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Draft country programme document**

Romania***

Summary

The draft country programme document (CPD) for Romania is presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comments. The Executive Board is requested to approve the aggregate indicative budget of \$2,250,000 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and \$7,700,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the period 2010 to 2012.

* E/ICEF/2009/8.

** Submission of this document was delayed because of the need for internal consultations.

*** In accordance with Executive Board decision 2006/19, the present document will be revised and posted on the UNICEF website, along with the results matrix, no later than six weeks after the discussion of the CPD at the annual session of the Executive Board. The revised CPD will then be presented to the Executive Board for approval at the second regular session of 2009.

| <i>Basic data</i> [†] (2007 unless otherwise stated) | |
|---|-------|
| Child population (millions, under 18 years) | 4.2 |
| U5MR (per 1,000 live births) | 15 |
| Underweight (% , moderate and severe, 2002) | 4 |
| Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, 2006) | 15* |
| Primary school enrolment/attendance (% net, male/female, 2003/2006) | 93/93 |
| Survival rate to last primary grade (% , 2005) | 94 |
| Use of improved drinking water sources (% , 2006) | 88 |
| Use of improved sanitation facilities (% , 2006) | 72 |
| Adult HIV prevalence rate (%) | 0.1 |
| Child labour (% , children 5-14 years old, 2000) | 1 |
| GNI per capita (\$) | 6 150 |
| One-year-olds immunized with DPT3 (%) | 97 |
| One-year-olds immunized with measles vaccine (%) | 97 |

[†] More comprehensive country data on children and women are available at www.unicef.org.

* The 2005 estimate developed by WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA and the World Bank, adjusted for underreporting and misclassification of maternal deaths, is 24 deaths per 100,000 live births. See www.childinfo.org/areas/maternalmortality.

Context and challenges for children and women

1. Romania joined the European Union (EU) on 1 January 2007. This followed a pre-accession period that saw many reforms in the fields of justice, child protection, trafficking in human beings and other areas linked to the EU *acquis communautaire*. The reforms coincided with an economic boom that made the Romanian economy one of the fastest-growing in Europe. The poverty rate declined from 35.9 per cent in 2000 to 13.8 per cent in 2006. By late 2008, however, the global financial and economic crisis had already begun to have a major impact.

2. Among the most significant reforms was progress on deinstitutionalizing children in public care and the establishment of a foster care system. As a result, the number of children in residential care in 2008 declined to approximately 25 per cent of pre-reform levels. The Government established a progressive legal framework, developed a national strategy and created a national coordination structure that facilitated a network of actors to support reform. A shift towards a stronger 'gate keeping' mechanism ensured that fewer children entered institutional care while a continuum of services was put in place to support families.

3. A law on promotion and protection of child rights was enacted in 2005. This led to approval by the Government of a national strategy to realize the rights of children as well as preparation of operational plans that encourage integrated, cross-sectoral approaches to identify at-risk children and prevent them from entering the childcare system.

4. The health of the Romanian population has improved over the past two decades, as evidenced by a drop in the under-five mortality rate from 22.6 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 15 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2007. Yet

challenges remain, especially in improving access to quality health services in rural areas, where standards lag behind urban areas.

5. In 2004, only 16 per cent of infants were exclusively breastfed during the first six months of life. By the end of 2008, the country had no certified baby-friendly hospitals, although a few hospitals had started implementing the standards set by UNICEF and the World Health Organization. This situation is a proxy for the continuing challenge of health reform.

6. While the HIV prevalence rate is less than 0.1 per cent, the incidence of infection among young people aged 15-29 years has increased. Concern is growing about HIV infections among high-risk groups, including most-at-risk adolescents. A large number of infants were infected with HIV between 1986 and 1991. These children have mostly survived, thanks to an effective response by the Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Now numbering around 7,500 and largely in the 17-19 year age group, they are in need of life skills and support as they enter adulthood.

7. The EU pre-accession period was a major engine of reform, resulting in a platform for advancing social and administrative progress. The Government has adopted a framework for supporting social inclusion through the National Development Plan 2007-2013 and the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013. These emphasize provision of integrated services supporting social inclusion services and ensuring equal opportunities for all, with a particular focus on vulnerable persons.

8. The Roma are generally recognized as the most socially excluded population in Europe, and Romania has the largest Roma population on the continent. A major step has been taken in scaling up education access to Roma children. However, the poverty risk among the Roma remains four times higher than among the majority population. According to a recent study by the Soros Foundation, 23 per cent of Roma had no education whatsoever, and a further 27 per cent had only a primary education. Only 20 per cent of Roma children attend pre-school, compared with 52 per cent of non-Roma children. Among the Roma, 3 per cent of births are not registered, compared with 0.9 per cent of births among the non-Roma population.

