

# **EVALUATION REPORT**

## **UNICEF'S FAMILY EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

### **ROMANIA**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A team of three Romanian consultants and one international (Singapore) consultant evaluated the Family Education Programme (1995 - 1999) over a 2-week period. The evaluation process included site visits extending from Bucharest to the east, central, west and north of Romania. Numerous meetings and focus group discussion were also arranged with various people involved with the programme. The team also studied project and related documents and conducted interviews with Unicef project officers and key officials from the MNE, MOH, Nurses Association, school inspectors, kindergarten directors and teachers, priests, and parents.

The 5-year FEP was an extension of a previous Unicef Child Development Project (1991-1994) to reach more counties and now targeting at strengthening the family through various change agents. That was a very ambitious project involving working with various partners, including the Ministry of National Education (MNE), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP), Mayors, other local authorities, NGOs, churches, educators, nurses, social workers and parents. Although the main target was family education, the project activities focused considerably on training of change agents, (basically kindergarten directors, teachers, school inspectors, social workers, nurses, Mayors etc.), early childhood programme development and implementation, parent education, health promotion and community development. The range and scope of coverage in the original workplan was very extensive with the intention to include crèches and primary schools. Much effort and dedication had been put into the programme; however, it suffers somewhat from ambiguous goals and lack of clear and specific objectives which may have repercussions on funding and use of human and material resources.

The FEP comprised 2 main components: General Education which included curriculum development, early childhood development, social workers training and nurses training, and, Non Formal Education consisting of HIV/Aids prevention, Facts for Life, and NGO training. Over the years, the focus shifted as certain objectives were achieved or other needs appear to be more urgent.

The FEP showed certain strengths in its strategies, including the selection of key government and non-government agencies and key persons as partners in the programme. The use of training of trainers creates a multiplier effect while good choice of NGO partners complement the work of FEP. Working within existing established system most of the time and integrating programme components into existing system enabled going to scale and ensured sustainability. There were also areas of concern: the need for clearer goals, objectives and a systematic plan of action, the lack of standard evaluation and monitoring instruments, understaffing of the FEP, division within the health sector, neglect of crèches and the minimal impact of FEP on Rroma children and the Rroma community mainly due to the complexity of the problem.

Lessons learnt: the care, development and education of children is the responsibility of not only families but the state and the community and that helping families provide the best environment for the children means helping parents and children first with basic survival needs. It was also noted that leadership in the community and the presence of a few related projects would determine the success of the programme. Where such leadership exists, there was much support and collaboration and more services to children and families. Poor enrollment in kindergartens of Rroma children reflect that poor kids have difficulties taking advantage of schooling unless their basic needs for food and clothing, their right to respect and to be understood and accepted are met. Another lesson learnt is that having trained hundreds of people is not enough unless there is a way to retain them in the system. Training is more than just the transfer of content - training of trainers is also about processes- processes that not only convey information but are also more likely to convince one to change one's attitude and belief system. Training teachers in PETAS is also no guarantee that they fully understand or would fully implement it. Appropriate training at the source, that is, at teacher training institutions and universities is better and more cost effective than re-training after they graduate.

To strengthen sustainability of the programme, FEP worked towards integrating programme components into national policies (e.g. PETAS), regulations of government agencies (e.g. training of PETAS under MNE and school inspectorates), advocating for change of curriculum for teachers, social workers and nurses. Likewise, the same could be done for parent education as a requirement for kindergartens to incorporate into the programme. Also advocate for national recognition of training to encourage more upgrading in the profession of teaching, social work and nursing. Involving people from the beginning and instilling a sense of ownership and empowerment contributes towards programme sustainability. Professional training of social workers, nurses and early childhood teachers were also examined. The integration of practicum hours at the university level and the training of field supervisors contribute to the currently small pool of social workers to work in various social work settings. Society is still unsure of the role that social workers could play in both remedial and preventive work and more work could be done with the related Ministries, NGOs and Social Work Association to promote and publicize the profession and their role in society. Advocacy for social work positions in the various settings is also much needed.

Strategic inputs from Unicef lies in its good and credible relationship with the government. Therefore, it is in a strong position to advise and to advocate as well as support the national development of the country. Other key inputs are the training of trainers, facilitating community development, organizing of regional, national and international seminars for dissemination. Unicef could use the provision of supplies to match contributions from the community, the Gos and NGOs. This matching of goods and/or services encourages commitment on the part of the other parties and generates a greater sense of ownership. Supplies like furniture and toys could also be manufactured locally to generate income for the local community as part of the community development efforts.

For the next and last phase of the FEP (2000 to 2004) the 2 main areas are: Early Childhood Care and Development, encompassing preschool education, parent education, child participation, and Community Development for the Strengthening of Families, comprising capacity building for agents of change and Roma community education and development. In this phase, the focus becomes narrower. While still seeking to explore solutions to problems, this phase should be working towards consolidation, further collaboration with Gos and NGOs and community, documentation, going to scale as the focus shifts towards the rural, the urban poor and the Roma community, dissemination of the programme, integration into existing systems and assessment and evaluation - which needs to be built into the programme as early as possible.

The following are recommended:

1. Project management: Additional staffing is recommended for next phase with 2 core committees of resource people to support the 2 major parts of the FEP.
2. Goals and objectives: Be clear about goals, objectives and action plan that should be directed specifically at achieving each objective.
3. Evaluation: Monitor processes and measure outcomes as stated in objectives. Begin developing monitoring instruments and evaluation early in the programme. For instance, develop a monitoring instrument to measure quality of the PETAS programme as a self-improvement tool for kindergartens and an evaluative tool to maintain an acceptable level of quality by MNE as an external evaluator. Work with Universities and research institutes to evaluate outcome of PETAS, do needs assessment of communities participating in the community development project.
4. Training: Upgrade level of training of PETAS. Expand training of trainers' programme – develop core of mobile inter-disciplinary trainers under the preschool inspectorate who would train teachers in different communities in the county. Upgrade training, including training methodologies. Set up network and database of trainers and trained personnel and advocate for the official recognition of training to maintain pool of trained resources.
5. Universities and Colleges: Teacher training institutions need to upgrade their skills and knowledge in the area of early childhood (and probably beyond) through study visits to international institutions, seminars and consultancy to update their teaching curriculum to be more relevant. Meetings between users (MNE) and producers (training institutions) of preschool teachers and representation of MNE on the Committee or Board of the institutions are recommended.
6. Publication: Support and/or develop more publication for young children, parents, teachers that are more user friendly – clear, simple and easy to read. Pool and use available, good parenting brochures and resources from INGOs and NGOs to save cost, time and effort. Develop Training Manuals for trainers and Resource Guides for teachers on using low cost/no cost indigenous material.

7. Community development: Select communities where strong leadership is available and some form of networking already exists. Do needs and strengths assessment before embarking on project. Implement/support a few related projects at the same time and pool resources for common use. Encourage community/ local authorities to match Unicef resources for commitment and taking ownership. Give business to locals for production of Unicef resources where possible (e.g. furniture, toys). Develop concept of community resource centre.
8. Rroma community: Develop back-to-back programmes of preschool education and training programme in adult literacy, numeracy, job skills. Offer free meals for kids in kindergarten/schools. Set up home-based kindergartens of at least one year kindergarten before entry to school where there is a concentration of Rromas. Make mainstream kindergartens more conducive to Rroma children – hire Rroma teachers or assistants, incorporate Rroma and other minority culture in the curriculum and environment. Facilitate the process with relevant authorities for Rroma children to have birth certificates and identity documents. Consider setting up food bank, clothes bank, skills and literacy training within the community. Encourage more Rromas to take up teacher training, social work training. Encourage more Rroma studies by the universities that could be incorporated into teacher, social work and nurses training. Family planning to be considered as part of the parent education outreach.
9. Kindergarten alternatives: Encourage primary schools to develop short preprimary programmes for children who have not attended kindergarten classes before entry to primary one. Kindergartens can also offer summer programme of 2 to 3 months and other time when the facilities are not in use.
10. Creches: MOH and MNE have to reconcile on which Ministry would be most appropriate in the care, development and education of the 0 to 3. Those who care for the children need to undergo training in working with this age group – at both pre-service and in-service level. Infants and toddlers curricula need to be developed and people trained to implement them.
11. Dissemination: Organize regional, national, international seminars and conferences. Use successful models as showcase in regional seminars. Use training hubs/mobile trainers to train more teachers in PETAS and parent education. Integrate key elements of the FEP into the MNE/MOH system to disseminate and sustain developments. Set up and FEP website to disseminate, network, create databases.

The responsibility for children is not on family alone but on the government and the whole community. To shift the total burden onto parents alone is a swing from one extreme of state responsibility to parents' responsibility. The responsibility is shared for it 'takes a village to raise a child'.

## I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The road to a market economy is marked with much struggle and hardship for the people of Romania. Poverty is strife and has been getting worse over the years and women and children are often the poorest. Poverty brings with it poor health in children, malnutrition, childhood diseases and an increase in mortality rates. There is an increase in unemployment. Increase poverty brings with it a host of social problems - school dropout, juvenile delinquencies, alcoholism, wife and child abuse, thefts, depression, suicides, child labour and the breakdown of the family. School and preschool enrollment have been dropping and unless there is a turn-a-round, the poor will be kept within the poverty cycle and the impact on the economy will be affected when the national education level of the working population drops.

