governments and also to ignore the fact that international law is just that: Law, which provides for defined obligations and responsibilities for States in relation to all of the international conventions that they have ratified.

There is, unfortunately, a growing tendency within certain governments and certain institutions, to misunderstand the language of these conventions and to refer, instead to the “needs” of individuals rather than to the rights of individuals, including children. This is to fundamentally distort the entire meaning of international Human Rights law.

International Law therefore sets obligations for the State. It does not directly place obligations on individuals. The responsibility for individuals is to respect the rights of others, and if they don't the State provides the sanction through its own national legal system.

So, the obligation is with the State and this means all manifestations of the State and all State actors, from the police to teachers, health professionals, politicians etc. and, indeed, the PRSP team.

The Nature of State Obligations

The usual wording is to respect, protect and fulfil the obligations contained in the various treaties. Of all those treaties and conventions the CRC is not only the longest, most ratified Convention but also the most explicit in its terminology. For example Art 1 refers to the responsibility as being to respect and ensure the rights in the CRC. Hence it is mandatory and is a positive obligation on the State.

One of the reasons for this is the vulnerability of children and their dependent status, which increases the need for State protection. Note for example the particular emphasis placed on the State in relation to children who are deprived of a family environment.

The government must, therefore ensure that the national legislation accords with the provisions of the international law and this, obviously means a great deal of different laws.

Since one of the ways in which children can be protected is through their parents, this encompasses the wide range of legislation dealing with civil and political rights and social and economic rights with particular emphasis on the principle of non- discrimination. If a single mother is discriminated against because of her status and sex, then her children cannot enjoy their rights either. Hence, laws relating to employment, health education, housing, the franchise etc. must all ensure that the rights of adults are ensured.

The same principles apply to children, and are of particular significance in a post conflict society where social welfare has collapsed and discrimination persists.

The CRC

Article 3 of the CRC refers to the "best interests of the child" and that this shall be the primary consideration. This means:

That the consideration must be given to all actions by public or private institutions, in their policies, programmes and in legislation, as to the effect of those actions on children.

It means too that the participation of children in those decision and actions shall be taken into account in accordance with their age and maturity, (Art 12).

In relation to the PSRP, a review of the most relevant articles and more importantly how to implement these rights is needed. I will concentrate only on the most obvious for present purposes.

The first and perhaps the most important right is to be free from discrimination. This is contained in Art 2, hence comments on all the other articles must be read as ensuring these rights to all children. It should be noted that there is special emphasis under Art 23 as to the need to respect the rights of children with disabilities.

In order to enjoy civil and political rights, the existence of the child must be recognised. Art 7 demands that all children be registered, have a name and a nationality. Clearly, without that, the child will not receive an identity card, will not have access to health care, to education, to travel and will forever be outside of the system. In those circumstances, the child will be at risk of poverty.

The national law in BiH demands registration and yet there are thousands of children who are not being registered. The obligation on the State is to determine why and how this is happening and to take all necessary measures to redress the situation.

So, a civil right is predicative of social and economic rights which impact on poverty. These are the right to education, to social welfare, to health and to housing and ultimately, to children and work

I will use the right to education, health and work to exemplify how State obligations work.

Health

Art 24 recognises the right of the child to the highest attainable standard of health care.

This is one of the rights, which is subject to what is termed progressive realisation of that right. It cannot be expected that BiH can, at present provide the same standard of care that is provided in rich countries but it does mean that the State shall take all reasonable measures over a period of time to allocate resources for the gradual improvement of health care. It means too, that whatever levels of health care are available will be provided without discrimination. Current BiH legislation does give effect to this right, but again the implementation undermines the apparent compliance. Out of pocket expenses for medical care are higher in BiH than in any European State, which means that large sectors of the community, particularly children cannot access even primary health care.

The State must remedy this by examining when and where additional charges are being levied, why and by whom, and then take all necessary steps to prevent this diminution of both national and international law.

Article 28

The right to education. Again recognised as a right of progressive implementation but under paragraph (a) they are to make primary education compulsory and available to all. I understand that pre-conflict this right was fully secured, now the situation has changed. National law reflects the obligation but, again, in practice a substantial number of children and girl children in particular are not attending school. The reasons: books and pencils are no longer provided, therefore some families cannot afford to send their children to school. Transport may be a problem, and in rural areas there is frequently a need for the assistance of the children of the family.

The government must seek to allocate additional resources to schools to overcome these problems, they can also seek assistance from the International community, and indeed, the CRC commends such cooperation. Action must be taken to prevent children being kept at home, such practices as having school holidays at times of greatest labour needs in agriculture can be considered.

The law does not prescribe what must be done, merely - that measures should be taken, it is for the government to decide on how to address these problems.

Article 32

This leads to issues of labour and the inevitable problems that arise re employment of children. All over the world children work. The CRC does not prohibit this. What it does do is require that children have the right to leisure time (art 31) and under Art 32 prohibits economic exploitation and labour which would be hazardous, or interfere with the child's education, health or physical development, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

Paragraphs (a) to (c) describes how States must regulate such labour.

It is known that in BiH there are major issues of exploitation of children, from begging to sexual exploitation. The criminal law is not used appropriately to prevent such abuses, insufficient attention is given to preventative measures. And generally in this sector BiH is not complying with its obligations.

Conclusion

To give effect to those rights mentioned, and indeed many others, the PSRP must start from the perspective of the best interests of the child. That means that analysis of every element within the PRSP to ensure that it will not have a negative impact on children.

To give effect to its positive obligations, those elements, which are most closely related to the prevention of poverty, must be articulated in the final document with clearly defined measures for implementation.

Recommendations

- A review of the most relevant CRC articles and more importantly how to implement these rights in relation to PRSP
- Birth registration: the obligation of the State is to determine why and how thousands of children are not registered and to take all necessary measures to redress the situation.
- The right to health: the out of pocket expenses for medical care in BiH, which are higher than in any European State, which prevent access to health care of large sectors of the community, particularly children. The State must examine when and where additional charges are being levied why and by whom, and then take all necessary steps to prevent this.
- The right to education: government must seek to allocate additional resources to schools to ensure that children from poor families are not prevented from going to school due to costs of textbooks, school supplies, transport, clothes which poor families cannot meet. Action must be taken to prevent children being kept at home, such practices as having school holidays at times of greatest labour needs in agriculture can be considered.
- Right to be protection from forced labour and exploitation: the state must put in place preventative measures and ensure implementation of the criminal law to address exploitation of children, from begging to sexual exploitation.
- Best interest of the child: analysis of every element within the PRSP to ensure that it will not have a negative impact on children.