9. Romania has embarked on public administration reforms, including decentralization of services to the county level. However, the lack of professional and administrative capacities to plan and implement child services in many of the country's 41 counties is a challenge. Local authorities and NGOs have also faced difficulties accessing EU structural funds for improving living standards. Decentralization introduces new administrative and budgetary rules and practices that hinder implementation of the many new laws, policies, programmes and strategies adopted as part of the reform of the child care and social protection system.

10. NGOs, part of a burgeoning civil society, have been active in many aspects of reform. However, the post-accession arrangements make EU funding difficult to obtain for these organizations, and other sources of financial support have been hampered by the economic crisis. As a result, a number of NGOs have found their survival threatened. The shrinking national NGO sector is a concern, as such organizations have played an important role in modelling innovation and as advocates for children.

11. In 2007, Romania submitted its third and fourth periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child for consideration at its mid-2009 session. The reports recorded considerable progress made since submission of the previous State report in enactment of legislation for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The reports also articulate remaining challenges.

12. UNICEF opened an office in Romania in 1991 to help to respond to the extremely difficult situation of children at the time. Since then, indicators of child well-being have improved considerably, widespread reforms have taken place, and standards are increasingly modelled on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and EU criteria. The time has now come for UNICEF to transform its engagement in line with the current situation of children and the new realities of Romania. UNICEF has gradually changed the emphasis of its assistance from service delivery to policy and system reform. In parallel, the office has developed a resource mobilization capacity. The challenge now is to consolidate the progress for children and transform the UNICEF partnership to a new model of engagement.

Key results and lessons learned from previous cooperation, 2005-2009

Key results achieved

13. The 2005-2009 programme supported the Government through the important period around accession to the EU. It aimed to consolidate key reforms and build capacities in health, education and child protection.

14. In child protection, UNICEF supported the development of a legal framework, policies and strategies. National Plans of Action for the prevention of child abandonment, child trafficking, child labour, child abuse and sexual exploitation were adopted. Minimum quality standards for services and implementation guidelines were developed and implemented for children in residential care, children with disabilities, victims of trafficking, children living on the street and children below the age of criminal responsibility. The programme has established models of good practice for reducing abandonment at birth, which have had a significant effect.

15. Early learning and development standards were developed, and the national pre-school curriculum for children under seven years old was revised. A National Integrated Parenting Strategy and a National Strategy on Mental Health for Children 0-7 was drafted. Early childhood education was adopted as a national priority in 2008.

16. Support was provided to build capacities at central and local levels to promote education of Roma children. This included the development of a bilingual pre-school curriculum and a set of manuals for the Romany language, history and traditions, benefiting approximately 260,000 Roma children. The Government policy of desegregating education for Roma was strongly supported. Local capacities to manage early marriage and pregnancy in Roma communities were built through a new community-based model of intervention. A national strategy for combating violence in schools was also adopted.

17. Efforts to implement the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative were intensified to address the low rate of exclusive breastfeeding and to reform practices and improve

standards of care in maternal and child health. Hospitals that started implementing baby-friendly standards reported a significant drop in the number of abandoned babies.

18. Since 2005, the UNICEF office has achieved success in mobilizing resources locally for children through partnerships with the private sector and through fundraising events. Fundraising also helped in creating networks to support advocacy efforts. In only four years, the funds raised grew almost sevenfold, and the efforts strengthened links with the private sector and helped to raise awareness of children's rights among the public.

Lessons learned

19. An important lesson learned is that policy reform must be accompanied by administrative and fiscal reform to ensure that policies are implemented, especially at the decentralized level. While decentralization brings services closer to the people and makes local authorities more accountable to the population, it also requires well-established administration and governance. Building capacities and fully anchoring reforms take time. Uncertainties in shifting responsibility for budgeting and costing also hinder implementation.

20. A 2008 evaluation of a UNICEF-supported community-based services programme underlined that implementation at the local level is hampered by shortages of trained personnel, low staff motivation and incentives, inadequate infrastructure, and poor management of data and information. Substantial gaps were identified between policy objectives and the funds available for their implementation. Strategies aimed at strengthening local capacities to address social inclusion and child protection become critical at the current stage of public administration reform.

