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Summary of mid-term reviews and major evaluations of country programmes

Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews (MTRs) and major country programme evaluations, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustments in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The present report presents the findings of six evaluations and three studies conducted in 2004, 2005 and 2006 on major issues affecting children in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) region. There were no mid-term reviews held in 2005 in this region.

Introduction

1. Across the CEE/CIS region, economic growth has taken hold and most countries have experienced sustained economic recovery since 2000. Prospects for rapid growth are changing the environment in which children are growing up. A disappointing feature of this economic rebound, however, is that children are not benefiting in a significant way. Recent data indicate that reforms appear to be passing them by.

* E/ICEF/2006/18.

2. Poverty levels among children are decreasing, but more slowly than for other age groups. In 2005, children accounted for the largest percentage of the population in poverty in any age group in the region. New dimensions of exclusion and erosion of access to universal coverage of health and education, combined with high levels of inequality, make child poverty more complex to address. Declining birth rates may well be a signal of young people losing confidence in the future and of fearing a lack of state support if they choose to have children.

3. Governments in the region are now in a position to invest the returns of economic growth in children. There is a dearth of knowledge about the social impact of market reform and 'what works' in addressing the complex drivers of social exclusion. Few policy interventions systematically address child poverty and social exclusion, partly on account of Governments' understandable caution about expanding public expenditure without first seeing tested models of effective interventions benefiting children.

4. In the past two years UNICEF, jointly with national and international institutions, has invested in a series of thematic and sectoral evaluations, with the aim of enhancing the understanding of 'what works' in terms of policy and good practices to tackle child poverty, and to reshape its contribution in countries in this region. The analysis of the impact on child well-being of social and economic changes identified as key areas for informing ongoing social sector reforms and much-needed changes in public administration systems supporting children: child benefits; early childhood development; quality of education; and child protection.

5. This report summarizes the findings of three studies and six evaluations which have been useful in drawing lessons and bringing to light under-analyzed aspects of child well-being. These include: (a) two studies on child poverty in Romania and the Russian Federation related to Millennium Development Goal 1 and the priority 5 of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan (MTSP); (b) two evaluations — a formative multi-country thematic evaluation on parenting initiatives and the evaluation of the Family Education project in Uzbekistan — related to Goal 4 and MTSP priority 1; (c) two evaluations — a regional thematic evaluation of the Global Education Programmes in Central Asia, and the evaluative review of 'active learning' in Serbia and Montenegro — related to Goal 3 and MTSP priority 2; (d) two related evaluations of the Family Support and Foster Care project, and of the Prevention of Infant Abandonment and De-institutionalization project in Georgia; and (e) an institutional assessment on the responsiveness of service providers to violence against children in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which is relevant to the Millennium Declaration and MTSP priority 4.

6. The report also presents the results achieved in the first year of implementation of the regional evaluation strategy adopted in 2005. In addition, the report highlights regional plans and further actions needed to strengthen the evaluation and learning function in CEE/CIS.

Major country programme studies and evaluations

A. Studies on child poverty and social exclusion

7. **Rationale.** The World Bank's 2005 study, *Growth, Poverty and Inequality: Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, highlighted the lack of progress on non-income dimensions of poverty, stressed the particular vulnerability of children and found these areas to be insufficiently understood and explored.

8. An assessment of the first round of poverty reduction strategies in the region shows that children were almost invisible in these plans. Governments are increasingly interested in using a broader analysis of child poverty in the next round of poverty reduction strategies or national development plans.

9. A series of studies that responded to country-specific challenges and policy environments, developed by national partners with local policy research groups, aimed to directly influence ongoing debates and decisions on reforms affecting children. Two of these studies are discussed below, one on child poverty in the Russian Federation and the other on understanding the dynamics of poverty and development risks on children in Romania.

10. **Summary of design and methodology.** The study in the Russian Federation was carried out by the Independent Institute of Social Policy, Moscow. Drawing on the national household survey framework and complemented by administrative data, the study tracked the dynamics and shifting demographic profile of poverty. A growing body of analytical work on poverty trends now exists in the Russian Federation, but there has been very little assessment of the magnitude of poverty as it affects children or any in-depth examination of the impact of policy measures. The study therefore focused on analyzing the role and effectiveness of government policies targeting poverty reduction among families with children.

11. The study in Romania took a broader approach, primarily using survey data from the Family Budget Survey introduced in Romania since 1995, allowing comparisons over time, and carried out by the National Institute of Statistics. The large sample of 36,000 households permitted an in-depth analysis by social stratifiers. Administrative data were used as a complementary source, mainly to estimate indicators for the education and health sectors.

Findings, lessons learned and recommendations

12. The study in the Russian Federation underlined that children are currently the age group with the highest risk of poverty, and that their position vis-à-vis other groups has continued to decline during the recent period of economic growth up. Families with children were found to have the highest risk of poverty, representing 37 per cent of all households but accounting for 50-60 per cent of the poor. They also account for a significant percentage of those facing extreme poverty. Regional disparities were particularly important in determining the chance of a household finding itself poor. The lowest levels of poverty are found in the large urban areas of Moscow and St. Petersburg (although risks for groups like single parents are exceptionally high in such settings), and the highest rates in the least developed Republics of Ingustetia, Kalmykia and Dagestan.