Families with 2 and more children are likely to fall below the poverty line – and many of the poor are the Roma community. The task of getting poor kid to kindergarten and to remain in school is a difficult task – unless multiple strategies are adopted that addresses the poverty of the Roma families as well. The Roma community is of the most disadvantaged minority groups in Romania. According to the last national survey on Roma population carried out by ICCV in autumn 1998, there are about 1.5 million (hetero-identified) Romas in Romania. About 3.1% out of the Roma population has no birth certificate (between 45,000 and 50,000 persons, most of them children) and about 5% from among over 14% have no Identity Card. Fifty-two percent of the working age Roma population did not work (not even occasionally) and only 16% were legally employed in 1997 and 1998. Twenty-four percent of those over 10 years old is illiterate and has never attended school. Poverty, unemployment, high infant mortality rate, a relatively large family may also indicate a need for family planning within the Roma community.

The positive signs are: the will of the State to promote and strengthen the family and to promote national education for all. Unicef's work supports the trend and direction of the government in revitalizing the country. Another positive point is the growing number of NGOs, said to be over 23,000 - Romanian nationals - who are committed to help the poor and disadvantage in the community. Although lacking in much experience. they present potential resources that could contribute to alleviating the condition in Romania. But before that, they need much nurturing and experience.

While it is good that the family is given much recognition by the State, the family must be given not only information and knowledge about the effective care and development of their children, they must also be given concrete help (an education, job skills and some material help) for them to be able to play an effective role. The transition and the empowering of families, especially poor families, take time. Meanwhile, unless there are alternatives for the care of children, which includes help, both information and material, for parents to care for their own children and unless there are more crèches, kindergartens and other viable alternatives accessible to these families, de-institutionalization of children will be a slow process. Families require counseling to deal with their problems - bringing up children, spousal relationship, coping with stress and loss of job, dealing with depression, solving conflict and so on. Counseling in these areas is new but more and

more urgent to help people cope with the effects of the transition. The need for social workers will grow to be more urgent. The training of social workers to emphasize on the practicum is a good move. What it may do the next step is to train social workers and the various role they will need to be playing - family and marriage counselor, probation officer, child welfare worker, drug counselor, medical social worker and community developer.

Unicef 's work in Romania covered 2 major projects since 1991 and is now embarking on its third and final project. It's presence has been timely in helping the nation move through these difficult transitional years. It has taken on a huge task, working at different fronts to deal with the issue early childhood education, of parent education, community development, especially the Rroma community, HIV/Aids and the training of change agents. The ultimate goal is to empower parents to provide a wholesome family environment for their children as they are expected to take on more responsibilities from the state in the care, development and education of their young.

The FEP works under very difficult circumstances to 'change attitudes'. Any change is difficult to begin with. The FEP attempts to change people's attitude – to take responsibility for oneself and one's family, to take initiatives, to cooperate and work as a team, to mobilize whole communities - all in order to better the conditions for children and families. These are daunting tasks. The beginning process of empowerment of the people brings with it both greater responsibility and burden. In the kindergarten, the change is from a passive, directive and teacher-oriented approach to one that is more child and process-oriented with teachers as facilitators. This change affects the curriculum and the training of teachers and also teacher training institutions ultimately. Signs of the changes were evident. There were also signs of changes in the nursing profession - another agent of change - as they undertake the role of public educator to bring knowledge on HIV/Aids prevention, Facts for Life and other health information to the community. Social workers' professional training, with the involvement and support from Unicef, is becoming more relevant although it must still struggle to find acceptance for the important role they can play in the community with increasing social problems. Community development is a new and complex concept. Successful communities that have benefited from Unicef can lead the way to show how they did it.

## **II EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

Four consultants, 3 Romanian and one international evaluated the FEP. The area of coverage was divided into two main areas for evaluation: the formal education and the informal education. The formal education comprise:

- a) Curriculum Development
- b) Early Childhood Development
- c) Social Work Development
- d) Nurses Training

The informal education component comprise:

- a) HIV/Aids Prevention
- b) Facts for Life
- c) NGO Training

The team worked in pairs to cover the two major areas although there were frequent overlapping of sub-projects and visits.

The evaluation was carried out in about 2 weeks covering several counties. The team used a variety method to assess the programme. They are:

- a) Review and analyses of documents;
- b)** Interviews of key officials;
- c) Meetings, focus group discussions with senior officials from the Ministry of National Education (preschool inspectors, kindergarten directors) Ministry of Health (Medical Directors, nurses), local authorities (Mayors, Secretaries of city council) Child Protection Officers. (Attachment B); key NGO partners, e.g. Churches, Save the Children, Romania, Copiii Nostri, Caminuil Felipe;
- d) Site visits to kindergartens, crèches, pedagogical centres, parent resource centres, Rroma communities, residential school, hospital for children with special needs, a food bank, a toy workshop, tailoring and woodworking workshops for youths, cultural/community development centre, primary schools, training centres and a Rroma community.
- e)** Discussions with Unicef project staff
- f)** Discussion among consultants.

The team felt that an evaluation of such an extensive and varied programme after 5 years of implementation required at least 3 weeks. It would have allowed for a wider variety of visits, more time for interviews and discussions with the various stakeholders, singly and in groups, and more time to study the various documents related to the project. Some changes were made to the programme to allow for more time for each field visit and for more in-depth discussions.

## **II. STRENGTHS OF THE FAMILY EDUCATION PROGRAMME (1995-1999)**

The 1995-1999 Family Education Programme is a major and complex project., It has certain strengths and limitations. The strengths of the programme are:

- a) A good understanding and overview of the situation of children and families and the use of a multi-prong approach.

- b) There is a deliberate attempt to involve partners at the national level, the local level, both Government and non-Government bodies and parents.
- c) The idea of training of trainers is an excellent strategy for a multiplier effect. Training of teachers and school inspectors on PETAS and Parent Education; training of Nurses, Social Workers, Mayors and others create a core of trained human resources.
- d) The selection and involvement of key individuals at the local community level helps to develop a sense of ownership for programme and contributes to the likelihood of continuity.
- e) Decentralization from national to county and district level empowers the local community. Instructions are not always seen as a top-down approach but a beginning effort from the grassroots. Empowerment of the people also requires equipping them with the necessary skills and know-how - which is where the training comes in.
- f) Excellent choice of some NGO partners which have strong complementary programmes. (for instance, Save the Children, Romania, on child participation and Copiii Nostri on parent education, Caminul Filip ).
- g) Partnerships with various government bodies at the national and county level (e.g. MNE, MLCP, MOH). More could be done to take advantage of working within existing structures and network in developing, promoting and sustaining elements of the programme.
- h) Provision and development of publications (manuals, resource books, pamphlets). E.g. local version of Facts for Life, nursing magazine and booklets on breastfeeding, diarrhea, hepatitis, parasitism, hygiene and immunizations, parenting brochures, etc. This is a good outreach strategy although more could be done in terms of variety, quantity and user-friendliness.
- i) Development and implementation of PETAS curriculum for preschool and having the MNE integrate elements of it into the national preschool curriculum is an indication of a project, or a part of it, gone to scale. Although not all kindergartens nationwide would be necessarily implementing PETAS as intended in the project, the move would pave the way for subsequent training of more kindergartens in the next phase of the project.

#### IV. MAIN AREAS OF CONCERN

There are some major areas of concern, even within some of the areas of strengths.

- a) **Focus of FEP:** The swing from State responsibility to parents' responsibility for children's care, development and education places too heavy a burden on family, in too short a time, especially in increasing difficult circumstances when families are

faced with unemployment, low wages and extensive poverty. Instead of either the State or parents, children's care, development and education should be seen as the responsibility of everyone - parents, State and community.

Although not stated upfront, the various activities of the programme could be said to focus on the child: the goal is enhancing quality care, development and education of young children through (i) family education and involvement, (ii) provision of accessible quality care, development and education programmes, and, (iii) community support for the family (material help, food, clothes, counseling, recreational facilities).

- b) Goals and objectives:** The main goal for the Family Education Programme (FEP) is somewhat vague and ambitious. The objectives are not clear and specific enough. FEP should avoid attempts to 'change attitude' (very difficult to do directly and to measure, although in the process attitudes of some may be changed) and focus on concrete goals. There is no clear focus of development of the programme over the 5 years although there were an abundance of activities. Clear specific goals and concrete and specific objectives would aid in the development of monitoring and evaluation of the programme and indicate whether objectives have been reached by a certain time, i.e. objectives must also be time-bound in order for assessment to take place.
- c) Project management.** The 1995-1999 project is too massive and diverse to be under one Unicef staff although a valiant attempt has been made to try to do it all. The Programme coverage ranges from training of trainers and a range of people in various areas, to working with the MNE, MOH, Child Protection and NGOs, local authorities and community, including the Roma community, professional training of social workers, nurses and teachers. The kinds of knowledge and skills required range from social work and community development to early childhood care and education, health and nutrition, monitoring and evaluation - and these are not all. Even if one person has all these skills and knowledge, the amount of work requires two or three full-time staff - even with the presence of external assistance at different times of the 5 year period.
- d) Training issues:**  
Sometimes there seems to be some misunderstanding of the term 'training of trainers'. The person who conducts the training of trainers is the Master Trainer. Master Trainers must have high training competence and high competence in specific content areas. Master trainers train others who become trainers. These trainers could be directors of kindergartens, senior teachers, school inspectors, social workers, nurses and college lecturers. Trainers then train others who work directly with the target group – e.g. kindergarten teachers in the implementation of PETAS, and, teachers who conduct the Copiii Nostri's parent education programme for parents.