Framework of cooperation, 2010-2012

Summary budget table

| <i>Programme</i> | <i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i> | | |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------------|--------------|
| | <i>Regular resources</i> | <i>Other resources</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| Partnerships for social inclusion | 1 800 | 6 500 | 8 300 |
| Resource leverage and mobilization | 150 | 900 | 1 050 |
| Cross-sectoral costs | 300 | 300 | 600 |
| Total | 2 250 | 7 700 | 9 950 |

Preparation process

21. Preparation of the new cooperation document involved discussions with the Government and other partners, including a formal midterm review, as well as close consultations with the United Nations country team. The midterm review looked beyond the current country programme towards a new three-year partnership between the Government and UNICEF focusing on advocacy, social inclusion and the gradual development of a UNICEF National Committee.

Goals and strategies

22. Relations between Romania and UNICEF enter a new phase with this country cooperation document. The coming three-year period will see a consolidation of efforts to ensure sustainability of reforms under way in child protection, health and education. It will also lead to the evolution of the UNICEF engagement in the country.

23. The strategic intent of the cooperation is to reduce disparities identified as the central target of the social inclusion agenda in Romania, with particular attention given to children in poverty and the Roma minority. Completion of child care system reform is a key goal, along with refining and institutionalizing mechanisms to track progress on child rights and linking them to policy.

24. Access to key services such as health and education will be expanded to embrace excluded children through the identification of barriers to participation and targeted interventions. The strategy will emphasize analysis and documentation of mechanisms of exclusion. Best practices will be identified, shared and scaled up through alliances with national academic and policy institutions.

25. The programme will focus on consolidating gains and building capacities at regional level to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of policy implementation for social inclusion of marginalized groups and for child protection, especially in underserved areas. These efforts will also aim to mobilize more resources, including through building regional and local capacities to access EU structural funds. The partnership will draw on communication for development approaches focusing on advocacy and social mobilization for effective social change. The strategy will also include measures to strengthen cooperation on cross-border concerns, including child trafficking, children of migrant workers and HIV/AIDS.

26. Capacities to monitor child rights will be strengthened, as will with research aimed at providing evidence and arguments for greater investment in children, with a focus on excluded groups. Partnerships with national and local institutions will promote the leveraging of resources for children.

27. Concurrently, UNICEF will continue building its local fundraising capabilities, moving gradually towards a new form of future engagement with Romania in the form of a UNICEF National Committee, subject to a viability assessment at an appropriate time during the cooperation period. While initially focused on raising resources for UNICEF activities in Romania, the emphasis will gradually shift towards fundraising for UNICEF programmes in poorer countries. It will be accompanied by public awareness-raising on child rights issues in Romania and elsewhere. UNICEF will also support the country's official development assistance priorities for children by facilitating the sharing of best practices in the international arena.

28. Mobilization of the public, civil society and community-based organizations and the private sector in support of local and international causes will be advanced. In the final year of the programme, the future mode of UNICEF engagement will be assessed in consultation with Government and other partners.

Relationship to national priorities, United Nations cooperation and international priorities

29. The United Nations Cooperation Framework for Romania for the period 2010-2012 is the strategic instrument for the programming of operational activities of the United Nations agencies in Romania. This cooperation partnership has been developed in the context of the National Development Plan 2007-2013. It is also consistent with other national priorities set out in the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, the National Pact on Education and the Strategic National Report Regarding Social Protection and Social Inclusion. The partnership is also closely aligned with national priorities in support of EU policies and instruments. In addition, the programme corresponds to the priorities of Romanian foreign policy and the National Strategy on Overseas Development Cooperation.

30. The cooperation partnership is directly linked to focus area 5 of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan on policy advocacy and partnerships for children's rights, and has been developed in the context of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The programme is also guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and supports implementation of article 2 on non-discrimination; article 4 on commitment to undertaking appropriate legislative and administrative measures; and article 42 on raising awareness regarding fulfilment of children's rights. It also supports EU priorities such as the revised Lisbon Strategy on the elimination of disparities and the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

Areas of cooperation**Partnerships for social inclusion**

31. The Government social inclusion agenda aims to eradicate child poverty, overcome discrimination and increase the integration of ethnic minorities.

32. The progressive laws, policies and strategies for children adopted in recent years still need to be fully implemented. The social inclusion agenda offers a strong framework for these. Capacities will be built to identify and position the principal elements remaining to be established, including the costing of services and recruitment and training of key managerial and professional staff at county level.