6. EXISTING POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR CHILDREN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Saliha Djuderija, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees

- ⊕ Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees has a lead role within the BiH on ensuring protection of child rights.
- ⊕ The first CRC report has been completed and is being submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva.
- ⊕ There are policy frameworks that address the rights and needs of children being developed and the next step is to ensure their implementation. These include:
 - The Ministry has worked with both Entities and coordinated finalisation of the State Plan of Action for Children,
 - The implementation of the National Plan of Action against Trafficking will ensure special focus on children,
 - There is a proposal for creation of the Council for Children.
- ⊕ There is a lot to be done, as there is a need to change more than 50 laws in BiH to ensure compliance with the international standards and CRC. In particular family law.
- ⊕ The Ministry is currently in the process of looking resources and funding in order to implement the State Plan of Action for Children:
 - Establishment of the Council for Children will be tasked with development of indicators on needs and funding strategy,
 - Treasury and other ministries have committed to support State Plan of Action for Children and will to allocate funds at the state level,
 - Entities and Brcko – commitment to place children as a priority.
- ⊕ The Ministry is committed to work with the Entity governments and NGOs as partners as well as critics and will continue to cooperate and seek assistance from the international organisations

Recommendations

- Include separate section on the rights of the child in the PRSP
- Creation of the Council for Children
- Revision and harmonisation of laws with CRC
- Allocation of resources for the implementation of the State Plan of Action for Children

7. CHILDREN ON POVERTY

Nada Uletilovic, Director, NGO Hi Neighbour

INTRODUCTION

We got the statements used for this presentation from 51 children aged 12 to 18 when in February we discussed with them the issues of poverty, right to education, and health care. Participants in the discussions were 33 girls and 18 boys from Banja Luka, Zenica, Prijedor and Sarajevo.

This discussion was organised for the purposes of a project of Save the Children – UK, with the wish to respect the right of the child (Art 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child) to express his/her views freely and the right for his/her views to be taken into account in all matters and procedures directly affecting the child.

We were surprised by the children's maturity, seriousness, and interest in the issues discussed. They showed that they were definitely interested in the issue of poverty and the poverty reduction strategy and that they had a lot to say about it. They showed that they were aware that their future depended on the current living conditions and situation in education, on the quality of health care, on their possibility to travel, to do sports, to consume and create culture. All this depends on the living standard. Every day of their childhood and youth passes by irrevocably and what is missed once can hardly be made up for. Children know this and have their views on all of these issues. These are essential issues for them. It is up to us, adults, to hear their voices and take their views into account wherever possible.

POVERTY AND HOW IT AFFECTS CHILDREN

"Poor children, because they are rejected by everyone, think that they are less worthy and do not want to fight in life."

Girl of 13

"There is a big difference, some children have everything, some nothing, children in the street and without parents."

Boy of 12

"I believe that children who have everything should behave as all other children, instead of showing off."

Girl of 12

"There are children who wear expensive clothes, while other children do not have anything to eat."

Girl of 14

"Poor children work hard and study, and the rich say my dad has a car, a firm, I don't have to study. And then they go to work somewhere, and they don't have the faintest idea. Everyone should go to school and teachers should be considerate towards everyone."

Girl of 13

"Poor children cannot go to school, they don't have any place to work and make money."

Girl of 13

"I believe that everyone should have a roof over their heads and something to eat. This should be provided by their parents. And if a child doesn't have parents and lives in a children's home where the situation is not all that great, people who don't have children should adopt him."

Girl of 13

"Rich children abhor poor children. Instead of helping them, they avoid them. That is not nice as all children are the same."

Girl of 13

"Rich children should not avoid poor children and should not discriminate between other children, because there are some rich people who would like to help the poor."

Girl of 13

"If a poor child has some disease and cannot be cured, he remains ill for the rest of his life."

Boy of 12

POVERTY AND CHANCES FOR THE FUTURE

"If they were born under the same conditions, their chances would be the same. Since the rich can afford to have better education, they have better conditions because they have better education."

Girl of 13

"They do not have the same chances as the poor don't have money to go to school to bigger cities, and the rich can pay for their exams. Some teachers say: you are poor, you cannot pay for your exams, we will fail you."

Girl of 13

"I know some poor children who study hard and have all the best grades, and the rich do not study and still are the first to get a job. I know of a girl who finished economics secondary school, she is poor and works as a cleaning lady in a school."

Girl of 13

"Though they study hard and have the best grades, poor children don't have money to continue with their education, while the rich can even buy their way to a university degree. This will come into the open sooner or later, just like it was the case with hospitals, but some people will die before it is proven."

Girl of 13

MESSAGES TO PARENTS

Through the question as to what they would do for their children if they were parents, the children projected what they expect from their own parents.

"It would be good for me to educate my child so that he has some basic knowledge, in order for him not to be a street cleaner, though all people are the same."

Boy of 12

"I would take care of my children's diet and would see to it that they don't go out without a jacket."

Girl of 12

"The economic standard of my family would be important for me. If all people took care of that, the living standard in our country would certainly improve."

Boy of 12

"I would give my children what I couldn't get."

Boy of 12

"I would ensure that my children have a computer, a stereo, so that they wouldn't feel they're backward compared to other children."

Boy of 12

CHILDREN'S MESSAGES TO THE GOVERNMENT

"I would tell them to invest more money in children, and not to invest it only for their own purposes."

Boy of 13

"The Government should look for foreign investors, and should give its own money."

Boy of 12

"The Government should bring from rich countries as many foreign investors as possible."

Boy of 12

"The Government should set aside funds from their own salaries because they have a lot of money."

Boy of 12

"The Government should reduce its transport fleet and thus help poor children."

Boy of 12

"Some special people should get organised and build homes for street children so that they could have a better and safer life."

Boy of 12

"It should be made possible for every child to go to school and have parents. Those who don't have parents should be adopted by those who can't have children."

Girl of 12

"I would tell the Government to establish humanitarian organisations to help children."

Girl of 12

"If some don't have a roof over their heads, the Government should help them build houses - e.g. refugees and those who don't have parents - or give them money for them to buy something they want."

Girl of 13

"I think that the people from the Government should provide education for children living in children's homes so that they could achieve something in their lives."

Girl of 13

"I would give poor children free books."