Trainers in the FEP, however, were not trained in training skills. Changing and influencing people is not through imparting knowledge and skills alone – a lot

depends on the process of how they are being trained. Trainers selected need both the experience and early childhood education or related content. Good and effective trainers require both a) content knowledge and skills and b) appropriate use of variety of training methodologies (role play, small group discussion, case study, games, project work, simulation, videos, micro-teaching, facilitation, etc.).

- e) **Division within the health sector:** The support of the original medical assistants' training and the subsequent formation of the Romanian Nurse Association and its growing independence in its professional education seems to have created another system of healthcare professionals (nurses) parallel to the medical assistants. Although the initial development of training and public education were supported by the MOH, this seems to be no longer the case. The growing independence of the Romanian Nurse Association has led to confusion and conflict as well as resistance from MOH and the trade union in the health care system. Notwithstanding the good work done by the Romanian Nurse Association, Unicef should not be perceived by the MOH as supporting a body that is not accepted by the Ministry. This could negatively affect any goodwill and good working relationship between Unicef and the MOH. Unicef could facilitate reconciliation.
- f) **Lack of standard monitoring and evaluation instruments.** There does not appear to be standard monitoring and evaluation instruments to assess the FEP at the end of the 5-year period. This makes it difficult to systematically and objectively evaluate the effectiveness of each intervention and to replicate. ( Please see below for more)
- g) **Groups neglected.** Crèches and primary schools were mentioned as targets for training. However, there was no evidence that much were done. Boundaries between MOH and MNE seem to also hinder the development of crèches. Although it may be too much work to go into primary school at this stage, work with 0 to 3 deserves more attention. There is little to suggest that the 0 to 3 have benefited from the Family Education Project so far.
- h) **The Rroma community:** This is a huge area of concern in terms of both development of the Rroma community and early childhood education for the children. Rroma children are highly over-represented in the category of children not attending kindergarten and school and having the highest dropout rate. Getting these children to school and making sure they have a complete education is crucial in order to break out of the poverty cycle. We observed that \* kindergartens tend to be some distance outside the Rroma community, \* kindergartens do not reflect Rroma culture, \* teachers do not understand the Rroma people, \* expectations of Rroma children to try to fit in with other children.

Reasons given for Rroma children not attending kindergartens/schools are: distance of kindergarten/schools from home, lack of shoes, clothes, no money for meals and that Rroma parents do not value education. The last should perhaps be viewed in the light of other more immediate and competing needs for day-to-day survival. Rroma parents and children may also feel out of place.

The issue is how to help the Rroma community help themselves and how to get the kinds to kindergarten and schools. Without kindergarten for a headstart, Rroma kids are likely to have problems in primary school, which may lead to failure and dropout. Helping the Rroma child will have to include helping the family in basic needs as well. This issue has not been sufficiently addressed so far.

- i) **Distribution and utilization of Unicef funded supplies:** There is a disparity of resources in urban and rural areas. Kindergarten centres in urban areas generally tend to be better equipped than those in rural areas. This could be attributed to more funding resources in urban communities (for instance, other NGOs, churches, well-to-do parents, etc.) while poor rural communities tend not to have such access.

Most centres also tend to keep the use of the equipment (copying machines, computers and printers for themselves. The equipment could be made available to the community, particularly to other Unicef-related projects to maximize the use of limited resources.

## V. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE FAMILY EDUCATION PROGRAMME

1. The focus of the FEP has as its main goal the 'changing of behaviour of family (mainly parents) towards the health and development of their children'. This change is to be brought about by various 'change agents' who would first need to be trained themselves. This places the parents as 'the target' for all change agents. The intensive focus on the family places a heavy responsibility on parents, swinging from one extreme of State responsibility to family responsibility. The burden on families, especially those with 3 or more children, unemployment and poverty even much more heavier.

In reality, the care, development and education of children are on the State, family and the community. Children spend time at home as well as in half day or full day kindergartens or in other residential or non-residential facilities. The state cannot escape the fact that it must be responsible for the health, education and welfare of children and families.

In fact, inspite the theoretical framework for intervention, the activities of the FEP itself reflect the shared responsibilities for young children. For instance, developing of the PETAS programme, training of teachers and others, providing funding for material and hardware – are all directed towards better quality preschool. The training of social workers and nurses goes towards upgrading and promoting the two professions for greater effectiveness in dealing with the current social and health issues.

The goal of the FEP should be to promote quality care, development and education of the child through family education, involvement and support; promoting and providing access to quality early childhood programmes; and, community support for

health, welfare and education of children and families. The child becomes the rallying point for community involvement and participation.

2. The FEP is very broad in its attempt to do too many things almost simultaneously, which is part of its stated strategies. While theoretically sound, the objectives are sometimes too broad, too general and vague and hard to measure. Basically, the goal of FEP should spell out what it hopes to achieve by the end of 5 years. It should then break that down into goals and objectives to be achieved for each year with subsequent years building on what the previous year has achieved. Monitoring and evaluation instruments could have been developed to standardize data gathering and assessment of both outcome and process. It is observed that the goals and objectives are relatively more focused for the 2000-2004 FEP.
3. **Leadership in community involvement:** Strong leadership and strong community involvement and participation are essential to the success of the programme. At the kindergarten level, where there is strong leadership, the kindergarten programme is more creative, the teachers more resourceful and parents more involved. An example is the rural kindergarten in Sagna. At the community level, strong leadership attracts the involvement of church, NGOs and other players in the community and made possible effective collaboration with relevant government bodies. This is evident in Tirgu Neamt which has the PETAS and parent education/parent resource centre, a cultural /community resource centre, a food bank for poor families, a Rroma project to teach tailoring skills to young Rroma girls and the making of soft toys by volunteers for kindergartens and creches. In Mangalia, the Mayor supports a variety of projects, including the development of some local NGOs (Femina Club and “Calatis” foundation) whose main purpose is community development and involvement in solving local social problems. Local funds support initiatives and ideas are provided. The Mayor also supports various other projects, e.g. a housing project for homeless people, the establishment of an agricultural association and the development of small enterprises.

**Recommendation:**

- a) For future pilot centres and projects identify places with strong Mayors and community leaders who are, or could be, convinced on the importance of the early years and are open to change. Look for communities where there are existing network in place and some local initiatives. Identify other successful community participation and programmes.
- b) Disseminate the concept of community development through regional seminars using successful models to show case the process and outcomes to encourage other communities. Tirgu Neamt is a good example to host such a regional seminar for communities with their various stakeholders. Tirgu Neamt could share the process they went through and organize visits to the various services for children and families. Sagna’s kindergarten in the province of Tirgu Neamt should also be included to showcase the possibility of having a good programme even in a poor rural

area. To prepare Tirgu Neamt as a role model, specific help may be needed in some areas:

- (i) **Develop the crèche:** The crèche in Tirgu Neamt has to be improved. The nurses in the crèche need to be trained to effectively implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum and environment for children from 0 to 3. At the moment the focus is very much on custodial care, health and nutrition. There is not much interaction with children and there is also a lack of suitable toys and activities. The environment while clean is not child friendly or stimulating. While PETAS may be modified for the 3-year-olds, the 0-2 may require another programme that is compatible with PETAS.
  - (ii) **Documentation:** A clear and simple document on the process and outcomes will be helpful to other communities to understand how Tirgu Neamt 'did it'. This document could be given to participants as part of the regional seminar package for discussion. The document would include the various services for children and families in Tirgu Neamt, how the services came about, the role of the Mayor and his administration, the church, NGOs, the various government departments, parents and community members. It should also include the strategies used, the problems faced and how those problems were resolved (or not resolved) as well as lessons learnt.
  - (iii) **Community development (resource) centre:** Tirgu Neamt uses the Mayor's office for meetings and gatherings in the process of involving the community. It also has a big cultural centre which could function as a resource centre for youth group activities (games, hobbies, etc.), an information and referral centre, a place for health screening, talks and counseling, etc. The cultural centre functioning as a community resource centre could offer various community services through its facilities depending on the needs of the community. (Please refer to community development centre concept)
  - (iv) **Publication of development of low cost/no cost teaching/learning aids and toys.** Sagna kindergarten teachers have excellent ideas and have developed a lot of such material. Unicef could help them to write up the activities. The books could come under the following titles: Activities for Language Development, Art Activities, Science Activities for Preschool, etc. During the seminar, teachers from Sagna could conduct workshops on developing resources to those who work directly with children. The publication could then be disseminated.
4. **Multiple Projects:** When the community has multiple related projects going on the success rate is further enhanced. This enables the multiple use of facilities (kindergarten which also serves as parent resource centre, a crèche, a training centre), the sharing of resources (photocopy machine, computer, TV, manpower, etc.) distribution and dissemination network (through the church, health and social services, preschools, cultural centres) and information (pamphlets, training, manuals

etc.). More people could be involved in different ways. An isolated preschool project with no support from its community is likely to have problems of sustainability no matter how good the director is in running the programme. Once the director goes, the programme will not be able to sustain itself. This speaks for the development of shared commitment and responsibility.