13. Non-monetary aspects of poverty in housing, health and education, dimensions that are particularly important to children, are growing characteristics of poverty in the Russian Federation. The link with poor housing was found to be relatively weak, as a number of poor families have been able to maintain decent living conditions. Access to health and education, however, is becoming increasingly polarized. There are few institutional barriers to access to medical services for children under age five years, but informal payments for prescriptions and fees for service are creating unequal opportunities, so that the percentage of household income used for medical services by the poor continued to rise between 1993 and 2001.

14. Two groups at special risk of poverty were distinguished: 'traditionally' poor families — those with large numbers of children and single parents; and the 'new' poor — families with one or two children who are affected by structural change related to economic transition, and 'young families' with one child who are often distinguished by higher risk of poverty.

15. The main contributing causes — and regulators — of poverty among children were found to be employment policies and wage levels. The study also found that the present system of child allowances is not having an impact on such poverty. Over the reform period 2000-2004, the role of state assistance to families, in particular through family and maternity benefits, has declined. While other benefits such as pensions were protected, child allowances shrank to one tenth of their earlier real value. Families with greater child dependency and facing a higher risk of poverty were found at the time of the survey to be virtually without government support: 80 per cent of single-parent families with children and more than 60 per cent families with many children were not covered by the social benefit system.

16. In 2005, financial and legislative powers with respect to these benefits were handed over to the regions. There is concern that devolution of responsibility for social programmes, including child allowances, to the regions will undermine state ability to support low-income families. Disparity between regions' capacity to finance social services may lead to depressed regions not having the resources to finance adequate standards of such interventions.

17. In Romania, a study of the changing pattern of poverty among children highlighted the complexity of new patterns of poverty affecting children, strongly influenced by economic restructuring experienced in the lead-up to European Union accession. Previous studies had focused on children in extreme circumstances, including children in institutional care or children coming out of public care settings. This study highlighted the multi-dimensional aspects of child poverty and examined ways that children are marginalized in society beyond incidence of income poverty. By examining national household survey data, complemented with administrative data and reviews of qualitative research (especially for children in extreme poverty), the study traces the dramatic rise of family poverty in two periods during the 1990s, peaking in 2000 and subsequently halving to 18.8 per cent by 2004. Inequality levels have continued to rise during this period of recovery and poverty levels for some groups remain high, with rates among children that are nearly 40 per cent higher than for the total population.

18. The study found that the rise in inequality during the transition is not being compensated by the social protection system. It describes a new type of poverty, very different from traditional forms, experienced by children early in life because of insufficient social protection systems, and the polarization accompanying rapid

rural-urban migration and sharp intra-urban disparities. It notes that social expenditure as a percentage of the government budget remains low compared to member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). State support for children remains weak. While social transfers have remained universal, their real value has deteriorated substantially. However, it was also noted that state child allowances, representing the largest single item on the government bill, reached over 4 million children and that without their presence, child poverty would have been 1.5 times higher.

19. Another striking finding of the study related to geographic dimensions of child poverty in Romania. Children from rural areas are clearly most exposed to risk of poverty, while also suffering from exclusion from education and health services. The characteristics of extreme poverty in urban areas were also underlined. Government attitudes to these disadvantaged areas were found to be very different and less accommodating than in rural areas.

20. **Use made of the studies.** In the Russian Federation, a round table with national and regional authorities reviewed the policy implications of the study. The findings were used by the Ministry of Health and Social Development as inputs into the President's Annual Address to the Federal Assembly in May 2006. It will also contribute to draft legislation being considered to strengthen state support to families. Similarly, in Romania, where there have been few such comprehensive analyses of poverty among children, the study is being used to inform the ongoing discussions among responsible Ministries and the public on reforming the family support system.

B. A multi-country formative thematic evaluation on parenting initiatives

21. **Rationale.** Historically, families in CEE/CIS relied heavily on the State to support their child-care responsibilities. After over a decade of changes in child-care services, parents increasingly have to handle their child-rearing responsibility on their own. Research confirms that in addition to economic hardship, many families lack the appropriate capacities, especially knowledge and skills, to provide a healthy, safe and nurturing environment for children in the most vulnerable and formative time of their lives — the first six years of life.

22. In the last few years, Governments, with support from UNICEF and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have launched a number of parenting programme initiatives. However, these are underfunded and not systematic and are sectoral rather than integrated. There are few examples of well-articulated national support systems for parenting programmes, which can address all of young children's development needs.

23. The formative evaluation is part of a continuing effort to expand the body of knowledge on effective early childhood interventions, to make national or local programmes more evidence-based and culturally sensitive and to assist government efforts to take parenting initiatives to scale.