Girl of 12

"The Government should not wear 3,000-mark suits, but 20-mark trousers so that they help others too. They are no better than the others."

Girl of 13

"I would tell the Government to first take care of all the poor, to provide food for them, and then do all the rest."

Boy of 14

"Since there are many children walking in the street who have disfigured legs and don't have fingers, I think that those children should be helped the most. We are all the same, but those children just need a bit more than we do, since their parents make them do that. I think that the cellulose factory should be closed down as it pollutes environment the most."

Boy of 12

"After a war it is children who need the most."

Boy of 12

"I would send the message that people shouldn't be charged if they have a serious illness, that money should not be used to buy your health."

Girl of 14

"Some children don't have money for textbooks and that's why they don't go to school."

Girl of 13

Recommendations

Government should:

- Provide free education for all, including provision of free textbooks for poor children
- Provide free health care
- Prioritise poor children, disabled children and children without parental care
- Encourage foreign investment
- Invest in children and reallocate existing budget to benefit children

8. POVERTY IN THE CONTEXT OF PROTECTION OF RIGHTS AND INTERESTS OF CHILDREN

Olgica Drinic, Secretary General, NGO Nasa djeca, Zenica

- ⊕ One of the greatest obstacles to the exercise of children's rights is POVERTY.
- ⊕ Children living in poverty on a daily basis witness their parents' or guardians' difficult fight for survival. The enormous pressure to meet basic existential needs affects children's education and their health care. Not rare is also the problem of neglected children as parents or guardians are not able to provide them with the minimum preconditions for a normal life. Poverty most frequently causes problems related to economic or sexual exploitation of children.
- ⊕ We have noticed the tendency of children to drop out of school, which parents explain by saying that they are not able to bear the expenses. Children thus start working in markets or cafés, and can also be seen begging in the street or as victims of juvenile prostitution.
- ⊕ Children living in poor families have difficulties coping in their daily lives, but they at the same time show a high level of understanding for what is happening in their own community.

These are some of the answers we received during interviews with children who participated in Focus Groups to the question

CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON POVERTY:

"Poverty is the worst thing that can happen to a state because it mirrors its economic situation, a situation that should change. Because if we want to move forward into Europe, we have to get rid of this poverty."

Boy 17

"I think that apart from that material poverty there is also spiritual poverty, and I believe it to be to blame the most for our current situation."

Girl 17

"I know that children who are not poor are for sure happier, at least they can live a child's life. When you have to think about if you will have anything to eat, or how to pay for electricity or overdue heating bills, you are no longer a child."

Girl 16

"Are there any differences between poor children and children who are not poor?"

"Poor children create their personalities on their own."

Girl 16

"Some poor children have complexes for a long time and feel less worthy. They are simply ashamed of themselves."

Boy 16

"Poor children are deprived of their childhood. They worry about things that adults worry about."

Boy 17

The group discussed the impact of poverty on health care and education. It is very important to stress the significance that children attach to these issues and to the need to resolve problems that exist in these fields.

CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON HEALTH CARE:

"Well, if we are not healthy it is logical that it should be the greatest problem as we cannot achieve anything in life that way. Health is the most important, and other things come in their own course".

Girl 17

"What is the current situation in health care and what are the most important things for a child's health?"

"Whoever has more money, he receives better care."

Girl 16

"The code of conduct of health workers is not honoured. We are taught in school that it should be different."

Boy 17

"There is no confidentiality. After my appointment there, the whole school knew about my problem. I can do that with my mom – she will give me advice and will not tell anyone.

Girl 16 - (comment regarding the work of the school psychologist):

"I get a good treatment at doctor's. My aunt works there."

Girl 15

"I believe it is all because of salaries. If doctors had higher salaries, they would work better."

Girl 16

"I believe that children in secondary schools should have annual systematic medical check-ups, as well as teachers. I am not happy with the way the medical certificate is obtained for enrolment in secondary school. I got it within three minutes, without any check-ups. I wonder if all the students in my school are mentally capable of being teachers."

Girl 16

"No discrimination should be made between the poor and the rich. A child is a child. Here people often believe that only children of the poor get drunk and use drugs. This is not true. Rich children do it too, they just receive a different medical treatment."

Girl 16

To reinforce this, I will quote here the comment by a psychologist in a secondary school, who said at a public panel organised to mark the international week of fight against drug abuse and other addictive diseases: "When children of the rich drink alcohol, they are *Bohemians*, and when children of the poor do this, they are *alcoholics*. Let us not discriminate, they both deserve to be treated adequately."

MESSAGES

"Children should be treated free of charge and in the best possible way. When I watch the "Humana TV" programme, I feel scared. Those who do not have money might as well just die."
Girl 15

When it comes to the impact of poverty on education, children emphasise the problem of dropping out of school by their acquaintances or friends because their parents are not able to bear the expenses of "free education".

Expensive books and school material, requests for them to pay for insurance, enrolment, school heating expenses or repairs aggravate children's position and serve as an excuse for parents to claim that in discontinuing their child's education they have acted the only possible way.

CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION:

"It is no good – we do not have a school, we are tenants in the Gymnasium building. We cannot even use the gym as there are no free time slots. The Ministry has said there is no money."

**Girl (16), student of secondary school for future teachers*

"A teacher told me: 'You are just one of 800 students for me.' I wrote in my notebook: 'I am but a number.'"

Girl 16

"In school we have a chemistry lab. We have never had our practical classes there. A lot of money has been invested in the equipment. They will not let us use it saying we would wreck it all. We are not morons."

Boy 18

"It is ridiculous that I have information science as a subject and have never even sat down in front of a computer. Some schools have computers and some do not. Who decides on this?"

Boy 16

"There is corruption in school too. The only thing still missing is an official price list. It is a public secret that grade 2 in math costs 50 KM at the quarter term and 100 KM at the end of the school year."

Girl 16

MESSAGES

- ⊕ All members of the group agreed that what was necessary, in addition to a good quality curriculum through which children and young people would be educated for their future professions, was to establish institutions that would have the task to provide children with professional orientation before their enrolment in secondary school.
- ⊕ They also stressed the need to make secondary education mandatory as well. Assistance should be provided for poor children in clothes, shoes, necessary school materials, and they should be offered comparable education opportunities.
- ⊕ They especially commented on discontinuation of education for female children, who seem to have opportunities to get married and, as a result, they apparently do not need to go to school.