### **Recommendation**

Consider having more than one thing going when initiating the next pilot project. E.g. for Rroma community, consider pilot kindergarten centre, plus literacy/job skills training for parents, garden project to be maintained by community and other services for children and families - should these be some of the services required after a needs assessment. Although guidance and support could be given, the community itself must decide what are its needs and priorities in order to assume responsibility and ownership for the initiation, process and outcomes.

5. **Publication.** Visits to kindergartens, parent centres and training centres show a shortage of good and easy-to-read publication for parents, teachers and children. Publication for parents and teachers are found to be too difficult. Reading material should be short and simple to read. Reading material could also include illustration to get the message across to the readers. There is also a lack of appropriate reference books for teachers. Children's books are very limited and most are also far too difficult and meant for much older children. They are deemed to be too expensive.

FEP has been producing or supporting the production of various publications on parent education, manuals, HIV/Aids prevention, health care, etc. However, unless there is a central database to capture all these information, many may not be aware of their existence and be deprived of the benefits of such information.

### **Recommendations**

**Parenting pamphlets:** More user-friendly education pamphlets are needed for parents. Instead of developing new ones, pool existing printed material from various INGOs and NGOs and either print additional copies developed by other agencies, or, modify/improve first and then print additional copies. This sharing of resources will save time, effort and cost to all concerned. Develop new publication only on topics that are not available.

**Teachers' resource books:** Resource books are needed to help teachers with new ideas and strategies for working with children, for making low cost teaching aides and for children's activities. Some kindergartens have very creative teachers who have been making and using a rich variety of low-cost indigenous material to work with children. These teachers could be encouraged to document their work, have it professionally edited and funded by Unicef for publishing and dissemination. These resource books would be very useful to supplement the PETAS manual.

**Children's books:** Books for young children are almost absent in most kindergartens. The MNE could either consider setting up its own, or in partnership with a private publishing company to publish affordable children's books, including school textbooks.

Books can also be 'written' by children. Teachers could encourage children to invent stories which the teacher could write down for the child and which the child could illustrate. A class of 20 children could in this way produce at least 20 books, if not more, that could be read to the children and which they could 'read' on their own. This low cost method develops a sense of pride, creativity, and the basis for a strong language foundation through story telling and reading in young children.

**Directory of resource books.** Publish a directory of all available publications for different issues, e.g. Preschool education, Parent education, Training of Trainers, Healthcare. Also include where these might be available and how to obtain them.

6. **Loss of Trainers:** A large number of people have been trained and some as trainers. However, some of them have been lost in the system because they elect to drop out due to heavy workload, lack of incentives and lack of recognition. Others have left the system when they retire. This is a costly loss of manpower resources.

### **Recommendation**

**Recognition:** To encourage continued participation and involvement in the project some form of recognition is necessary, e.g. certificates of attendance for certain types of training and college credits for professional training.

**Create trainers' network:** Maintain contact with trained people. Use a) regular local and regional meetings to update participants on development of project, share experiences learn something new; b) a simple newsletter for snippets of news update and for sharing of tips and ideas; c) a database of all trainers and resource people in their various areas they have been trained in, for instance PETAS, parent education, HIV/Aids prevention, which could be accessed by those looking for trainers. It would provide information on who have been trained, what further training is required for different people and who would be available as resource in which location.

7. **Evaluation instruments:** The absence of standardized instruments to monitor and evaluate different aspects of the programme makes it difficult to assess the degree of success. Currently, different centres provide different feedback. Many are informal feedback, for instance, the children do better with PETAS – they are more creative and independent and they do better in school. There is a lack of hard data to support this.

## Recommendation

### a) **Develop standard instruments for self-monitoring and external evaluation.**

An evaluation instrument for the kindergarten could look at a few areas: facilities, child-teacher interaction, variety of developmentally appropriate toys and books and activities, reflection of cultural values and material of Romanian and other minority children, type and frequency of parent involvement and participation, etc. There could also be a section to be completed by parents on the quality of care and education in the centre.

The evaluation instrument is a tool for self-improvement by the director of the kindergarten while the preschool inspector could use it as the external evaluator to monitor standards. The accepted level of quality would have to be agreed upon by parties concerned. Unicef could encourage the MNE to incorporate the evaluation instrument into the MNE's requirement for all kindergartens to raise standards and to ensure continuity of practice.

**b) Impact studies:** At another level, Unicef could invite universities to conduct a long term study on the impact of PETAS and parent education on the child's development in terms of interpersonal skills, school performance, independence skills, etc. as well as attrition rate of cohorts of these children. A long-term study could follow through cohorts of children from preschool to primary and secondary school. This may produce the data necessary for policy change. Another impact study could be on specific intervention programmes with the Rroma community.

**c) Needs Assessment Surveys.** Community needs assessment need the help of universities and research institutes. As the project expands to include more communities, Unicef could invite the big 4 universities to work with the local communities to do a needs assessment.

**d) Evaluation of FEP 2000-2004.** It is important to begin to plan and develop the relevant monitoring and evaluation tools to assess the achievement of set goals and objectives. To do so, programme goals need to be clearly defined and objectives clearly stated in concrete operational terms. This is currently not the case. If such an expertise is not available in-house, an external consultant may be needed to ensure that the programme starts on the right footing.

8. **Understanding and implementation of PETAS:** Not everyone trained in PETAS would automatically implement it or implement it correctly. Some centres only implement it in one or two classrooms out of the whole kindergarten. A few pilot centres felt that good programmes are only possible when there are more toys and more equipment, including computers for preschoolers. Many stimulation corners tend to be too rigid, provide too small a space for children to work in or are not stimulating at all. Large available spaces are not utilized at all ('because all the children must be inside the classroom'). A good early childhood programme does not

depend on materials or the stimulation centres alone. It depends on the quality and variety of interaction of children with the materials, other children and adults. It also depends on teachers' child observation and facilitative skills to foster children's development and learning through experiential and exploratory play. We would have also liked to see more creative use of low cost-cost local material for teaching aids and for children's activities. An excellent example of this was observed in a rural kindergarten in Sagna.

### **Recommendation**

**Upgrade training:** Existing trained PETAS teachers need to be upgraded to the next level on the more effective use of space, child observation, facilitating children's play and development and the use of low cost no cost material.

The training of new PETAS teachers may need to be reviewed to reinforce certain aspects and to correct erroneous views of what makes a good programme. It should also incorporate the upgrading component for existing PETAS teachers.

The use of a kindergarten evaluation tool would be useful to guide kindergarten directors and teachers on achieving an acceptable standard of quality agreed upon by the MNE and the kindergartens.

### **9. Poverty and low enrollment rate at preschool/school in Rroma community:**

Free meals in schools seem to be a good incentive for very poor children, many of them Rroma, to attend school. The impact of free meals on school attendance has been tested in Bucharest within the framework of the RUT project, financed by SOROS Foundation for an Open Society. Very poor children were not attending school even at age of 10. A free meal was provided to encourage them to come to school. The Filipescu Family that now is managing the Caminul Filip Project set up the school in Ferentari. High attendance in the school is attributed to the free daily meal provided for all the 220 children involved in the project which has many more on the waiting list.

Discussion with kindergarten teachers and directors tend to reinforce this observation – that Rroma kids are more likely to be sent to school if they are provided with a meal or in some cases, even snacks. Some Rroma parents told them that they would send their kids if they were given shoes, school supplies and snacks and if the children have **birth certificates**. A rural kindergarten in Buzau has only 30 Rroma children when there are about 230 children in the community. A small family-based kindergarten with 15 places for 3 to 4 years old children is full and more places are being requested. On completion of the one-year programme, the class of children and others over 4 years do not attend the main kindergarten reason given – it is too far.

The Mayor of Buzau has made the giving of child allowance contingent on the child going to school and has also made it a contingent for anyone hired by the city council.

## Recommendation

- a) **Free meals:** Provide free meals to poor children whose family is unemployed or earn below the subsistence level. School performance is affected by the health of children and hungry children do not learn well. Food - one of the very basic child's rights must be provided by the State with the help of the community where possible when parents are unable to do so. It could be included as part of the county budget for education or it could be part of community development or a combination of the both. Experience shows that free meals is an incentive for Rroma parents to send their kids to kindergarten and school.
- b) **Grow vegetable gardens.** Kindergartens with large playgrounds could use part of it for cultivation of vegetables and fruit trees to supplement children's meals. School garden projects are successfully done in the Philippines as part of a nutrition programme for children. This could be undertaken as a community project to help kindergartens and schools feed their children. Kindergartens have dismissed it as 'not possible' because they 'don't have enough land'. Parents and members of the community could be persuaded to undertake this project.
- c) **Issue birth certificates/identity documents:** A large number of Rroma children are reported to be without such documents. Unicef could advocate for the process to be simplified by the relevant authorities in order for the children to be issued with their documents. Children without documentation face problems of enrollment, getting services and eventually securing jobs.
- d) **Bring the kindergarten to the Rroma community:** Consider having kindergartens within the Rroma community where there is a substantial concentration of the population. These could be home-based kindergartens or a simple building that could be used for preschool education and other community purposes. Such arrangements are very limited at the moment.
- e) **Reflect Rroma and other minority culture in mainstream kindergartens.** Mainstreaming has often been suggested to bring Rroma children to regular kindergartens. Successful mainstreaming must take into consideration several factors. Some of them are: integration of positive aspects of Rroma culture (and others) into the kindergarten curriculum and environment (e.g. the clothes of gypsies, music and musical instruments); teacher training (pre and in-service) should include a better understanding of Rroma children and families (and other minority groups); provide transport, meals and even shoes and clothes for poor kids and have Rroma teachers/aides in the kindergartens.
- f) **Encourage more young Rroma girls to join the teaching profession by offering financial grants and scholarships** (perhaps with a bond to serve for a certain length of time). Where Rroma teachers are not available, kindergartens could engage young