24. Parenting programmes at different levels of maturity and expansion were assessed in four countries (Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Kazakhstan). In Belarus, the programme is led by the Ministry of Education and has

been universalized. In Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Health plans are being developed to take the programme to scale, based on the experience gathered in one oblast. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, efforts are underway to expand pilot parenting services for high-risk families. Georgia has accumulated some experience in conducting parenting classes through health centre-based sessions, but the development and execution of systematic plans to achieve national coverage have been stymied by competing priorities in a difficult economic situation.

25. **Summary of design and methodology.** In addition to a desk review of reports, documents and materials on parenting developed within each of the four countries, the formative evaluation was based on on-site observations of parenting programmes, as well as structured interviews with government personnel, parent educators and parents. A conceptual framework and discussion and observation guides for use during site visits and interviews were developed in each country.

26. The study was divided into three major parts: (a) a general assessment of the four parenting programmes and their materials; (b) analyses of the parenting programmes in each country; and (c) a listing of standards for parenting programmes that were being conducted with and through government structures to ensure that all children, and especially vulnerable children, received priority attention.

Findings, lessons learned and recommendations

27. The formative evaluation revealed that most parenting programmes focused on pregnancy and children from birth to three years of age. Outreach, through home visits (by public health providers) was undertaken in Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina (some) and Kazakhstan. Parenting activities were supported by a wide array of booklets, leaflets, manuals, calendars, posters, television shows and other media. In all countries, health and nutrition materials were found to be highly relevant to national needs. However, except for in Belarus, materials on child development tended to be limited.

28. Each programme included a small evaluation and monitoring component that covered only a few variables. Cost data were found to be weak. Only in Belarus did programmes go to scale. The overall conclusion was that with additional design work and national support, the other programmes have the potential to do likewise.

29. Only two programmes had established results chains, and most programmes needed to be more precise with respect to objectives and results statements. The study therefore recommended that the results chain in each programme be carefully specified. All relevant government sectors — health, education, protection — should be more involved in developing comprehensive parenting systems, and countries should build on their sectoral strengths. To provide comprehensive parenting programmes, both universal and targeted services for vulnerable children and families should be offered.

30. The evaluation found that typically, apart from baseline studies, materials review and some outreach, parents had not been involved in programme design, implementation or evaluation. They should be more involved in programme design, implementation, materials development, evaluation, monitoring and revision. To this end, materials for parents should be readable in home languages and use visuals that reflect cultural realities. Additional culturally-derived materials based on research

and promising practices are required for psychosocial stimulation and child development. Countries should seek to develop partnerships with NGOs, universities, institutes and others engaged or potentially interested in parenting education.

31. **Use made of the evaluation.** This analysis of parenting initiatives in four countries enumerates criteria and enabling competencies to improve programme quality and sustainability. These standards are useful not only for the improvement and expansion of parenting programmes in the countries studied, but valuable for other countries in the region. The standards were described by the formative evaluation with a high level of technical detail, and represent a significant contribution to global understanding of parenting initiatives.

32. The findings and recommendations of the study will be presented in July 2006 at a Global Consultation on Parenting, where methods of measuring the effectiveness of programmes in terms of outcomes will be discussed by international experts and representatives from Governments, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Soros Foundation and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation.

C. Evaluation of the family education project in Uzbekistan

33. **Rationale.** The most populous of the Central Asian republics, Uzbekistan has 25.5 million people, 12 per cent of whom are under five years of age. As in so many countries in the region, economic and social transition has resulted in the deterioration of pre-school education, mainly because of the Government's inability to hire well-qualified service providers by offering attractive wages in the education sector. Although the State promotes family education, this is often based on traditional stereotypes that deliver information but fail to empower parents and caregivers.

34. While decision-making in the public sector mostly occurs at higher levels of government, the *Makhallas* ("neighbourhood community") — the smallest administrative unit — have been given significant authority to organize social support to families. This represents a unique social mobilization entry point to support communities to take responsibility for their own well-being and demand better social services.

35. The Family Education Project (FEP) was initiated in May 2003 by the Government of Uzbekistan, with technical support from UNICEF, as a model for the practical application of the concept of integrated early childhood development. At the time of the evaluation, the project was being expanded from the original 13 *Makhallas* in Fergana, Tashkent and the Republic of Karakalpakstan to a total of 57 *Makhallas*, or 15 per cent of the total number of *Makhallas* in the three regions. The evaluation was conducted at this critical point in order to assess achievements and identify lessons that would inform government decisions on possible scaling-up of the approach.

36. **Summary of design and methodology.** The evaluation was conducted in all three 'FEP regions' through interviews with a selection of key stakeholders, including volunteers, families, trainers, partners, donors, NGOs, government

officials and UNICEF staff. Data and information were triangulated with 13 focus group discussions and with direct observation of training programmes, community events and visits to kindergartens — at state, *Makhalla* and family levels — as well as to resource centres and corners, in all three regions. A qualitative evaluation guide was developed, addressing key result areas related to inputs, processes and output. Evaluation findings were assessed against project objectives and available quantitative district-level data.

