

TERMS OF REFERENCE

DECENTRALISATION AND ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN CEE/CIS REGION

2007

Context

Socio-economic transition in Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) during the 1990s focused largely on increasing the role of the market and improving the environment in which it operates. For some years, there was a preoccupation with the private sector development, such that reformers almost seemed to forget the potential role of the public sector in promoting of economic growth and social equity. In recent years, there have been attempts both to redefine the role of the public sector and to improve its performance. An increasingly important component of these reforms is the introduction of policies to decentralize the functions of government.

Decentralisation is generally viewed by the Governments and civil society in the region as a key democratic governance objective needed for the efficient delivery of services to people and to foster political integration, identification and involvement. A number of fiscal decentralisation models and local government reforms have been tried; however, many of these wide-ranging and costly efforts have made only modest progress toward meeting their stated goals and after a decade of political and economic transformation the level and quality of decentralisation remains very diverse across the region. Countries of Eastern Europe and - to certain degree - Russia have advanced toward this objective in the other parts of the region decentralisation is either not considered as a political priority or hampered by frozen conflicts (Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova). An intermediate example is Kazakhstan, a unitary state, where decentralisation is still in the deconcentration stage. Overall the CEE/CIS region witnesses different levels of progress in individual countries, with decentralization being generally more advanced in the political field than in the administrative and, in particular, fiscal fields. In a number of countries decentralisation is emerging as one of the pillars underpinning the reform and revitalization of health and education and social protection services. Primary elements of these efforts included decentralizing provision of social services vital to children's health and development to the regional or district level.

As decentralisation becomes a significant and growing trend in the region, it will have significant impact on access to quality services for children and community participation. It is therefore important to ensure that interests of children and young people are central to design and implementation of decentralisation policies.

1, Objectives

Given the growing number of countries of the region are in the process of decentralization or embarking on such reforms, there is a need for systematic documentation of these processes, sharing of lessons on good practices, networking

that will help identify entry points for more effective public policy for the benefit of children.

Decentralisation implies a change in institutional culture, creating a socio-political context conducive to a transfer of authority. Children's issues often remain low on priority. It is therefore critical to support the central government which has demonstrated a commitment to decentralisation, to empower local government, organisations and actors through more thorough training in the skills required of them in their new roles.

UNICEF staff in Country Offices working on economic and social policy need to be able to analyze and track decentralisation processes in their countries and be able to dialogue effectively on priorities with relevant Ministries and all levels of government as well as with international partners such as UNDP and the World Bank, and bilateral donor agencies working in the field of policy and governance.

This TOR aims at helping UNICEF move upstream in its policy analysis and help governments of the region to develop decentralization policies and plans that take child rights, needs and priorities into special consideration. More specifically the TOR envisages

- I. carrying out a critical review of the decentralisation processes in the region in social sectors that affect children's well-being and
- II. proposing specific actions that will take this agenda forward in the CEE/CIS region for the benefit of children

2. Main Tasks

The consultant would support UNICEF Country and Regional Offices

- to develop and summarize conceptual foundations and practice of decentralized delivery of social services for children in transition settings, e.g. decentralization of responsibility versus decentralization of ownership for policy formulation and evaluation, advantages of the devolution of responsibilities for social services provision versus the risk of insufficient resources being transferred from the central budgets to local governments, big push versus small steps; bottom up versus top down;
- to take stock of decentralization progress in the region and make a comparative analysis of developments in political, fiscal and administrative decentralization in selected countries.
- to identify successes and problems, major enabling or constraining factors and strategies adapted to accommodate these factors,
- to prepare 'lessons' learned from these experiences that can be used to guide countries embarking on or already implementing their own decentralization reforms
- To provide observations on more appropriate and effective strategy for and design of decentralisation of social services that will benefit realization of children's rights, including measures to strengthen institutional and human

resources, both for government officials and citizen participation and democratization.

3.Deliverables

- I. Support to UNICEF Country Offices in technical guidance and situation analysis
- II. A review of the decentralisation processes in CEE/CIS region in social sectors that affect children's well-being, identifying good practice and innovation in selected countries along four core elements being central to successful decentralization: the legislative framework and process; financial decentralization; developing human resources for decentralization; and mobilizing civil participation in local government.
- III. Recommendations for the further development and operationalisation of the analysis across the CEE/CIS region

4. No of working days

To be decided

5. Time Frame

2007 – 2008

6. Skills and Qualifications

- Expertise in Public Administration / or Social Policy
- Extensive professional experience in decentralization policies and social policy in middle income countries, especially in the countries with economy in transition
- Familiarity with and understanding of issues relating to children's rights.
- Professional experience of working in CEE/CIS countries
- Excellent analytical and writing skills in English.
- Russian language an advantage