Rroma girls as assistants where there is a concentration of Rromas in the area. Kindergartens and schools need to have the authority and flexibility to do so

- g) **More studies on Rroma population.** Encourage the universities to undertake more studies on the Rroma community and the findings integrated into teacher training and into the classroom setting and parent education. Many teachers spoken to confessed their lack of knowledge of the Rroma community and culture.
- h) **Back-to-back programmes:** Develop a back-to-back programme linking early childhood education with a literacy or/and a vocational training programme for parents. For instance, parents accompany the children to school: the children attend school while parents attend a functional literacy and numeracy class. Other possible programmes for parents could include some income-generating skills (e.g. tailoring).
- i) **Rroma representation:** Rroma leaders need to be represented in kindergarten and school committees to make sure that Rroma interest are considered and incorporated in the rules, regulations and programmes. One issue to be taken up is the issue of birth certificates/identity documents.
- j) **Family Planning:** Poverty is strife in the Rroma community. Statistics also show that families with 2 or more children are likely to fall below the poverty line. Family planning should therefore be seriously considered as part of the parent education programme to lessen the likelihood of infant mortality and to give existing children a better prospect.

## VI. MECHANISMS FOR STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABILITY

- a) **Integrate developments into national policies.** For example, elements of the PETAS programme are now part of the MNE's national curriculum. This means that kindergarten nation-wide would be expected to introduce elements of PETAS into their kindergarten. This was actually observed in non-pilot kindergartens. This move not only strengthens sustainability but also brings this part of the project to scale. The next batch of PETAS pilot centres would be able to take off faster than the earlier batches because of the exposure. Likewise, advocate for elements of parent involvement and education to be integrated in the national curriculum.
- b) **Teacher training colleges/universities.** Teacher training in colleges and university needs to incorporate the principles and practice of PETAS. In fact, it needs to go beyond PETAS and begin to introduce recent research and innovation and programmes in early childhood development and education, including incorporating a strong practice component. Currently, the link between the teacher trainers (colleges/universities) and the users (Ministry of National Education and kindergartens) is absent or at most, weak. Feedback from the user groups to the training agencies will be useful to shape the desired training outcomes.

A meeting between all training agencies and MNE would be helpful identify job knowledge and skills required of preschool teachers and the problems teachers face on the job. A team from the universities and colleges should also embark on study missions to learn from international institutions with good training programmes in early childhood. An international consultant could work with the teacher training institutions to review and recommend how to best improve and update the training curriculum.

Training of preschool teachers should go beyond kindergarten teaching. Looking ahead, as teaching in creches may soon become a reality, the curriculum content and practice should also include working with infants and toddlers.

- c) **National recognition:** Unicef could work with MNE and MOH to recognize the training received by teachers, nurses and professionals. Certification and credit hours could be given as an incentive and in recognition of their interest to upgrade themselves.

At another level, preschool teachers who do not have the required preschool education could go through a series of courses, including the ones conducted by Unicef trainers, that would earn credits towards teacher accreditation. Working with the MNE, Universities and Colleges, such a series of in-service training would provide a pathway towards professionalism for initially untrained teachers. Credits should also be given to their years of working experience in the field.

- d) **Free meal policy:** If the proposal for free meals for poor kids, mainly Rroma, to attract them to kindergartens and schools is accepted at the national level by MNE, we can expect a dramatic increase in enrollment rate almost immediately. This would be a most effective strategy to undertake to reach as many poor kids as possible. Data from NGOs involved in free meals to poor kids attest to this. Documentation of such experiences, including statistics, could help Unicef advocate to the MNE.
- e) **Dissemination:** (i) National meetings and conferences organized help to disseminate best practices and reinforce and extend the network of Unicef partners. There could be an exhibition and exchange of materials developed for parent education, teaching aids, children's games, publication etc. This could also be done on a smaller scale at the district and county level.
- (ii) Material resources like manual, teachers' guide, newsletters, parent education pamphlets could be further developed. These need to be simply written and reader-friendly. It is important that they address the need of the consumers.

- f) Children/Youth Development:** Children's camps under the MNE could offer programmes on youths leadership, child's rights (and responsibilities), community work, teamwork, etc. Unicef could fund an appropriate NGOs to undertake such programmes.
- g) Local Human Resource:** Human resources need to be developed and strengthened for each community so that at the end of the FEP there will be a core of resources left behind. These will be the professionals, consultants and a national/county database of expertise (trainers in the different areas) that could be called upon for further training and consultation.
- h) Organize Programmes within the System:** The training of PETAS and parent education programmes need to be fully integrated into the ongoing in-service training of teachers and nurses at the county level. To maximize training resources, an interdisciplinary training squad could be formed to visit each of the methodological centres (rural especially) to conduct training for each district of teachers, especially during the school holidays. They would help develop a rural kindergarten/cum training centre to also serve as a model for the rural kindergartens. Unicef could provide a van/minibus and have different partners – the MNE, the Mayor to contribute the services of a driver, gas and repairs. The minibus could also serve the community development project, for instance, as a mobile toy and book library for children and families in the countryside, health and other outreach to the rural areas, distribution of food and clothes to poor families.
- h) Maximize facilities:** Organizing related programmes within existing structures is also another way to strengthen sustainability without undue cost. For instance, kindergartens are under-utilized after the morning session, during weekends and during the long vacation of 2 ½ to 3 months. During these times, the facilities could be used for short-term preparatory classes for children who had not attended kindergarten before entry to primary one. It could also be used as a drop-in centre for mothers and young children a few times a week in the afternoons /weekends to allow children to use the play facilities and toys while teachers/nurses conduct parenting sessions or facilitate, say, single mothers' support group.

## VII. UNICEF'S STRATEGIC INPUTS

There are certain things that Unicef would be best suited to initiate and to support to best maximize its presence in Romania.

- 1. Relationship with the Romanian Government:** Unicef holds a very credible status in relation to the Romanian Government. It could, therefore, use this relationship to collaborate and influence the relevant Ministries in its attempt to alleviate the condition in the country during this transition period. This could be in terms of integrating positive aspects of the FEP into the system (which is done

for PETAS in MNE, the training of nurses and social workers in the universities). It is therefore also in a position to advocate for child's rights, e.g. free meals.

2. **Training of trainers:** This is a key input for Unicef in terms of training an interdisciplinary core of trainers within the system who could be called upon to continue training of others. Unicef in this last phase need to be sure that the trainers are integrated within the system and will continue to take it upon itself to continue with the training. Investment in good quality training, competent and committed people can reap long term returns. Training also includes ability to develop curriculum.

Unicef with the help of its partners could identify key people in strategic places who are supportive of the work of Unicef and are able to influence and advocate for the integration and continuation of key elements of the programme.

3. **International and national seminar:** Very few Romanians have access to the international early childhood scene, including parent education and community involvement. Although some money is invested for out-of-country visits, part of it could be put aside to organize regional, national and international seminar(s) to highlight early childhood issues and for dissemination. Such events attract media attention – generating further interest in the importance of eccl. Give notice of this event to partners involved (say a year) will allow respective partners to get ready for it. This might speed up the work of the programme, too.

An international conference could have selected international experts to share the latest research, programmes and methodologies and experiences. This way, more Romanians will have exposure to the international scene and at the same time, showcase their own progress. This could be an impetus to strengthen collaboration between the various Government agencies (MNE, Child Protection, MOH, etc.) with Unicef and to demonstrate to the European Union (EU) (and others) its efforts in promoting the rights of Romanian children to quality care, development and education.

National seminars/workshops could bring together major successful projects by INGOs (e.g. PETAS, Parent Education and Tirgu Neamt) and local NGOs for dissemination. This would be an opportunity for networking and to identify possible collaboration between and among Government/INGOs/NGOs/local community. In particular, it would allow the various government agencies to have a more comprehensive perspective of available services and gaps of services for children and families. This information could be used to strengthen policies and programmes. Unicef and its partners could use this as a platform to pitch for inter-ministerial collaboration and for integration of successful factors into its system.

Such seminars help to facilitate co-operation between INGOs and NGOs. Unicef could bring both parties together to help 'grow and nurture' local NGOs and to match programmes with funders. The above seminars are one such avenue.

- 3. Develop/strengthen models of community involvement.** Provide guidance, facilitators, concepts, training of trainers, equipment (photocopying machine, printer, minibus/van (see mobile teachers) written materials.

Identify, support, strengthen and use local human resources. Use local authorities, grassroots leaders and local experts.

- 4. Supplies: helping others to help themselves.** Some are mentioned above. Negotiate with kindergartens/communities for matching of contribution. For instance, identify what might be needed in the kindergarten/parent resource centre/training centre and decide what Unicef will be responsible for and what the others will be responsible for. This way, Unicef gets away from the image of simply being a donor. Matching contributions in kind or service gives people a sense of involvement, commitment and very importantly, ownership. It also projects Unicef's position of helping communities who are also prepared to help themselves. Before donating equipment, the community must first have a specific plan for the use of the equipment. E.g. Furniture was donated to Bivolari for parent resource centre but there did not seem to be any particular objectives or plans thought out. Advice, information and guidance to the community may need to precede or at least accompany supplies.