At the end of our presentation, we will quote the words of a boy of 17:

"It is awful to be a poor child. And it is even worse when your teacher is poor too, because he does not look at you through the same eyes like a child who is not poor. They discriminate between us.

It hardly ever happens that the child of a doctor or director is failed in a subject. It is, I guess, the privilege of the rich, not of all but of most of the new rich. They already know which university they will enrol in and how much using connections costs. I do not have the money for that sort of entrance exam."

CLOSING REMARKS

- ⊕ This presentation has offered an overview of children's opinions on poverty and its impact on particular fields of importance for the lives of children.
- ⊕ As you can conclude, children do not think as children anymore because for a long time now they have been suffering the pressure of problems related to their daily lives. They look at adults with a lot of distrust, and most frequently link their future to leaving the country.
- ⊕ This presentation offers an extraordinary opportunity to recognise children's views and hear their voices.
- ⊕ The poverty reduction strategy in BiH should meet the expectations, wishes and needs of children, for children do not ask for nothing more but what is guaranteed under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, one of whose signatories is our country.
- ⊕ It was said in the Convention on the Rights on the Child that children should be the first to feel prosperity in a society and the last to feel the problems. As a result of this strategy, children and young people should feel progress in all segments of their lives. In turn, we will have a future.

9. CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE DISCUSSION ON CHILDHOOD POVERTY

Shon Campbell, Save the Children UK

1) WHAT DO WE MEAN BY POVERTY

⊕ **Absolute poverty**

- Children living in households where resources are insufficient to meet basic human needs.
(This would include insufficient food, safe drinking water, sanitation, health, shelter, education, or access to information that concerns them).

⊕ **Relative poverty**

- Households where there are resources, but so limited as to exclude the child from a lifestyle that at least approaches that of the rest of society.
(For example, lack of resources to enable sustainable livelihoods, limited or lack of access to basic services (health, education, social protection), higher morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environments, social discrimination and exclusion, lack of possibility to participate in decision-making in civil, social and cultural life.)

From a rights perspective:

Poverty is measured relative to the freedoms and opportunities considered basic by the society in which the child lives, and fulfilment of their rights. Hence poverty can be defined as:

- ⊕ failure of freedoms considered basic by the society in which they live,
- ⊕ or non-fulfilment of rights to those freedoms

This means that poverty is not just an issue of income. It includes other dimensions such as social exclusion, limited access to services/resources, and denial of rights.

2) WHY FOCUS ON CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD POVERTY?

a) Children are at greater risk of poverty than other groups.

- ⊕ As a result, children constitute a higher proportion of the poor than they do of the population as a whole.

b) Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of poverty

- ⊕ The longer children stay poor, the more likely it is that they will suffer lasting consequences.
- ⊕ The consequences of poverty increase the chance of poverty in the next generation so that today's poor children are likely to become tomorrow's poor adults.

c) Children are more likely to be overlooked

- ⊕ Children are dependent on adults and governments to recognize and meet their needs, ensure their protection, and act in their best interests so that they can reach their full potential as children and subsequently as adults.

Those States parties, which have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have undertaken to uphold these obligations to children. BiH is one of them. Inter-governmental agencies working in BiH are also bound by these international human rights instruments and should thus be acting on this commitment to the children of the country.

The real test for us all will be the amount of space the PRSP devotes to children, and specifically to the impact that proposed poverty reduction measures will have, in practice, on childhood poverty.

d) *Childhood is a one-off window of opportunity and development*

- ⊕ Certain losses incurred in childhood cannot be made up later meaning that children must be a first priority in addressing poverty.

Measures to reduce the impact and incidence of childhood poverty are critical as they will reduce current and future poverty of the population as a whole.

3) WHICH CHILDREN ARE MOST AT RISK?

Certain factors increase the risk of childhood poverty:

- ⊕ Factors affecting individual families
For example, the risk of poverty increases with a higher number of children in household, non-working heads of household or those earning insufficient or irregular income, families with particular social problems, etc....
- ⊕ Broader factors affecting communities and increasing the vulnerability of children:
For example, children living in rural areas tend to have a higher risk of poverty than children living in urban areas, and poverty can make other disadvantages still more important – such as having further to travel to school, more limited access to basic utilities and services, less access to information....
- ⊕ Groups who tend to be excluded or marginalized
Examples in BiH include Roma children, disabled children, children deprived of parental care, and others. This exclusion or marginalisation is often the result of systemic or non-intentional discrimination. All aspects of discrimination need to be addressed.

It is not possible to address poverty without a full understanding of who is poor and how they experience poverty.

4) WHAT WILL - OR WILL NOT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Elements of an effective strategy to address childhood poverty would be:

a) *A clear aim*

To enable poor and marginalized children and their families to participate in and benefit from economic growth such that these children are able to reach their full potential together with other children in their society.

It is not enough to seek only to alleviate or contain childhood poverty

b) *Economic growth – but this alone is not enough to reduce childhood poverty*

- ⊕ Promoting economic growth alone may actually increase inequality for poor people and may even lead to them becoming poorer. Attention is needed to promoting equality along with economic growth.

Those able to take advantage of the opportunities offered by economic growth may be able to prosper, but those without that capacity may become relatively – and even practically - poorer. An example can be found in the deterioration of the situation of Roma in some of Europe's fastest growing economies.

- ⊕ In addition, economic growth will not, in itself, end social exclusion.

There will continue to be particularly vulnerable groups who require special attention due to age, disability and other factors.

c) *Basic services and social protection for all children*

- ⊕ Basic services – health and education – must be available for ALL children as a priority, along with social protection which recognizes the dimensions of childhood poverty and is targeted toward support for those children who are most affected.
General development measures are not enough to assure social protection. It requires a targeted approach that recognizes the dimensions of childhood poverty and places priority on who are most affected.

d) *A full understanding of who is affected and how*

This requires:

- ⊕ Targeted approaches to children and families most affected by poverty.
 - To be effective in a situation where there are limited resources, as in BiH, a strategy needs to be focused and fully informed through comprehensive analysis. It should prioritise those children and families most affected by poverty.
- ⊕ To address poverty, we must understand all its consequences and aspects - meaning we need the participation of those who are poor, including children.
 - Participation of civil society is essential to build this understanding, but most important is participation of poor people themselves. Effective approaches require consultations with both groups.
It is important to distinguish between organised civil society and poor people. Organised civil society includes associations, NGOs, teachers, unions etc, and can provide insights on those who are poor based on experience across a range of locations. Poor people, on the other hand, have an understanding of the experience of living in poverty and what really is or isn't available/accessible. Without this, it is not possible to fully understand the dimensions of poverty, or to begin to address *it*.
- ⊕ Ensuring active and informed participation of those affected by poverty is likely to require proactive and targeted approaches. These should also aim at understanding poverty from the perspectives of children and youth as well as from adults.
Poor people are likely to be unaccustomed to being consulted, uninformed of the issues, and unaware of the importance of their being part of the process. They may also be hesitant to voice their views where they are concerned to be further disadvantaged by speaking honestly (for example, in front of officials or others who they feel have power over the few resources and opportunities they have access to).
- ⊕ Gathering detailed data on those children affected by poverty
 - At a very minimum, this must consider the status of health, education and the standard of living of children who are poor.
- ⊕ Data must be disaggregated according to various factors to give a complete picture of the incidence, diversity and special effects of poverty among different groups of people. This is necessary to enable effective strategies to be explored.
For example: age, gender, ability/disability, rural or urban domicile, status as a refugee or displaced person (regardless of registration), number of children in the household, whether a child is residing with one or both parents or is dependent on extended family members – especially grandparents of pensionable age, whether children work to contribute to family income....

e) Use of this data to predict the likely outcomes of proposed policies on children and childhood poverty.

This must be done as part of determining which strategy will have the greatest positive impact on reducing childhood poverty.

f) Clear mechanisms to implement the strategy.

- ⊕ Develop indicators and benchmarks to measure whether or not there is progress
 - In order to address childhood poverty, these should be:
 - established in consultation with children
 - based on well formulated and time-bound objectives
 - ensure accountability by clarifying who is responsible for progress
 - able to act as a basis for monitoring together with affected groups

For the PRSP to have an impact on reducing childhood poverty, it must do more than focus on macroeconomic and structural policies that promote economic growth.

It must aim to reduce inequality and ensure well-targeted social protection. It must also be based on detailed information about those who are poor, which is obtained with the active and informed participation of poor people and of children affected by poverty. Policy makers must ensure that the proposed macroeconomic and social policies will, when applied in practice, make a real difference to children by reducing childhood poverty.

5) WHAT CAN THE PRS PROCESS DO TO TACKLE CHILDHOOD POVERTY?

Effective action to tackle childhood poverty depends on:

- ⊕ understanding what is specific about childhood poverty,
- ⊕ relationship to broad factors that lead to children growing up in poverty,
- ⊕ action that addresses these areas

I. Recognise the different dimensions of poverty

- ⊕ relative as well as absolute - rights dimensions

II. Make childhood poverty a key issue which must be addressed

- ⊕ particular vulnerability for children to poverty
- ⊕ your accountability toward children and their future
- ⊕ what measures undertaken so far to reduce childhood poverty

III. Identify children most at risk of childhood poverty

Roma, children with disability, children from rural areas, children in collective accommodation, children deprived of parental care...

Develop an understanding of

- ⊕ who they are,
- ⊕ where they are,
- ⊕ how they experience poverty

→ to do this - we need their participation

IV. Ensure appropriate data

Poverty-related data should be disaggregated within PRSPs

→ information about incidence, diversity, and special effects of poverty among different particular groups of people ...

V. Make informed choices about the prioritisation of resources

Focus on what will make a significant difference:

- ⊕ **reducing inequality** through equitable social and economic policy and policies / programmes that improve the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable families.
- ⊕ **focusing public expenditure on essential services** - social protection, education, health, and prioritising access for ALL children.

VI. Build a commitment to combating childhood poverty into the PRSP and all other development processes...

- ⊕ **social impact analysis** to predict outcomes of proposed policies on children affected by poverty before they are finalized and implemented
- ⊕ **monitor progress together with those who are affected**
- ⊕ **ensure results are then used to fine-tune policy**

Recommendations

- Recognise the different dimensions of poverty.
- Make childhood poverty a key issue, which must be addressed.
- Identify children most at risk of childhood poverty.
- Ensure appropriate data.
- Make informed choices about the prioritisation of resources.
- Build a commitment to combating childhood poverty into the PRSP and all other development processes.

10. WORKING GROUP ONE: discrimination & exclusion/risk of increasing inequity

- ⊕ Discrimination and exclusion
- ⊕ Risk of increasing inequity

Which children are most at risk of being poor?

In BiH all children are at risk, but especially:

- ⊕ Children with disability (besides the increase in needs, at least one parent is prevented from working as he/she has to take care of the child)
- ⊕ Children from marginalized groups
- ⊕ Roma Children
- ⊕ Children refugees
- ⊕ Children returnees
- ⊕ Children from the families with low or no earnings
- ⊕ "Invisible" children – e.g. children from rural, inaccessible areas

How do we know?

- ⊕ From everyday contact with children
- ⊕ Need official statistical indicators

What is responsibility of the government?

- ⊕ Provide minimum of basic needs for all children (minimum package)
- ⊕ Provide special protection packages for different groups of vulnerable children
- ⊕ Equality and equity of social protection for all children in BiH

Recommendations

- Government to establish an information system for education, health and social protection with responsibilities of all members in the process
- Development of a minimum package of special protection for vulnerable children
- Government to establish a fund for child protection on a state level or integrate specific provision for children in budgets related to social protection (i.e. consideration will need to be given to this at entity level such that this fund is seen as part of the social welfare system rather than as a structure covering issues relating to children in isolation of regular government structures).
- Allocation of budget towards children's needs within the framework of the PRSP
- Integration of the PRSP with the Action Plan for Children and social protection strategies that already exist at entity levels.

11. WORKING GROUP TWO: data, analysis, monitoring / participation

- ⊕ Need for data and analysis
- ⊕ Need for monitoring / participation in these processes

What data are required?

- ⊕ General data and data that will provide information on the situation of poverty in BiH
- ⊕ Analysis of poverty through standardized questionnaires.

How and by whom this data can be collected?

- ⊕ Government has to be aware of their responsibility in collection of these data as well as public dissemination of these data
- ⊕ By Government, as well as NGOs and partners.
- ⊕ One of the possibilities is to involve universities in this process as part of their practical lessons.

Should children participate in monitoring and how?

- ⊕ Children should be involved through NGOs that are working with children as well as through Government and nongovernmental sector.

Recommendations

- Forecast tracking mechanism for the implementation of the PRSP and its impact on children (in addition, with help from Ombuds offices and NGOs).

