

Terms of references

Evaluation of the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan for the reform of the residential childcare system, 2007-2012

Background

In 2006 Moldova officially launched its child care reform. This aimed to establish a network of community social assistants, develop family support services and alternative family placement services, and reorganise residential child care institutions. The Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child was created and further transformed into the Ministry of Labour, Social protection and Family (MLSPF), with responsibility for child care reform.

The National Strategy and Action Plan for the reform of the residential childcare system, 2007-2012 (hereinafter "National Strategy and Action Plan") was approved by the Government of Moldova. The National Action Plan comprises the following components

1. Changes in the legislative and policy environment
2. Development of a community and family based services
3. Capacity building of professionals
4. Transformation of the residential care
5. Redirection of financial sources from the residential care to a community based care services
6. Monitoring and evaluation
7. Social mobilization and communication of the change

As the Government of Moldova is presently planning to develop a new strategy for a wider reform in the field of child and family protection, there is a need to have external evaluation to assess the impact of the existing childcare reform on the life of children, to better understand strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of the NAP for further adjustments and development of new strategy. It is expected that the result of this evaluation will substantially inform the process of elaboration of the above mentioned strategy.

The overall objective is to evaluate qualitative and quantitative results and achievements of the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan for the reform of the residential childcare system during 2007-2011 in relation to the planned objectives.

The specific objectives are:

- To provide insight into the current status of the childcare system reform and strategic recommendations for the next steps in the reform process relevant for all engaged stakeholders.
- To assess the position of the National Strategy and Action Plan for the reform of the residential childcare system and links with overall reforms of the child care system
- To evaluate the impact of the reform on children's life, especially the most vulnerable ones

Scope and focus

The scope and focus of the evaluation takes into consideration the following criteria and evaluation questions:

- assessing relevance / To what extent the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan responding to the priorities in overall social and child protection reforms?

- To what extent the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan timely and relevant for development of new policies and legislation?
- To what extent does the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan respond to the needs of the target groups?
- To what extent and how the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan took into account the results of the previous efforts as a basis for planned interventions?
- Were the objectives of the National Strategy and Action Plan set realistically to be achieved in a given period of time?

- assessing effectiveness / To what extent does the implementation of the reform of the residential childcare system meet the outcomes as defined by the National Strategy and Action Plan ?

- Have the planned results been achieved to date (quantitative and qualitative)?
- To what extent and how did the implementation of the reform of the residential child care system respond to the changing external conditions and unplanned (both positive and negative) effects relevant to the planned results? What strategies have been used to take into account a changing environment? Were these strategies successful?
- To what extent did the implementation of the reform of the residential child care system contribute to decreasing the number of children in residential care?
- To what extent did the implementation of the reform of the residential child care system contribute to increasing ratio of the children in family substitute services versus those in institutional care? What do children themselves think about improvements in this matter (has there been improvements? What/what not? Etc). Have the necessary standards / amendments to the relevant by-laws been developed?
- To what extent has the implementation of the reform of the residential child care system contributed to the realization of the rights of children in the social protection system?

- assessing sustainability / To what extent are the outcomes achieved, sustainable?

- What is the level of ownership within the Government and what are the prospects for further development of related interventions after the end of external support? To what extent have relevant target groups (the ministries, experts, NGOs, beneficiary groups) been involved in the implementation of the reform of the residential child care system, including monitoring?
- How well are activities related to implementation of the reform of the residential child care system contributing to institutional capacities of involved actors / stakeholders? To what extent have the national human (professional / expert) resources at both national and local level been empowered to continue transferring knowledge?
- What is the financial / economic viability for sustainability of National Strategy and Action Plan outcomes?

- assessing efficiency / To what extent did the management of the implementation of the reform of the residential childcare system ensure timelines and defined were kept to?

- How well have the implementation of reform of residential child care system been managed? To what extent are activities implemented as scheduled, how flexible was the management of the reform of the residential care in adapting to changing needs?
- How well have the financial resources been used?
- Did the management of the reform of the residential care ensure co-ordination with other similar interventions to encourage synergy and avoid overlaps?

- assessing impact /To what extent and in what way did the implementation of the reform of the residential child care system succeed in improving the situation of children, especially the poor, vulnerable and marginalised ones?

Additional criteria to be used assessed to the extent possible are as follows:

- Coverage: Which vulnerable groups of children have been reached? Have vulnerable children been reached, including girls, children from low-income families, ethnic minorities, children left behind due to migration etc.?
- Coordination: How the coordination mechanism were defined and divided between the Government, UNICEF and NGO partners. What was the role of the MLSPF and Ministry of Education and other key actors in coordination of the activities? What was the role of UNICEF and other donor agencies?
- *What do the children in residential care and children reintegrated into biological and other family solutions think themselves in terms of improvements of their situation, especially the poor, vulnerable and marginalized? What has been improved and what has not been improved? What are their recommendations for the future in this regard?*

In addition to this, the following approaches and issues should be considered:

Assessing human rights-based approach and relevant cross-cutting issues / To what extent do the project outcomes contribute to achievement of children's rights and to what extent have they contributed to addressing key cross-cutting issues?

- Does the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan actively contribute to the promotion of child rights?
- To what extent and how the National Strategy and Action Plan ensures a non-discrimination and equity focus?
- Is the National Strategy and Action Plan, the National Strategy and Action Plan , gender_sensitive?

Use of the evaluation results

The evaluation results will be used widely: by the Government of Moldova and its partners in measuring the impact of the child care reform and planning its next phase; by UNICEF in preparation for the new country Program (2013-2017).