33. Focus will be on promoting inclusion of the Roma child. Sharing of best practices and linking outcomes of model projects to national systems will contribute to knowledge of 'what works' in policies. This will help to address exclusion through the strengthening of birth registration, early learning, parent education, and access to quality services for Roma children and families. This includes school attendance of Roma and other disadvantaged children. Strong emphasis will be placed on early childhood development, pre-school and primary education since these are the main pathways out of vulnerability, poverty and exclusion.

34. Progress on child care reform has been substantial, yet it remains incomplete. An enhanced public/NGO partnership will ensure that the highest standards and accountabilities are embedded in all areas and levels of the child protection system. The public sector regulatory framework for oversight and quality assurance will be strengthened. Collaboration with NGOs will be strengthened to provide quality services and innovation as part of the evolving system. UNICEF will play a convening and advocating role, promoting adoption of best practices and sharing the experience of Romania with other countries.

35. Successful models addressing disparities and ensuring equitable basic services at community level in early childhood development, better parenting, health reform through the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, and child protection will be scaled up to national level. The cooperation will also contribute to strengthening the capacity for prevention of HIV among the most-at-risk adolescents and other vulnerable groups at national and decentralized levels.

36. Child rights monitoring mechanisms and improved data analysis will contribute to a better understanding of issues to be addressed and will inform national interventions. Capacities will be built for the collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data on child poverty and well-being to strengthen analysis of the determinants and impact of economic and social deprivation on children. Civil society networks and academic centres will influence policies and actions to increase access to quality basic social services and resources, including through the leveraging of EU structural and cohesion funds.

37. Progress towards system reform and social inclusion needs to include sound budgetary policies. A key result of the cooperation includes better data analysis for budgeting and costing of services benefiting children. Monitoring and oversight mechanisms for financial allocations and expenditures will contribute to transparent and participatory fiscal decentralization.

38. Increased awareness and dialogue around children's issues will help national authorities as well as key line Ministries and national agencies to ensure that full capacities are deployed to eliminate social exclusion. A communication for development strategy will aim to reach families with key knowledge on better child care, parenting and child development.

Resource leverage and mobilization

39. Long-term partnerships with the private sector, media, civil society organizations and prominent individuals will aim to create an alliance for children across Romanian society and to ensure the sustainability of social inclusion initiatives. This will also contribute to the mobilization of resources for sustained investments in improving the situation of excluded and disadvantaged children. Such efforts will be particularly important if State resources are constrained as a result of the economic downturn. Strengthened partnerships will lead to advocacy for budgetary adjustments that protect children during a difficult economic period.

40. Private individuals and businesses will be targeted in efforts to mobilize resources for the 'other resources' component of this cooperation partnership. Building on increased public trust and greater UNICEF brand awareness in the country, resources raised will be gradually shifted towards international programmes and the country's official development assistance strategies and programmes.

41. **Cross-sectoral costs.** For both areas of cooperation, this will include salaries and travel of cross-sectoral staff and related costs of office furniture and equipment, as well as communication.

Major partnerships

42. The maintenance and enhancement of strong partnerships for child rights are at the core of the programme. The main partner is the National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights, which has statutory responsibility for coordinating

children's rights issues across all Government ministries and agencies. Key partners in addressing poverty and exclusion will be the National Commission for Social Inclusion and the Social Inclusion Directorate of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection. The National Institute of Statistics will be a key partner in collecting data for evidence-based advocacy, monitoring and evaluation. Close working relationships will continue with the Ministries of Health and Education, Research and Innovation in the promotion of parenting, early childhood development and school attendance. Regular coordination with the National AIDS Commission and the National AIDS Centre will be essential in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Maintaining close working relations with the Ministry of Administration and Interior will be important in intensifying partnerships with local authorities, especially those facing the greatest challenges to social inclusion. Relations with the National Agency for Roma will also be enhanced.

43. UNICEF will continue its partnership with the Federation of NGOs for Children, which has around 100 member organizations, as well as relevant NGOs outside the federation. Collaboration with the World Bank will continue, especially in monitoring changes to the situation of children caused by the financial and economic crisis. Within the context of the United Nations Cooperation Framework, UNICEF will continue working closely with the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other United Nations agencies. In working to leverage and mobilize resources, UNICEF will expand its network of private sector supporters and continue to foster close relations with the media.

Cooperation modalities

44. Monitoring and evaluation will include research, studies, surveys, evaluations and assessments against key indicators. Baselines will be established in each main area of cooperation and progress will be measured against established benchmarks through an independent evaluation and monitoring system. Joint annual reviews will be held with the Government.

45. A new basis for cooperation and partnership will be developed with the Government at the end of 2011, as appropriate. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights will have overall responsibility for coordination of the cooperation for Romania.