Findings, lessons learned and recommendations

37. The study concluded that FEP was a unique model in CEE/CIS, as it aimed not only at increasing local knowledge but also at developing a culturally appropriate response to early childhood care. FEP is an example of how families and communities, when empowered with individual and organizational skills, can respond to the needs of young children. The project's most notable tangible result was its success in demystifying health knowledge and placing children's educational and psychosocial needs at the heart of the community. This was achieved because instead of speaking only to mothers, FEP addressed whole families and communities. This was found to be very appropriate in the Uzbek context, where children grow up in large extended families. By involving all members of the family, FEP targeted underlying family relationships and norms. It addressed such traditional 'gatekeepers' as mothers-in-law and included men (fathers and grandfathers) in child-rearing, involved mothers in decision-making and encouraged mothers and children to access available health and education services. In terms of health services, FEP sensitized caregivers and decision makers to the need for mothers and children to use available health services at health points and polyclinics. The use of community volunteers as educators also contributed to the project's easy acceptance and visibility.

38. As a result of this initiative, in Karakalpakstan many families wrote to government officials asking for (and receiving) kindergarten services. Information gathered by the evaluation indicated that families and communities clearly understood the concept of the FEP integrated approach to early childhood development. Volunteers and families reported changes in behaviour related to all the health, cognitive and psychosocial messages.

39. The evaluation also analyzed the project's goals and objectives in the context of global and national-level priorities and concluded that the project is indeed aligned with national priorities. In terms of coverage, however, although FEP had good outreach in the pilot *Makhallas* (covering 54 per cent of families), overall coverage was very low (6 per cent). The project was found to be weak in terms of efficiency, to have poor monitoring and evaluation components, including a lack of a solid baseline data, and to need to enhance sustainability by linking with other programmes.

40. The evaluation therefore strongly recommended that both government and UNICEF programme managers needed to design a sustainable strategy to address the health and educational needs of children aged 0-3 and 3-6 years. This strategy must clearly be inserted within available and proposed government programmes, and must integrate FEP training into relevant ongoing training, thus maximizing coverage in a cost-effective manner. In order to provide practical suggestions on how this could be done, the evaluation mapped ongoing initiatives of other major

players in the same field. It recommended concrete steps for a rapid scaling-up through positioning FEP within initiatives of partners such as the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and WHO.

41. **Use made of the evaluation.** The Uzbekistan FEP is one of the most original approaches in the region, as it works very closely with and through community members. This evaluation was used as an important input into a FEP Congress where scaling-up, streamlining and improving effectiveness were considered by key players in the field, including government counterparts. The evaluation provided much-needed evidence to enhance the understanding of UNICEF and its partners of potential synergies and methods to respond to the needs of young children in Uzbekistan.

Evaluation of the Active Learning Project in Serbia and Montenegro¹

42. **Rationale.** In the recent past, primary education in Serbia and Montenegro has been mainly based on traditional schooling, with lecturing the predominant teaching method and students being primarily passive. The curriculum was overloaded and content-driven, and teaching itself focused on delivering factual knowledge as prescribed in the various school subjects. Additional knowledge and skills that are necessary for living and working in the modern world were largely unavailable to children through the school system, as was building up a life-long approach to learning. Ten years of under-investment in the education sector, conflict and ensuing economic sanctions and isolation further eroded new ideas and progress in teaching. As a result, children suffer from poor learning achievement and low motivation and increasingly are dropping out of school. Students in primary school acquire less than 50 per cent of the basic knowledge necessary for furthering their education.

43. Cognizant of this problem, the Ministry of Education and the Institute of Psychology of the University of Belgrade proactively initiated the Active Learning Project, in cooperation with UNICEF. The long-term goal of the project is to improve teaching and learning methods in primary schools by promoting approaches that emphasize pupils' participation. The active learning methodology aims to improve the quality and relevance of education for all children in a learning-centred, participative and child-friendly environment.

44. **Summary of design and methodology.** The objectives of this evaluation were: (a) to assess the concept, implementation and effects of the Active Learning Project, primarily on teachers as main actors responsible to carry out the education sector reform; (b) to evaluate the project's potential to contribute to a national strategy on quality Education For All; (c) to recommend short-, medium- and long-term measures for the integration of project strategies into the education system by key government stakeholders; and (d) to demonstrate effective results that would

¹ In a letter dated 3 June 2006, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations informed the Secretary-General that following a referendum held on 21 May 2006, the National Assembly of Montenegro had adopted a Declaration of Independence and that the Republic of Serbia would continue the membership in the United Nations of the former state union of Serbia and Montenegro. The Republic of Montenegro was subsequently admitted to membership in the United Nations on 28 June 2006. The evaluation discussed in the present report was completed in 2004, and therefore covers the former state union of Serbia and Montenegro.

garner support among national and international actors with respect to teacher training, project implementation, evaluation and funding.

45. The evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and included a desk review, open and structured questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, field visits and case studies. A national sample of 1,500 teachers, trainers and inspectors completed questionnaires. Case studies of selected schools were undertaken to assist in questionnaire design and subsequently to corroborate data collected through the questionnaires.