Do needs assessment before automatically providing the equipment. The equipment could be provided with the understanding that it is for the use of the community as part of the community development process and not only for kindergartens. Some system may have to be worked out - e.g. cost sharing for maintenance, day and time when equipment would be available to others, whether to charge for paper or for each to bring his own supplies of paper, etc. The maintenance of equipment is an important factor. Those using the equipment must be prepared to share costs of maintenance and repair of any machine for continued use.

- 5. Stimulate local resources:** Unicef tends to bring in furniture, toys and equipment to supported projects. The next time Unicef plans to donate furniture and wooden toys, it might want to consider commissioning the locals to produce them. This way Unicef helps with the local economy, brings job to the people and wins appreciation and support. These very people may be the ones supporting the programme in the community.
- 6. Set up a website:** Seriously consider setting up a FEP website to address the issue of a) dissemination of information, resources, b) to set up a network of interested partners – Gos, INGOs, NGOs, parents c) to document types of programmes, the processes, outcomes c) to share experiences, d) to capture database of trainers, types of publication, information on INGOS, NGOs, etc. Unicef could set this up with a government or non-government organization to ensure the continuity.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2000 TO 2004

For the last phase of the Family Education Programme in Romania the project appears to be more focused, aiming to consolidate and disseminate earlier efforts and targeting at the Rroma Community, the rural areas and the urban poor. The 2 main areas and the sub-projects are:

### **Early Childhood Care and Development**

- a) Pre-School Education
- b) Parent Education
- c) Child Participation

### **Community Development for the Strengthening of Family**

- a) Capacity – Building for Agents of Change
- b) Rroma Community Education and Development

**Goals and Objectives.** For better clarity and to avoid confusion, have a clear delineation of goals and objectives. What is stated as objectives (7.5. OBJECTIVES) is better stated as the overall GOALS of the 2001-2004 Programme. What follows after are the SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES of the various sub-projects. After the objectives of the sub-projects are the proposed PLAN OF ACTION (referred in the proposal as operational objectives) to achieve the specific objectives. The plan of action must be very specific in terms of MEASURABLE OUTCOMES that would constitute the achievement of the specific objective. (Some of the outcome measures are mentioned under 'Milestones' in the proposal). The evaluation of the programme would then assess to what extent the measurable outcomes has been achieved.

The clarity of goals, objectives and plan of action under each objective helps to ensure a clear focus of action in achieving objectives and keeping the programme on track.

The final phase of a programme usually works towards:

- a) Consolidation - to strengthen what has been done earlier
- b) Collaboration - with NGOs, Gos, community
- c) Documentation - of training, manuals, successful processes
- d) Going to scale - from project to national scale
- e) Dissemination - through publication, seminars to reach wider audience
- f) Integration - into existing system for continuity
- g) Assessment and evaluation - to assess goals and objectives reached

These are not isolated dimensions and usually there is an overlap of two or more particular activities. E.g. under consolidation through training, there is also documentation involved as well as collaboration with the State and NGOs, dissemination and integration into existing systems. The 2000-2004 programme

reflects this direction although not necessarily spelt out systematically and in specific terms.

The programme strategies proposed for both national and local are good and many are excellent and have also been recommended by the consultant team. The important thing is the harnessing of each strategy or the selection of a few strategies to achieve specific objectives systematically.

Since this is the last phase for Unicef in Romania, it must focus its energy and resources on a few key elements to leave behind a sustainable legacy. This Report highlights some areas for attention for this last phase of the Family Education Programme. Some may have been mentioned earlier, while others not mentioned below have been recommended elsewhere in the Report.

## **1. PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

For the next phase of development, it is advisable to have at least two Unicef staff responsible for the Programme: one for the ECCD and another for community development. Each officer could have a small team of experienced consultants over the 5-year period to provide guidance, support, and perspectives, keep the project on track and provide influence where needed. Some members of the team should also hold an influential position in the relevant Ministries, other organizations/institutions and in the Roma community and have the relevant expertise. This strategy is to facilitate ownership and integration of relevant elements of the programme into the respective Ministries/organizations at the end of the programme or even earlier. For instance, Ministry of Health's involvement is necessary for any lasting changes to be made in relation to the development of crèches and outreach to the 0 to 3-year-old children.

Since there is a high concentration on early childhood care development and education in this Programme, a full-time early childhood staff or consultant familiar with international developments in the early childhood field as well as familiarity with the Romanian system of preschool education should be involved in this ECCD Project.

The ECCD team already has a core group of trainers to conduct PETAS and parent education training from the last phase. The Community Development team would need to train a core of people to facilitate community development process at the district/county level.

## **2. TRAINING**

The proposal to focus on Training of Trainers is a good strategy. The training of trainers should focus on the following:

- a) **Training techniques and approaches.** This aspect of training was absent altogether in previous training of trainers' programme. It should be of high priority as effective training requires a skillful trainer as well as a knowledgeable trainer. This training should focus on developing effective trainers in their delivery of content, using a variety of approaches, including, presentation skills, facilitative skills, small group discussion and presentation, role play, games (based on games theory), journaling, mentoring, hands-on activities and participatory and experiential learning. Effective training skills help trainees be more confident and learn better. A training manual on Training Approaches could be developed or adapted from existing training manuals, for example, the series of 5 guides **on Enhancing the skills of early childhood trainers** published by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and Unesco.
- b) **Upgrade PETAS training.** Teachers trained in PETAS need to go for further training to upgrade their skills and knowledge in this area. The PETAS training programme could incorporate the upgraded training for those who have not gone through the training before.
- c) **Review, update and incorporate PETAS and parent education in Teacher Training Colleges' and Universities' curriculum.** These institutions need to update their content and methods of teacher training and keep abreast of latest development in the early childhood field. This will ensure that teachers do not need to be re-trained upon graduation. This may require the intervention of the Ministry of National Education.
- d) **Leadership training institute.** A variety of training have been carried out and further proposed for the FEP. Some of these training, like PETAS, are to some extent, integrated in the education system and that will ensure its continuity. Another group of training is targeted at leadership development in the community, including the Roma community. The types of training include the development of leadership skills, organizing skills, communication skills, mobilizing skills, advocacy skills, fund raising, project management, etc. Currently, the training do not come under any permanent auspices and appear to be ad hoc in nature, which raises the issue of sustainability after the programme ends. As good leadership is an important and critical factor for the development of Romania at various levels that go beyond the project, the State could be persuaded to consider integrating the institute (which need not be a physical building, but more of a programme or programmes) under one of its existing Ministries. Youth leadership training could also come under the training institute in developing young people for the present and the future.

## 2. PARENT EDUCATION

Parent education will be disseminated through more kindergartens as well as crèches as well as through the health network. To expedite the process of dissemination,

more trainers may need to be trained to work with teachers, nurses and those who work with parents of young children.

Entry points to reach out to parents are:

- a) hospitals before/after delivery
- b) health clinics when parents bring in children for immunization
- c) crèches
- d) kindergartens
- e) primary schools
- f) secondary schools
- g) community (resource) centres

Currently, only a small number of parents are reached. Hospitals, clinics and kindergartens have begun some parent education outreach. The other entry points could be introduced. This could be through dissemination of information through appropriate brochures and pamphlets, workshops on parenting, one-to-one counseling and also through the media.

Advocate for parent education and involvement in the preschool and school system. This phase could begin to include the training of primary schools, particularly, teachers in the early primaries, on parent education. Schools selected could be the ones linked to kindergartens having parent education going on.

Children from kindergartens upward can also be taught health and hygiene, nutrition and safety matters. These information can be incorporated into the kindergarten and school curriculum content. As more kids attend primary one than kindergartens, having a parent education programme for parents in primary school increases the rate of parent education outreach.

Poor families have difficulty thinking of child development when they have no jobs and no food. Together with all the fine attempts to help the family, must be the assistance of income generation and the provision of material help until they are able to stand on their feet.

### **3. CHILD PARTICIPATION**

As spelt out in the proposal, the focus is on getting people to understand the importance and rights of children to participation in decision-making in areas that affect him and to find out different ways of such participation within the family and school.

Under 7.9.6. Sub-project 3: Child Participation, the 'Operational objectives' are sated as 'to initiate local agents of change in promoting child participation in family, school and family life' and 'to strengthen the capacity of local libraries and cultural centres to organize activities for the promotion of child participation'. If the earlier

definition of child participation is to help children make decisions in matters that affect him, than what follows may have little to do with making decisions directly.

While child participation is one of the rights of children, there are also other rights that are more basic and that have not even been met which perhaps require greater attention - right to life (infant mortality rate is high) right to basic needs (food, shelter and clothing). Many poor children do not even have enough to eat. The fact that Roma kids will attend schools for free meals is one of the indicators. Right to education - which many children are not getting - note the decline in enrollment for kindergarten and schools and the dropout rates when children are deemed old enough to work.

This is not a recommendation to do away with children's participation as a project but rather to seriously consider what aspect of participation should Unicef be focusing on, bearing in mind the limited manpower and financial resources and time. I would suggest that Unicef review this sub-project to be clearer in terms of what it hopes to achieve and why.