12. SOCIAL POLICY IN TRANSITION: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

*Asim Zecevic, Assistant Minister, Federal Ministry of Social Welfare,
Displaced Persons and Refugees*

The objectives of a transition in a society are of an ultimately social nature, regardless of whether we speak of a transition of political, economic or social system, as it is aimed at reaching a particular living standard for most of the population. Accommodation of existential needs is actually the start of all social reforms, including economic and market reforms.

In the field of social and child protection, it is necessary to make radical interventions in order to more evenly distribute the burden of poverty in the society.

A consequence of the existing decentralisation in the social sphere is that Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in particular the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is spending less on social care for the vulnerable population than any other country in the region, a fact difficult to justify in a country with this level of social needs.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the allocations for social and child protection from GDP in 2000 were 1,1% in Republika Srpska, and 0,7% in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For illustration, according to World Bank data, the allocations for social and child protection from GDP in 2000 were 1,1% in Slovenia, 1,6% in Macedonia, 1,9% in Croatia, 1,4% in Bulgaria, 2,4% in Latvia, and 2,1% in Estonia.

In neither of the BH entities are social protection allowances funded or supported from the entity budget, which is untenable /World Bank's "Public Expenditures Survey in BiH"/.

Especially discouraging in Cantons are the allocations for child protection. Only four Cantons have allocated some funds for these purposes (Una-Sana 78,515 KM, Zenica-Doboj 2,132,781 KM, West Herzegovina 267,050 KM, and Sarajevo Canton 16,194,271 KM). This amounts to a total of 18,672,617 KM, or 0,28% of GDP, allocated in FBiH.

The current situation in the Federation of BiH is very difficult due to the constant increase in the number of citizens who are in a situation of social need or exclusion, which is undoubtedly caused by the difficult post-war situation and transition in all spheres.

The current situation is characterised by a poor co-ordination in the implementation of social and child protection and a poor co-ordination of measures from the Federation and cantonal to municipal levels.

In connection with this, it is necessary to seek new possibilities of redistributing public revenue in the Federation of BiH to work to the advantage of social policy and its segments, i.e. to increase social protection expenditures to the region's average level in this field.

PROTECTION OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Protection of families with children is an integral part of social policy, but is also an activity of special social interest, aimed at providing all children with approximately equal conditions for healthy and proper growth and development; providing help in the implementation of the

reproductive function of the family, as well as in the implementation of the educational, protective, and other functions of the family.

The binding provisions of international conventions (in particular those of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), the FBiH Constitution, and all positive regulations governing family and child protection only represent the binding legal norms and legal framework. The reality is different. The family is little or not materially protected at all in the system of social, child, and family protection.

As for provision of funds for protection of families with children, the Law on Allocation of Public Revenue in the Federation and Financing of FBiH (FBiH Official Gazette, No. 26/96 and 32/98) defines the distribution of public revenue between the Federation and the Cantons. Through their regulations, the Cantons should have ensured the type and level of revenues to be given to municipalities to finance social and child protection.

However, the main reason for the failure to pass cantonal laws on social and child protection and protection of civilian victims of war was the inability to provide necessary funds within cantonal budgets to fund the rights from the field of child protection.

The most important forms of protection to be enjoyed by families with children stipulated in the Federation law and foreseen in cantonal laws are as follows:

- ⊕ **Child's allowance**, enjoyed and paid only in Sarajevo Canton for 19,648 beneficiaries with 36,261 children.

Other cantons do not pay child's allowances. In Sarajevo Canton, beneficiaries of the child's allowance entitlement were provided with one-off assistance for 89 newborns, while 750 mothers received assistance in child food up to six months of age of the child.

- ⊕ **Allowance replacing salaries for employed mothers** during the time they are absent from work in order to take care of the child and allowances for unemployed mothers – in Sarajevo Canton this allowance was paid for 516 employed women and 887 unemployed women. In Una-Sana Canton this allowance was paid for 228 employed women and 94 unemployed women. The contribution for pension and health insurance will be paid for this allowance for employed mothers, and the allowance will be paid as of the day of delivery.
- ⊕ **Entitlement to subsidies for placement of children** in pre-school institutions was enjoyed by 718 children in Sarajevo Canton, and by 100 children in West Herzegovina Canton.

ASSESSMENT OF FUNDS FOR PROTECTION OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Proceeding from the great importance of family and children's upbringing, one of the objectives of the strategy is to establish, develop and advance a system of protection of families with children. This objective should be achieved through putting in place forms of protection, or basic rights of families with children.

The basic rights that should be enjoyed by families with children are:

- ⊕ **Child's allowance**, as a form of protection that is massive in its scope, should considerably alleviate the social status of child's allowance beneficiaries. According to incomplete data and on the basis of the current law, the assessment is that in FBiH this

form of protection will include approximately 160,000 children, which requires annual funds of 38,000,000 KM. The monthly child's allowance would amount to 20 KM per child, or 4% of the average salary in FBiH in the previous year.

- ⊕ **One-off assistance for newborns** is enjoyed by beneficiaries of the child's allowance entitlement. It would be paid at the level of 25% of the average salary in FBiH in the previous year. The necessary funds are assessed at the level of around 1,700,000 KM.
- ⊕ **Entitlement to assistance in child food up to six months of age of the child** is enjoyed by those who are entitled to child's allowance. This allowance would be at the level of 8% of the average salary in FBiH in the previous year. The assessment is that the necessary funds would amount to around 1,000,000 KM.
- ⊕ **Allowance replacing salaries for employed women/mothers and allowance for unemployed women/mothers** as a form of protection of families with children is aimed at improving the status of women/mothers during maternity leave. The assessment is that the necessary funds for this purpose would amount to 18.000.000 KM per year. The allowance during pregnancy and post-delivery period for employed women/mothers would be at the level of 50% of the mother's salary, and the allowance for unemployed women/mothers at the level of 20% of the average salary in FBiH in the previous year.