Findings, lessons learned and recommendations

46. The evaluation found that the programme had a positive impact on one of the root causes of system failure — a cultural and institutional resistance to change by the main responsible authorities in the education system, including key actors in the inspection and advisory services. This was the result of a major capacity development approach by the Government: as many as 20,000 education officers, representing 56 per cent of all elementary teachers in the Republic of Montenegro and 15 per cent in the Republic of Serbia, have been fully trained by the project. Including teachers who received the first part of the active learning training package, a sizeable 30 per cent of all teachers in the country were trained by this initiative.

47. The evaluation found that the active learning methodology was applied, in varying degrees, in as many as two thirds of classes. As a result, improved creativity, group work, questioning and critical thinking among students were observed, as were better student-teacher relations and school environments.

48. Perhaps the most important and relevant lesson learned was that the project worked through the extensive network that makes up the education system. Partnering with education professionals and public officials in the field and strategically positioning the initiative with local, national and international stakeholders represented a successful systemic approach that ensured relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. This recently became apparent when the Government, through the well-developed network of committed teachers, could use the formal endorsement of active learning not only to continue the project but to expand it through the system of model schools and the development of new modules to support education of the most disadvantaged, despite some structural changes at the Ministry of Education in the Republic of Serbia.

49. **Use made of the evaluation.** The draft evaluation report was presented and discussed with the Government and all major actors in education, ensuring a high degree of ownership of its findings, as demonstrated by the current level of implementation of the detailed recommendation plan included in the evaluation report.

50. Following the evaluation results and recommendations, the project has provided some significant contribution to the education reform process: (a) the curricular reform training in both Republics has incorporated elements of the active learning training package; (b) the regulations governing professional development and pedagogical supervision now include essential elements of active learning; and (c) in the Republic of Serbia, the active learning training package is both accredited and recommended by the Ministry of Education.

51. The financial analysis of the project concluded that the cost per beneficiary (\$47) compared favourably to similar projects implemented in the country. Nevertheless, the estimated cost of scaling up the project — approximately \$2 million — constitutes a challenge. In the Republic of Serbia, teachers' professional development is decentralized, resulting in financial difficulties for poor municipalities where more needy children live. The country programme therefore refocused its strategy and role in order to help the Government to address these obstacles. In 2006, UNICEF began to support municipalities in prioritizing education within local plans of action and municipal budgets, with a view to increasing access to education for the most disadvantaged. In addition, also based on the evaluation's recommendations, the Ministry received support to develop a system to evaluate students' performance and learning achievements as a way to measure the benefit of the active learning initiative on children. The Ministry is already piloting this system in the 2006-2007 school year, with the aim of incorporating it in the education reform.

Regional thematic evaluation of the Global Education Project in Central Asian countries

52. **Rationale.** Children in the five Central Asia Republics have suffered from similar effects of the rapid social and economic changes of the first decade of transition: high school drop-out rates; deteriorating quality and motivation of teachers; and declining quality of education due to low public expenditures in the sector. Under the auspices of the Central Asian Education Forum, UNICEF supported four Central Asian Governments — those of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan — with the Global Education Project, a strategic partnership between the Ministries of Education of the four countries, the University of Plymouth (United Kingdom) and a number of NGOs.

53. The Global Education Project aims to improve the quality and relevance of basic education in Central Asia by mainstreaming across the curriculum such themes as democratic citizenship, health, multiculturalism, child rights, peace, human rights and social justice. It also seeks to renew learning and teaching through the implementation of interactive and participatory methodologies within the classroom, in out-of-school learning and in teacher training. Underpinning the whole approach are the twin objectives of building students' competencies for active and responsive citizenship and building the capacities of teachers so they become facilitative, flexible and reflective practitioners.

54. After four years of piloting the project, this formative evaluation (covering 106 schools with 3,490 pupils) took place mid-way through the initial phase, and was commissioned in order to assess the project's current contributions to the education sector in the four countries. The objective of the evaluation was to assess the project's potential to be mainstreamed and to provide recommendations for future directions and position within the Governments' ongoing education reform processes.

55. **Summary of design and methodology.** The evaluation was based on the principles of participation and cooperation, combined local and international expertise and cross-fertilized academic expertise with field and project expertise. It used the four evaluation criteria of the OECD Development Assistance Committee: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

56. The evaluation design adopted the case-control methodology, using 22 schools as a control group. In total, 5,087 questionnaires were completed by school directors and assistant directors, teachers, students and parents. Interviews were carried out with 71 key informants, such as representatives of Ministries of Education and major development partners, and through 37 focus group discussions. Class visits were also conducted to corroborate the interpretation of the questionnaires.

Findings, lessons learned and recommendations

57. The evaluation found that the project is contributing to the incorporation of a human rights perspective education. The project is relevant and aligned with the priorities of national and international partners in the Central Asian educational context.