Child participation and child rights must also go hand in hand with child responsibility - according to the age and maturity of the child. Not every child is able to make all decisions for himself. Children should be encouraged to choose, beginning first with simple daily matters of an either-or situation. Allowing children to make choices and experience the consequence of his or her choice is helping them to participate and solve problems at the same time. In the kindergartens and schools, allowing children to take responsibility - e.g. to be in charge of a group for the day, to make sure that the toys are kept away at the end of the session, etc. is participation.

When children are not able to participate in decisions that affect his well-being, than others must advocate for them. One instance is the right of children to have their basic needs met - food, shelter and clothing - an education. Yet there are countless poor children who do not have enough to eat and who do not attend kindergarten and school.

#### **4. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR AGENTS OF CHANGE:**

**Nurturing Local NGOs:** NGOs are mushrooming in Romania and are keen to contribute but many do not have the necessary expertise, knowledge and funding to be effective. Unicef could assist the NGO sector by facilitating networking among NGOs, INGOs and the State.

- a) A directory of NGOs and the work they are doing would be useful for possible sponsors as well as community seeking ideas or services. The National Council for NGOs could be persuaded to develop such a directory, which Unicef could consider sponsoring. A directory of INGOs would also be helpful and could be incorporated in the same directory.

- b) National meetings and seminars for INGOs and NGOs working with children and families in Romania would promote networking. It would help participants to identify and understand the work of various bodies and to maximize resources. INGOs and NGOs could share the nature of the work and exhibit materials developed. The aims of such a meeting are:
- (i) To develop a network of INGOs and NGOs working in the area of young children and families;
  - (ii) To bring local and INGOs together to match sponsors with local initiatives. Local initiatives with good programmes in search of sponsors and vice versa would benefit, e.g. Unicef and Copiii Nostri;
  - (iii) To increase awareness of interested parties of the activities of different parties for cooperation, collaboration, identifying and meeting unmet needs.
  - (iv) To increase pool of developed material resources. E.g. parent education pamphlets and resource could be shared. The pooling of material and information already developed would increase the pool of ready-made material immediately and cut down time and costs of developing these materials from scratch. Unicef and other INGOs can make copies for dissemination within its own network instead of developing everything itself.
  - (v) To complement one another's work. The work of another INGO may complement the work of Unicef, e.g. working with primary school. Funding school furniture and equipment.
  - (vi) The exposure will be helpful to local NGOs in helping them to grow and develop when they come into contact with established international and local NGOs.

**Role and Training of Social Workers:** With the introduction of greater emphasis of field work in social work training, one can perhaps expect social workers to be better equipped to deal with the issues in the community. The role of social workers is still not that clear and much may have to be done to educate the public on the various role of social workers - as probation officer, community developer, medical social worker, school counselor, marriage and family counselor, etc. Unicef could work with the Romanian Association for Promoting Social Work Profession. The Association should also work with the Universities to identify areas for further training and specialization. Social workers can also play a bigger role in working with the community, including developing educational information on understanding children at different stage, effective disciplining of children, supporting children, dealing with aggressive behaviour, etc. that

are of interest to parents. Social workers can also do public talks in the community as well as on radio.

**Nurses:** As mentioned earlier, the Romanian Nurse Association has done much to enhance its public role and in public health education. Unicef's role could perhaps be directed at helping the association and the MOH work out an acceptable cooperation where the association can function within the ambit of the MOH while continuing its efforts to upgrade training of the profession and its public outreach.

## **5. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Comments and recommendations are mentioned earlier. Additional comments are:

### **Concept of community resource centre**

Community resource centre is basically a place that serves multiple purpose for the community at large. Tirgu Neamt has a cultural centre that could fulfill that purpose or it could be a facility in the Mayor's office that could hold community meetings or any government building that could be used by the community perhaps under the auspices of the Mayor's office. The resource centre could have a Community Resource Centre Committee comprising representatives from the Mayor's office, parents group, the Rroma community, the MNE, MOH, NGOs, church, local businesses and others from relevant associations. The Committee, possibly under the Mayor's Office, would identify the needs of the community and decide on facilities, services and activities in the CRC. The CRC could be:

- a) a meeting place for project and any other community meetings;
- b) a facility that houses equipment like a TV and video player, photocopying machine, computer for common use;
- c) a library and data base for all projects, relevant literature, research, training manuals;
- d) a parent education centre where information is available to parents and where workshops could be held;
- e) support groups for Rroma parents, single parents, support for Aids victims and family;
- f) specific services could be held regularly - e.g. information and referral services, counseling services, health screening, etc.
- g) public talks and workshops addressing issues of concern, e.g. dealing with stress, depression, survival skills, home management, prevention of common health problems, etc. Counseling is a very recent phenomenon and many may not be comfortable about seeking such help. However, if the issue is presented as an educational and informational talk with helpful tips, more will be willing to attend such sessions.
- h) depending of availability of space, the community centre could also hold adult classes;
- i) a place for youth clubs and special interest groups
- j) children's library

- k) a drop in centre for children and families' recreation activities (TV, reading material, games, sports like table tennis, basketball, soccer if space permits).

**Material support.** Poor families require material support until they are able to fend for themselves.

Free meals: In some areas, especially when it comes to the basic for children, the State has a responsibility to help, e.g. free meals for kindergarten and school children although the community has also a role to play. Education is a high priority for the State and it follows that all efforts should therefore be made to ensure that every child is able to have access and benefit from it.

Food and clothes bank: Food bank from donations from community members, local businesses, churches would help poor families. It could also go to kindergartens to feed poor kids. Farmers could also contribute a portion of their harvest to the food bank to feed the hungry. Used clothes and shoes could also be collected from families for poor children and families. Rroma families and kindergarten teachers often explain that Rroma children do not attend school because of lack of money for food and clothes.

### **Toy Production**

Local toy production could be encouraged for income generation to fund projects and to give jobs to youths or other unemployed adults. The current toy workshop at Tirgu Neamt makes only soft toys for the moment by youths. Youths and other unemployed women, particularly Rroma women, could be taught how to make a variety of toys that could be sold to the various kindergartens and crèches. At the same time, places like Bovilari has a carpenter workshop where youths are trained in carpentering.

Unicef could collaborate with the Ministry of National Education to support toys and equipment making workshops to produce quality educational toys for the region or the whole country. (In Vietnam, the Ministry of National Education and training supported a local toy production company.) International catalogues of quality wooden toys, games and outdoor equipment could provide good ideas for adaptation.

## **6. RROMA COMMUNITY**

### **Strengthening the Rroma Communities**

- a. Rroma Representation. Rroma communities need to be represented on school Councils, kindergartens and on any national or local committees or programmes.
- b. Unicef should also work and involve the Department of Ethnic Minorities in projects that will affect the Rroma population.
- c. Universities or/and research institutions, particularly those that have studied the Rroma population, could work with the Rroma community to conduct a needs

assessment and evaluation of programme implemented in the community. Also do a 'strengths' assessment, that is, what are the strengths of the Roma community. This may vary from community to community. Strengths could be in the form of some leadership personalities, a commitment to better themselves, a love for music, etc. A strengths assessment would need a different approach from a survey method. Focus groups discussion may be one of the methods to be considered. Identify Roma leaders to support and help develop the community (e.g. in Mangalia).

- d. It would be useful to train Roma social workers to work with the community. Financial grants could be made available to encourage high school students to take up social work.
- e. To help children, we also need to help the families. Roma communities are low in the educational level, low in skills and high in unemployment. Literacy and numeracy skills and vocational skills like tailoring could be tied to preschool programme. Parents who send their kids to kindergarten could also participate in one of these programmes. Tirgu Neamt has a Roma programme where one of the better to do community members help others by setting up a tailoring workshop to teach young girls to sew and earn a livelihood eventually. Another community project in Bivolari has carpentering workshop for youths to learn a useful trade.

### **Increasing preschool enrollment among poor and Roma community**

Enrollment of poor and Roma children in kindergarten is generally low. Roma parents are reported not to send their children because of lack of proper clothes, shoes and money for meals. Where clothes, shoes are provided by kindergarten or the community and where snacks are also provided free, children are reported to be more likely to be sent – although attendance may be irregular.

- a. As mentioned above, regularize free meals for poor kids in kindergartens.
- b. Where there is Roma settlement of a sufficient number, identify and set up home-based kindergarten where parents are more likely to send their children. If space is a problem, priority should be to set up classes for the 5 to 6/7year old children.
- c. Or/and, build a simple kindergarten within the community itself. Unicef could sponsor the building of such kindergartens in collaboration with the city council with the involvement of the Roma community. The building would be conditional on the participation of the community. E.g. in the building, making of curtains, making toys for the kindergarten, etc. Where there is a local workshop, the order of furniture etc. should be given to them. Form a Roma committee to be responsible for the kindergarten.
- d. Study other cases of successful work with Roma communities, e.g. Glod and Mangalia to assess feasibility of adapting. Working with the community requires building on their strengths, respect.