CONCLUSIONS:

As all levels of government and decision-making should seek to provide all children with approximately the same conditions for a harmonious development of their personalities and to help the family to express its reproductive function in improving the quality of life, we suggest the following:

- In the framework of defining the population policy, whose task is to achieve particular demographic objectives, it is necessary to identify family policy measures in the Federation of BiH by 2005.
- By 2005 pass a separate Law on Child's Allowance.
- By 2005 a child protection fund should be created at the entity level. As of 2003 financing from the Federation Budget, as an interim solution pending the creation of this fund and intended to provide minimum child's allowances, uniform for the territory of the Federation of BiH, should be introduced, within the framework of achieving the objectives of the fight against poverty and assistance to the most vulnerable groups in the society, as decided by the FBiH Government at its session of 16 May 2002.
- In 2003 create a new database for monitoring child protection beneficiaries in the Federation of BiH according to European standards, with constant monitoring of the actual situation in terms of vulnerability of families and children.
- By 2003 eliminate the existing legislative and legal obstacles to the exercise of children's rights, in particular for disabled children in the sectors of education, health, spatial planning and urbanism, finances, etc., and pass legislation and regulations to uphold more strict legal sanctions for violations of children's rights. We also suggest that a law on protection against violence should be passed by 2004.

- Develop and significantly support alternative forms of child care, in the first place foster families, day and semi-day centres, as opposed to institutional care, as a more humane and also more cost-effective form of care for children without parental care and children with special needs (physical and mental disabilities).
- In the context of improving child protection, it is necessary to pass and amend the following laws in the Federation of BiH by the end of 2002: the Family Law; the Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code of FBiH; the Law on Criminal Procedure; amendments to the Law on Allocation of Public Revenues and Financing of the Federation of BiH; amendments to the Law on Lottery and Games of Chance; amendments to the Federation and Cantonal Laws on Internal Affairs.

13. SOCIAL ACTION FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Salih Resavac, NGO Corridor

To speak of poverty at the very start implies an association with unemployment and the discussions on PRSP so far have mostly focused on that topic.

It is not up to me to judge, but whenever I have an opportunity, I try to speak of poverty in a different context, especially when I have an opportunity to speak of this burning problem for Bosnia and Herzegovina from the perspective of young people, a generation that expects a lot, but from whom a lot is expected too.

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I will not offer assessments expressed in figures. What I will present here are some of the results of the survey conducted by "Corridor" on how poverty affects children. I will also try to point to activities and programmes that have not been addressed at all or have just been addressed in a cursory manner within the PRSP Project.

We conducted a pilot survey to assess how poverty affects acquisition of social skills by children.

The hypothesis was that children from families above the poverty line (PL) subject to this survey would demonstrate that they acquire social skills more easily.

The aim of the survey was to assess the impact of poverty on children of pre-school age, and to create conditions to develop necessary skills, through appropriate programmes, for successful adaptation to various social situations. The informants were children of pre-school age aged 4 to 5.

We used scales of behavioural skills /for children of pre-school and kindergarten age/.

Number of informants: 45.

Two Sub-Groups within the Experimental and Control Group.

Children below the PL.

Children above the PL.

The analysis yielded mixed results.

- ⊕ The Experimental Group above the PL showed a smaller percentage of behavioural problems than the Experimental Group below the PL.
- ⊕ When the Control Group below the PL was compared to the Experimental Group above the PL, the former showed a considerably narrower range of social skills and more problems related to behaviour.
- ⊕ The Experimental Group below the PL showed that following the inclusion in an offered programme of psycho-social support its social skills improved compared to the Control Group below the PL, which was not included in those programmes.

1/2 of children below the PL have mental health problems, which is a result of the direct impact of poverty.

The need for research and early intervention was apparent on the basis of this survey in the comparison between the Experimental Group above the PL and the Control Group below the PL.

- ⊕ The group above the PL demonstrated considerably better-developed social skills than the group below the PL, which points to developmental problems and needs of children living in extreme poverty.

Surveys of this kind and implementation of programmes offer an opportunity to children below the PL to grow up with skills necessary for their functioning in society.

It is necessary reality in which the educational process is taking place, it seems quite normal that professionals should be preoccupied with negative aspects of life. Our reality is turning into a chronicle of bad news.

Unemployment; life in exile; a radical increase in crime, robberies, and violence; increase in alcoholism and drug abuse; prostitution; juvenile delinquency; trafficking of juveniles, are all part of our reality.

It is therefore no wonder that social workers, pedagogues and psychologists in schools and social work centres mostly deal with pathology and treatment.

In their work, the paradigm of disease and not the paradigm of health is prevalent.

The media themselves “promote” pathology. We are thus witnesses of lead stories on the number of drug abusers and opening of centres for treatment of drug abuse, and communes for treatment of drug abuse are mushrooming. The perception of man as a victim seems to be prevalent.

Our experience in working with young people of primary school and secondary school age, as well as with university students, points to symptoms of an existential crisis combined with depressive conditions with 5,7% girls and 2,3% boys.

Characteristic for them is:

- ⊕ An intense feeling of their own unworthiness,
- ⊕ Futility of life,
- ⊕ A feeling of not belonging to this world,
- ⊕ A devastating boredom,
- ⊕ Anxiety and sadness.

However, 50,7% of students indicate that their circumstances cannot prevail over the need of their healthy bodies to feel good.

Adolescents:

- ⊕ Express a desire to be autonomous,
- ⊕ Are braver,
- ⊕ Decide themselves how they will behave,
- ⊕ Adapt better to different people and situations,
- ⊕ Have a feeling that they are capable of resolving their problems on their own,
- ⊕ Are interested in the world surrounding them,
- ⊕ Are open for different experiences,
- ⊕ Accept risks,
- ⊕ Are faster in recovering,

- ⊕ Are ambitious and active,
- ⊕ Are tolerant,
- ⊕ Tend to forgive,

which all points to a great potential that is not being used or channelled into creativity and proving themselves, even though the resources are evident.

In the discussion that the NGO Core Group had with young people on the topic of the PRSP Project, they offered some good and authentic suggestions:

1. Harmonise pedagogical standards on the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
2. Establish a system of monitoring and support for talented students;
3. Reform the educational system and its adjustment to the labour market;
4. Through regulations make more strict the system of monitoring of corruption and sanctions in this field;
5. Give more importance to programmes of social activities of young people through programmes for prevention of alcoholism and drug abuse. This implies allocation of funds for social activities of young people beneficial for the community, in co-operation with the NGO sector.

These are recommendations by secondary school students.

Note

The views and recommendations come from young people from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina and they coincide.

Young university students group

1. Make more strict the legal measures against corruption in secondary schools;
2. Put in place international standards for teachers at universities;
3. Reduce the excessive number of universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would automatically result in savings and at the same time a selection of teachers;
4. Through a reform of higher education, ensure harmonisation of curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
5. Adjust the higher education system to the local resources, which will contribute to avoiding a situation like the current one, where we are producing professionals with university degrees who will, once their education is completed, only join the category of the poor because the community does not need people with a particular professional profile.