58. In terms of its effectiveness, the comparison between the project and control schools showed that global education provided professional growth to some 700 teachers at an individual level, but did not contribute to change some causes of system failure in education systems. These include the lack of an enabling environment for serious reform planning, resistant bureaucracies and curricular mandates that do not facilitate innovative teaching techniques. The strong respect for rigid former instructional methods among many teachers and school administrators represent an additional attitudinal factor to be addressed.

59. The evaluation found that the global education project, although implemented in a limited number of schools, contributed to broadening awareness and practice of participatory and child-centered methodologies in the four countries. However, the project should have better complemented efforts from other actors in the education system. The evaluation also concluded that the outcomes of the pilot phase could provide useful inputs to a sector-wide pedagogical reform supported by all development partners. After four years of implementing the pilot phase, core outcomes of the pilot Global Education Project at school level need to be mainstreamed into the larger policy reform, and expensive international technical assistance should be significantly reduced. The Education Forum held annually by Central Asian countries offers an opportunity to discuss with other partners, including development banks, modalities for mainstreaming global education in national education systems.

60. **Use made of the evaluation.** The Global Education Project has the potential to contribute to the ongoing policy debate on education reform in Central Asia. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, the process of accrediting of global education appears to be near completion, with the Academy for Education already indicating its support for the accreditation process. In Tajikistan, there is also potential for the project to contribute to the policy debate, although this process has repeatedly been affected by administrative changes in the Ministry of Education.

61. The evaluation's findings were validated and disseminated during an international conference in Kyrgyzstan attended by 60 government officials, development partners and global education project stakeholders from the four Central Asian countries. Key stakeholders subsequently used the evaluation recommendations to prepare country-specific and concrete action plans.

Institutional assessment on the responsiveness of service providers to violence against children in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

62. **Rationale.** The Millennium Declaration calls for countries to protect the vulnerable, especially children, from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation, a right enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Most countries in the region are currently engaged in reform of child protection systems with support from UNICEF and in cooperation with such major stakeholders as the European Union, the World Bank and major NGOs. However, it is acknowledged that one of the major failures and challenges of the child protection system is the weak responsiveness of service providers to identify, report and respond to violence against children.

63. Violence against children is to large extent a hidden problem. The TransMONEE database reveals that in the CEE/CIS region, 3 of 100 children under five years of age died from causes related to violence and poisoning. This data represents only the most extreme cases of violence — the tip of the iceberg — and it is highly probable that violence against children is much more widespread. In the absence of systems to identify cases of violence, many cases go unreported and children are exposed to violence without ever receiving any assistance and support. Violence is also believed to be associated with other child protection problems. Children exposed to violence are more likely to drop out of school, run away from home and end up working or begging in the streets or become victims of trafficking. Failure of systems to identify early signs of violence and to respond to them leave children unprotected and at the margin of development.

64. In the context of the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children, countries in the CEE/CIS region are being supported in collecting accurate data on the situation and forms of violence against children, and in upgrading of services and professional skills to improve protection of children from violence. Adequate standards for protection and recovery of child victims of violence are also being promoted. This institutional assessment was designed to provide the knowledge required to inform policy changes and reforms of national child protection systems in the region in order for Governments to more effectively protect children against various forms of violence.

65. **Summary of design and methodology.** The objectives of the study in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were to: (a) assess the capacity of the child protection system to identify and respond to cases of violence against children; and (b) test a methodology for collecting baseline data for measuring progress in the responsiveness of the child protection system, to be scaled up later in other countries.

66. The study included an institutional assessment of official records and interviews with different service providers at the local level, covering 278 institutions. All child protection services (residential institutions, detention and correctional facilities, reception and transit centres for children in conflict with the law), centres for social work and health facilities were assessed. Schools, including pre-schools, and police stations were surveyed through the selection of a 20-per-cent and 50-per-cent random stratified sample, respectively. Data were collected through quantitative and qualitative research tools.

67. **Findings of the study.** The study revealed that general social services and child protection services fail to report and respond to cases of violence against children. A total of 1,403 cases of violence were recorded by the sample of service providers in the previous 12 months. The majority of cases, 404 reports, came through social work centres, followed by specialized child protection services and police stations. School reports count for only about 10 per cent of total cases and the health centres for fewer than 4 per cent of total recorded cases. The Office of the Ombudsperson for Children reported only 10 cases (fewer than 1 per cent) in the same period of time.

68. About 44 per cent of all institutions stated that they do not officially record cases of violence and of institutions that do record cases, 58 per cent reported that their actions are ad hoc, i.e., without guidance from any official regulations or documents. Education and health institutions are the weakest in terms of having official criteria that guide appropriate actions in cases of violence, with only one quarter of educational institutions and fewer than one third of health institutions basing their actions on official documents. Police stations and state-run centres for social work are better regulated, with 90 per cent of such facilities reporting that their actions are based on official documents such as the Criminal Code, the Law for Social Protection and internal by-laws on conducting services from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

69. About 60 per cent of institutions had no knowledge of specific mechanisms (e.g., guidelines or protocols) that regulate the referral of cases of violence against children to appropriate service providers or about actions taken in response to reports of violence. Only 11 per cent of all institutions knew if the cases of violence against children had been resolved.