- e. Persuade relevant authorities to extend payment of child allowance to school attendance to pre-primary school attendance as well.
- f. Develop alternative kindergartens: For children who do not have any preschool preparation, some short alternatives are suggested to provide these children, usually Roma and poor children, some form of preparation. for formal schooling.
  - (i) Primary schools could offer a few weeks of pre-primary classes before the start of the school year. The Philippines has an 8-week preprimary programme in primary one for children who did not have a preschool education, namely poor kids.
  - (ii) Kindergartens can also offer a 2-3-month pre-primary education before the start of the school year during school holidays when the kindergartens are not utilized at all. The facilities could be put to good use. Part time teachers or regular full time teachers could be paid to undertake the programme.

## 7. Development of Crèches

For the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, the development of crèches should be one of its main focus to reach out to children 0 to 3. The ambiguity between the role of MNE and MOH regarding the development and stimulation of children need to be settled. Infants below one and half years could continue under the MOH but its nurses training curriculum needs to integrate developmental programmes for infants and toddlers. Those currently working with young children and residential homes need be likewise trained. The development of crèches needs to work on a few areas:

- a) **Role of MNE and MOH:** Inter-ministerial co-operation. MNE and MOH need to come to an understanding on the need to collaborate to develop and implement an appropriate programme for 0 to 3. The roles of each ministry may need to be resolved, guided by what would make the best sense for the continuity of children's care, development and education from 0 to 6. One possibility is for MOH to be responsible for the health and nutrition of children from 0 to 6, while MNE would be responsible for the development and education. This may be in practical terms mean that all crèches and kindergartens would have a nurse responsible for children's health, nutrition while the MNE teachers will be responsible for the programmes for all children.
- b) **Training to work with 0 to 3: Nurses/medical assistants** need training to provide stimulation apart from care and nutrition to these children. If it is agreed that MNE teachers work with children from 0 to 3, then they, too, must be trained to work with infants and toddlers. Currently, the disparity between the kindergarten and crèche is quite obvious even though both may be under the same roof and under the same director.

- c) **Programmes for 0 to 3:** Infant care programmes and toddler programmes need to be developed separately from PETAS. Unicef could either identify any particular programmes for infants and toddlers currently in place in Romania if not, it should either identify any particular international programmes for adaptation or develop from scratch with the help of a consultant. Teachers will then have to be trained to implement the infant and toddler programme in terms of quality of environment, activities and interaction.
- d) **Drop-in Centre:** For parents who are reluctant to send the children to crèches, the kindergarten could provide space for a drop in centre when the kindergarten is not in use (e.g. in the afternoons or weekends for mothers to drop in with their children to play with the toys and equipment. Teachers or nurses could provide parenting information informally or have a small support group among mothers.
- e) **Parent education/involvement:** Like the kindergartens, the crèches are also avenues to reach out to parents of children and need to be integrated into the crèche programme.

**Submitted By:**

**Khoo Kim Choo (Team Leader)**

**Annex 1****Documents Reviewed**

- 1. Master Plan of Operations for 1995 - 1999, Country Programme of Co-operation, Romania. Government of Romania and United Nations Children's Fund.**
- 2. Master Plan of Operations, 2000-2004, Country Programme of Cooperation, Romania. Government of Romania and United Nations Children's Fund.**
- 3. Family Education Programme: Background Information, Unicef Romania 1994 - 2000. Part 1.**
- 4. Family Education Programme: Background information. Unicef Romania 1994 - 2000. Part 2.**
- 5. Analyzing Study of Children and families problems in a Communitary and regional perspective (Tirgu Neamt 1999). Unicef and City Hall of Tirgu Neamt.**
- 6. National report on Education for All, Romania. Ministry of National Education, Institute of Educational Sciences. Bucharest 1999.**
- 7. Parents' Education: A Way to Improve Children's Situation in the Family. Project Proposal to be funded by Unicef. Presented by Fundatia Copiii Nostri, Bucharest, 2000.**
- 8. Unicef and the Children of Romania, USAID Grant#EURO-0032-G00-3039-00, Final Evaluation (20 May - 7 June 1996).**

**Meetings/Persons being interviewed:**

## Mangalia:

Dr. Mariana Tudorica – Direction for Public Health  
 Jitarasu Geta – County School Inspectorate – Preschool education  
 Monica Cracea - County School Inspectorate – Preschool education  
 G. Ghita - County School Inspectorate – Preschool education  
 Ileana Manzu – Principal, Kindergarten 47  
 Principal, Kindergarten 3, Navodari  
 Tara Ionica – parent, Kindergarten 3 Mangalia  
 Andrei Florentina – teacher, Kindergarten 3 Mangalia  
 Vintorescu Maritica – teacher, Kindergarten 3 Mangalia  
 Violeta Toma – teacher, Kindergarten 3 Mangalia  
 Cucu Camelia – teacher, Kindergarten 3 Mangalia  
 Maria Tanasescu – grandparent  
 Coman Elena – parent, Kindergarten 3 Mangalia  
 Neagu Eugenia – parent, Kindergarten 3 Mangalia  
 Director, Association “Ingerii Pazitori”, Medgidia  
 Stoica Georgeta – Nurse  
 Dr. Rodica Matusa – President, Association “Speranta” (“Hope”), for HIV/AIDS children, Constanta  
 Head of Social Service, Mairie, Mangalia  
 Zamfir Iorgus – Mayor, Mangalia  
 Vasile Cobzaru – President of Roma Federation, Mangalia  
 Belmondo Cobzaru – Secretary of Roma Federation, Mangalia  
 Social Worker, HOLT Romania, Medgidia

## Tirgu Neamt

Ioana Cojocaru – Principal, Special School, Tirgu Neamt; Coordinator of the School Integration Project  
 V. Stan – Principal, Kindergarten; Coordinator of the Day Care Center Project  
 Florea Zenovia – School Inspector, Preschool Education, Tirgu Neamt  
 Francisc Gille - School Inspector, Preschool Education, Tirgu Neamt  
 Carmen Dumitreasa – County Direction for Public Health, Neamt  
 Sarpe Victor – Coordinator of the project for the emergency center for minors  
 Hurghidan Elena - Coordinator of the Food Bank project  
 Ciocarlan Nicoleta – Social Worker, Child Protection Office, Mairie, Tirgu Neamt  
 Refferee, Mairie, Tirgu Neamt, coordinator of the project for training center for Roma women  
 M. Ignatovici – General Director, County Direction for Protection of Children’s Rights, Neamt

Elena Delciu – Assistant Director, County Direction for Protection of Children’s Rights, Neamt

T.Ciubotaru – Vice-president of “Hope” Association

Carmen Grigoras – Referee, Mairie Tg. Neamt; Coordinator of the Community Development Center project

Mihaela - Coordinator of the “Agents of Change” project

Elena - Financial Coordinator

Ana Marin - Secretary, Mairie Tg. Neamt, General Coordinator

Psychologist, ARAS, Piatra Neamt

Ana-Maria - Roma Woman, Social Mediator

Orthodox Priest – Protopopiat, Tg. Neamt

Serafim Lungu – Mayor, Tg. Neamt, Mayor, Nehoiu

Iasi

Agent, Youth NGO – President

Psychologist

Vice-President

Volunteer

Micliuc – Nurse, Department for Public Health/Health promotion Center, Iasi

Bivolari

Mayor

Local Counselor

School Director

School Teacher

Apprenticeship Teacher

Physician – Hospital/Pediatric Psychiatric Ward

Bucharest

Dl. Filipescu – President, Caminul Filip

Principal – Kindergarten 34 Bucharest

Nina Cugler – “Save the Children”

Lucia Pietraru – Center for Health Promotion, Bucharest

Tereza Budura – Coordinator, project for training of trainers, HIV/AIDS

Dr. Petrea

IOMC-HOLT : Community Resource Center for Mother and Child:

Dr. Alin Stanescu – IOMC Director

Dr. Tatiana Goldner – HOLT –Romania Director

Sidonia Maxim – social worker

Gina Schiteanu – social worker

TOT for PETAS

-Adina Vrasmas, PhD,  
Pitesti, Stefanesti, Bivolari  
Toma Georgeta – Inspector, School Inspectorate, Arges County  
Macovei, I. – Director, County Direction for Protection of Children’s Rights, Arges  
Mandreanu Monica – Placement Center, Pitesti  
Bascov – Principal, Kindergarten  
Kindergarten Teachers (2)  
Adam Florica – Director, Kindergarten 21, Pitesti  
Magda Lazar – President of “Adolescentul”, Stefanesti  
Ion Georgeta – Lawyer  
Liliana Mustata – preschool teacher, Mioveni  
Sorin Neagu – Job Club project, Mioveni  
Doina Stoica – Primary School teacher  
Carmen Nicolescu – Kindergarten Principal  
Gheorghe Nicolescu – teacher  
Nora Teodorescu – ex-inspector, Preschool Education, Arges  
Nelida Ghitulescu – social worker, County Hospital, Pitesti  
Gabi Ghitulescu – lawyer  
Nicoleta Merisescu – Primary School teacher, Mioveni  
Catalin Pretescu, Priest – Stefanesti  
Adela Petrescu, Social worker – Stefanesti  
Barbuceanu Ion – Mayor, -Stefanesti  
Melida Soare – Social worker at County’s Hospital  
Mariana Carstea – an excellent retired teacher  
Dr. Eliza Lupu – Health Inspector  
Ioan Georgeta – Mayoralty lawyer  
Nicolescu Carmen – Stefanesti kindergarten Director  
Dr. Leca Ramona – Local councilor

**Annex 3**

**Schedule of visits, meetings, interviews.**

**(please incorporate schedule prepared for consultants here)**