This is the best way to reduce "brain drain", a trend very much pronounced at the moment.

The opinion of young people is that a reform of education would have to regulate these issues through legislation.

Without going into specific details in this text in terms of things as seen from the perspective of young people, I would just add that the educational system, as an essential element, has been founded on wrong bases so far.

Educational programmes should not be hostage to political quibbling or based on the repression of a minority /returnees/ by a majority, or block the evident potentials of young people.

Recommendations

- Reform the educational system: harmonisation of curricula in BiH and adjustment to the labour market, harmonisation of pedagogical standards on the level of BiH, international standards for teachers at universities
- Strengthen legal measures and system of monitoring of corruption and sanctions in the field of education
- Establish a system of monitoring and support for talented students
- Give more importance to programmes of social activities of young people through programmes for prevention of alcoholism and drug abuse. This implies allocation of funds for social activities of young people beneficial for the community, in co-operation with the NGO sector
- Reduce the excessive number of universities in BiH

14. WORKING GROUP THREE: macroeconomic and fiscal policies that result in better outcomes for children

- ⊕ Macroeconomic and fiscal policies that result in better outcomes for children

Discussion included

- ⊕ The need to ensure children are targeted within budget reform,
- ⊕ The need for international assistance to ensure allocation to basic social services, a possibility to consider would be adopting the 20:20 principle: governments to commit 20 percent of budget to basic social services and donor to commit 20 percent of Official Development Assistance to basic social services
- ⊕ Measures/guarantees need to be integrated in ME Policies to ensure negative impacts on people/children are limited,
- ⊕ The need to ensure accountability (re PRSP proposed)
- ⊕ Decisions on spending - who and how decides? (i.e. municipality decides how much to direct to children related priorities, usually less than for the other priorities)
- ⊕ Increased employment – which would ensure less people need social assistance and will also contribute to a higher budget
- ⊕ Budget allocation: there should be consultations done on this with the civil society; civil society should have some influence and the information on budget allocation should be available to the public.
- ⊕ Privatisation: there are risks related to access to services in case of privatisation of basic services
- ⊕ Privatisation requires commitments of the country, based on an analysis of its implications in 5-10 years. What are the options?
- ⊕ External debt is to be taken into account in the analysis and its implications

Recommendations

- Transparent, targeted and equitable allocation of benefits
- Budget analysis related to spending on children
- Defence expenditure to be reduced and also explore other areas where reduction can be made for the benefit of children (Ensure that people “in real need” are not affected by the reductions)
- There should be consultations with civil society done for any macroeconomic policies
- There should be social impact analysis/child impact analysis undertaken, based on child rights for every proposed macroeconomic policy
- International community/international organisations are also responsible to ensure the policies are not harming people and are appropriate (given the power of international organisations in BiH)
- Analysis Poverty Reduction Objectives against market orientation and liberalization and achieving the right balance

15. WORKING GROUP FOUR: social policies & social action for children's rights

- ⊕ Social policies and social action for children's rights

Discussion included

- ⊕ Proposal for reallocation of 15 percent of municipal's budget for children was not adopted by RS Parliament
- ⊕ The law on taxation – there is a need to ensure funding of children
- ⊕ Legislation covers children rights, but the implementation is poor as the decision making is left to the authorities on various levels to decide on spending (Municipalities, Cantons)
- ⊕ Social action for child rights is to be implemented through a partnership of Government and NGO Sector
- ⊕ Necessity of multi-sector approach in the social action for children
- ⊕ Promotion & Prevention principles
- ⊕ NGO Sector to respect the Codex and standards

Recommendations

- Need for one State Law on spending that defines and obliges to a minimum standards for ALL children
- Reallocation of the existing funds within the Budget will ensure more funds for child protection (Social protection, Health Care and Education)
- Reform and of existing laws and harmonization of the legislation with the international conventions and standards
- Close cooperation between government and NGOs

ANNEX 1: Agenda

CHILDREN AND POVERTY ROUNDTABLE

10 July 2002, Sarajevo

Office of the BiH Coordinator for PRSP

UNICEF

Save the Children UK

*Venue: Canton Sarajevo Economic Chamber
La Benevolencija Street 8*

AGENDA

Morning Session: to be chaired by Helena Eversole, UNICEF Representative

- 9:00am **Welcome and introduction**
Helena Eversole, UNICEF Representative
- 9:10am **PRSP process and children**
Zlatko Hurdic, PRSP Coordinator
- 9:20am **Child rights – CRC and state obligations**
Madeleine Rees, Head of UNOHCHR
- 9:35am **Existing policy frameworks for children in BiH**
Saliha Djuderija, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees
- 9:50am **Children's perspectives**
*Nada Uletilovic, Director, NGO Hi Neighbour
Oljica Drinic, Secretary General, NGO Nasa djeca, Zenica*
- 10:05am **Children and poverty: key critical issues**
Shon Campbell, Save the Children UK
- 10:20am **Break out session I: discussion in two groups:**
Children and poverty: key critical issues
⊕ Discrimination: exclusion and risk, and risk of increasing inequity
⊕ Need for data and analysis, monitoring / participation in these processes
Who is affected? How? How do we know?

Coffee break

11:45am **Groups report to the plenary/discussion**

12:30pm – 1:30pm **LUNCH**

Afternoon Session: chaired by Shon Campbell, Programme Director, Save the Children UK

1:30pm **Macroeconomic and fiscal policies that result in better outcomes for children.**

Irina Smirnov, Research Analyst, World Bank

- 1:45pm **Social policy in transition: social and economic rights of children**
Asim Zecevic, Assistant Minister, Federal Ministry of Social Welfare, Displaced Persons and Refugees
Dr. Stevan Jovic, Assistant Minister, RS Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
- 2:00pm **Social action for children's rights**
Salih Rasavac, NGO Corridor
- 2:15pm **Break out session II: discussion in two groups:**
⊕ Macroeconomic and fiscal policies that result in better outcomes for children.
⊕ Social policies and social action for children's rights.

Coffee Break

- 3:45pm **Groups report to the plenary/discussion of recommendations**
- 4:15pm **Closing remarks and conclusions**

| ANNEX 2: List of Participants | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
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ANNEX 3: List of Working Groups Participants

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