70. The survey results concluded that there is a significant gap in officially regulated criteria for recording, referring and treating cases of violence against children. In addition, there are no mechanisms for cooperation among institutions dealing with child victims of violence, or for monitoring and evaluating the quality of services provide to affected children and their families.

71. The results confirm that laws do regulate protection of victims of violence and penalties for perpetrators of violence, but say nothing about the systematic identification, recording and referral of cases of violence against children. It also found that state obligations to protect children from all forms of violence are neither adequately translated into legal standards nor supported by official regulations or guidance on criteria for identification, referral and reporting of violence.

72. **Use made of study results.** In late 2006, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy will organize three regional workshops for professionals from the social services sector to seek their inputs and recommendations for follow-up actions. It is expected that proposals will focus on amendments to laws so they articulate clear mandates and obligations of different sectors (especially health, education, social welfare and justice); on the formulation of guidelines, regulations, protocols and standards for different service providers; and on the development of relevant competencies for concerned professionals.

73. The pilot methodology is being tested and rolled out in other countries in the region, in order to support Governments in improving their national child protection policies and systems.

Evaluation of the family support and foster care project and the prevention of infant abandonment and de-institutionalization project in Georgia

74. **Rationale.** Institutionalization of children continues to represent a significant state strategy to mitigate family poverty. Even with the region's rapid economic growth, the number of children who are separated from their biological families continues to increase. Poverty reduction strategies have not yet produced the necessary support for families and children at risk.

75. Although there is still a long way to go to make an impact on de-institutionalization, current reforms of the child-care system appear to have favoured the development of family-based care options as an alternative to institutionalization, as the proportion of children placed in alternative care is increasing in comparison to those placed in institutions.

76. UNICEF has been supporting Governments in the de-institutionalization process through different strategies since the end of 1990s. In order to assess progress and gather knowledge that will benefit countries undertaking reform of their child protection systems, a review of UNICEF support to child-care system reforms was undertaken. The objective of the evaluation was to assess the ways in which UNICEF-supported approaches to prevention of child institutionalization, such as establishment of alternatives and decision-making mechanisms, have influenced overall systemic change and policy reform.

77. **Design and methodology.** Two projects in Georgia were selected as a purposive sample and representative of UNICEF support to the de-institutionalization process: Prevention of Infant Abandonment and Deinstitutionalization (PIAD); and Family Support and Foster Care. Both projects share complementary the objectives of preventing children at risk from entering residential care, and de-institutionalizing children who are already there by: (a) addressing the causes of child abandonment; and (b) creating family-based care alternatives and family support services.

78. The Family Support and Foster Care project was initiated in 2001 by the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science and covers five regions in the country. The project's components included employment and training of Georgia's first cadre of social workers, development of foster care and adoption services, cash assistance to vulnerable families and foster parents, material assistance and counselling.

79. The PIAD project was initiated in 2002 by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science, with the intention of building upon Family Support and Foster Care services, but with a specific focus on children under the age of three years. The project included hiring and training of social workers, delivery of an integrated package of services (including a shelter for mothers and infants), employment and business support, material assistance, counselling and mediation, fostering, adoption and family reintegration arrangements.

80. The evaluation used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Field instruments included a desk review of documents; 34 semi-structured interviews with key informants in the Tbilisi, Batumi and Kutaisi regions; five focus groups with social workers in the same regions; and a questionnaire administered to a sample of mothers benefiting from the projects' preventive services in Tbilisi.

Findings of the evaluation and lessons learned

81. The evaluation confirmed that the explicit aim of the two projects was not to reduce significantly the number of children in public care at the national level, and found that both the Family Support and Foster Care and the PIAD projects had introduced good models for the development of a different decision-making system. This includes examples of how to address difficult child-care cases in the best interest of the child, through making available to the child and his/her family a continuum of services instead of residential care. This involves linking them to various counselling, parental skills training, day-care centres and advice on family allowances. To operationalize this model, it was found necessary to develop a first cadre of social workers in Georgia, in addition to sound case management practices and standards for child-care services that are becoming the basis for national reform of social protection systems. In addition, the Family Support and Foster Care project pioneered the creation of regional multidisciplinary decision-making panels, comprised of child psychologists, teachers, health officers and experts from the justice system and commissions of minors. This is promising mechanism for transparent decision-making following the principle of the best interest of the child. The PIAD project has introduced a “service package” as an innovative practice to efficiently respond to the complex needs of children and their families.

82. The projects have contributed to the development of an integrated system to deliver high-quality services as an alternative to residential care. The ability of EveryChild — the main project partner — to meet requests of the Ministry of Education and Science and its willingness to further develop public sector capacities was a central element in making Family Support and Foster Care services part of the government system. However, in the case of PIAD, the comprehensive package of services was found to be beyond the Government’s means at this point in time. It was noted that the Government did accept the project’s recommendations but found the component of the package related to employment services too ambitious, due to the limited capacity of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs and the lack of targeted employment policies in Georgia.

83. The projects were found to have made good progress in partnering with major stakeholders, including the European Union, especially in supporting the Government to establish the Inter-ministerial Commission on Child Welfare and Deinstitutionalization, and the development of standards for alternative child-care services.

84. A number of challenges remain for the reforms of different sectors responsible for child-care services, however. The definition of institutional mandates and accountabilities for the provision of various types of services is in progress. There is still no clear indication of which services will be considered ‘statutory’ (i.e., the responsibility of the Government) and which ones would need to be outsourced. In the meantime, priority needs for family and children at risk remain unmet, such as day-care centres or services for children with disabilities. The hasty closure of institutions before such alternative services are in place may have had a negative impact on child welfare. Weak inter-agency cooperation within the Government, particularly the insufficient involvement of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, are also hindering the development of an effective referral system. In addition, existing mechanisms for public funding of residential institutions and the

lack of employment alternatives for staff continue to provide incentives to institutionalization.

85. **Use of the evaluating findings.** Since 2004, the Government of Georgia is embarking on an accelerated agenda for the reform of the child-care system. The Ministry of Education has assumed overall responsibility for the reform and a technical working group for leading the work has been established. All NGOs active in social service provision and international partners, including the European Union Food Security Programme, UNICEF and the World Bank and, are participating in technical working groups. Components of good practices are being scaled up. The findings of the evaluation are also helping to define the UNICEF strategic niche in the reform process, not only in Georgia but also regionally.

Regional evaluation strategy

86. In April 2005, the Regional Management Team (RMT) endorsed a regional evaluation strategy aimed at improving the quality of knowledge produced by evaluations. A regional quality assurance system was developed to support UNICEF country offices to: (a) better plan their overall monitoring and evaluation activities within their annual integrated monitoring and evaluation plans (IMEPs); and (b) assure that UNICEF-supported evaluations are of good quality.

87. Some tangible results are already visible. The quality of multi-year and annual IMEPs has improved. There is more careful selection of fewer key evaluations and studies, and better linking of the knowledge gained to decision-making milestones in government reform processes and in country programmes. Similar patterns were observed in terms of reference for evaluations, which improved significantly, and it is therefore expected that the final reports that will emerge from this generation of evaluations will also be of better quality than those reviewed in the 2003 meta evaluation.

88. Based on an monitoring and evaluation needs assessment carried out at the end of 2005, a regional monitoring and evaluation capacity development strategy was also put in place. The UNICEF global monitoring and evaluation training package was translated into Russian for distribution and use by partners and national stakeholders. The curriculum and training materials for a one-week monitoring and evaluation training were developed and tested in the Russian Federation, and strategic information on new methodologies and external learning opportunities is being shared with monitoring and evaluation focal points. In addition, to facilitate access by country offices to good external evaluators, a regional evaluation roster was established. The roster, composed of experienced individuals and institutional consultants, allows country offices to search for consultants based on their professional experience by MTSP area and country of experience in the region.

89. It is now well understood that the role of the evaluation function in the region should be geared towards systematically increase the ability of Governments to link lessons learned from project evaluations to national programmes and policies. As part of the regional strategy, in 2006 the Regional Office further developed partnerships with several key international, regional and national stakeholders. The International Programme Evaluation Network (IPEN) was supported throughout the year and UNICEF is now a member of the IPEN Board of Trustees. The regional office worked together with the Eurasia Foundation, the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS), the International Organisation for Cooperation in

Evaluation, the International Program for Development Evaluation Training, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank to support the International Consultation on Evaluation Capacity Development Strategy in the CIS. The office was also able to contribute to the first IDEAS regional workshop on country-led evaluations and systems in Prague and to the bi-annual conference of the European Evaluation Society in London.

90. To support Governments in their ongoing efforts to develop national monitoring and evaluation systems for their own development priorities, several country offices are now contributing to their United Nations country teams to develop *DevInfo*-based monitoring systems. Technical and financial assistance to Governments was also provided, in partnership with other United Nations agencies, to carry out a third round of multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) in 12 countries and to add MICS modules to the Demographic and Health Surveys in three countries. These household surveys have collected data disaggregated by gender, age, region, urban or rural residence and income, providing the necessary data for policy formulation.

91. The RMT decided to review progress on the implementation of the regional evaluation studies on an annual basis. The next review will be carried out at the October 2006 RMT meeting, where a strong consensus is expected to support major efforts on further strengthening and professionalizing competencies in evaluation in a few larger and more strategically positioned country programmes in each subregion. This strengthened function will enable the region and selected country offices to conduct thematic evaluations which will demonstrate in critical programme areas which changes in public administration systems and social service delivery can effectively be implemented to increase benefits for children living in marginal groups who find it hardest to access and afford basic packages of services and social assistance schemes. This will be particularly important as a preparation to the 10 mid-term reviews scheduled to take place in the region towards the end of 2007, which the region intends to use to better position country programmes as supportive and critically contributing to ongoing government reform efforts.