Existing information sources – see Annex 1.

Evaluation process and methods

The evaluation methodology will be guided by the Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)¹. The evaluation methodology will be further defined by Evaluation Team and will cover desk review, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with national and local stakeholders, NGOs, families and children, combined with the field visits to residential services and visit to families. More emphasis will be placed on the learning dimension of the assessment.

Scope and focus

Nation wide scope - with focus on geographical areas where the National Strategy and Action Plan at the institution level is modelled.

Stakeholders' participation

This is joint Evaluation of the Government of Moldova, UNICEF and NGO partners involved in the implementation of the National Strategy and the Action Plan. During the Evaluation, the respective Ministry will lead the process with logistical support by Terres de Hommes NGO and technical guidance of UNICEF.

Confidentiality: evaluators should be sensitive to beliefs and act with integrity and respect to all stakeholders. In the report evaluators should ensure confidentiality of information regarding individual children. Evaluators may not share findings with media in Moldova or abroad concerning individual children or individual institutions.

Evaluation team composition and qualifications

Evaluation team will be composed from an international expert and a nationally based NGO - Terres de Hommes (Losanne)..

The requirements for international consultant are listed below. The local based NGO has a proven expertise in evaluation of projects, policies, formulation of sector plans, planning of programmes and coordination of research work and will assist the international expert in conducting evaluation.

The Evaluation Team will in the inception phase develop a detailed methodology and a plan of evaluation. The consultant will use the desk review to get familiar with the policy basis, relevant project documents and deliverables of the Project. Existing information sources will be made available to the consultant.

The international consultancy involves 33 working days, including 13 working days in country (2 missions) involving field visits to project regions and 2 validation meetings with counterparts (an interim and the final).

Accountabilities

Key tasks that Evaluation team is responsible for carrying out are:

¹ UNEG Norms:
<http://www.uneval.org/indexAction.cfm?module=Library&action=GetFile&DocumentAttachmentID=1491>

UNEG Standards:
<http://www.uneval.org/indexAction.cfm?module=Library&action=GetFile&DocumentAttachmentID=1496>

- Develop more detailed evaluation methodology and work plan – draft to be submitted to UNICEF for approval, including key instruments.
- De-briefing meeting with UNICEF and other partners
- Prepare the draft report with key findings, recommendations and lessons learned based on all sources of information used
- Based on feed-back provided by UNICEF and partners prepare the final report with all key findings, recommendations (including prioritisation of key strategic recommendations² followed by development of management response developed in close cooperation with UNICEF and stakeholders) and lessons learned following the UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards.
- Prepare presentation and two pages of key findings
- Organize a round table on the final report with relevant stakeholders

The International Consultant will be responsible for guiding the evaluation process:

- The development of methodology and evaluation plan and ensuring that inputs provided by the the national consultant and feed-back provided by UNICEF are integrated into final evaluation work plan to be submitted to UNICEF;
- conducting desk review of selected documents / reports in close cooperation with the national consultant;
- conducting field-visit and interviewing key stakeholders / beneficiaries in close cooperation with the national consultant, including taking the key role in preparing for and realizing debriefing with UNICEF and key partners; This would be at initial stage only to develop a model of field work for the national consultant.
- analyzing all the inputs and writing the draft report with inputs provided by the national consultant;
- integration of comments / feed-back given by UNICEF and partners into the final evaluation report.

Responsibilities of the local team / Terres de Hommes NGO:

- Assist in the preparatory work of the appraisal in advance of the arrival of the international expert in Moldova
- Assist the international expert in the design of the questionnaires for the interviews (if any);
- Collect and select project documents for evaluation;
- Coordinate and support evaluation activities: focus groups, meetings, etc;

² ***Prioritization of strategic recommendations***

The following should be clearly stated in the Evaluation report (i) the intended use (how the evaluation process and results will be used and by whom), and (ii) prioritization of key strategic recommendations.

- Requirements for effective evaluation recommendations
1. To ensure programmatic and technical relevance, key stakeholders should be consulted during the development of recommendations.
 2. The evaluation team should highlight key strategic recommendations, suggesting an appropriate sequencing in the implementation of recommendations whenever possible.
 3. Recommendations should be firmly based on evidence and analysis.
 4. Recommendations should clearly identify the specific operational units/offices/divisions responsible for its implementation. (If this hasn't been done it should be done in the response

- Brief the international expert about key relevant issues of the national child care system;
- Gather relevant information and organize this information in English and Romanian ;
- Propose specific recommendations for the respective Ministries, stakeholders;
- Comment on the intermediate and final evaluation reports and provide inputs as appropriate;
- Organize the logistics and accomplish other tasks to assist the international expert as required.
- Translate the report into Romanian, have it designed and printed in 2 languages, organise launch

UNICEF programme staff will be accountable for reviewing/approving the evaluation methodology and intermediate and final evaluation results.

Qualifications

The competencies required from the members of the Evaluation team are the following:

- Technical expertise in child protection;
- Experience of conducting project and programme evaluations;
- Good communication and presentation skills / ability to express concisely and clearly ideas and concepts in written and oral form;
- Experience in working with UN / UNICEF (desired);
- Knowledgeable of UN evaluation policy;
- Ability to keep with strict deadlines.

The qualifications and skill areas required from the international consultant include:

- Advanced University degree in related field.
- Expertise in the area of child protection
- Extensive evaluation expertise and experience;
- Proven knowledge of the region;
- Team leadership competencies;
- Excellent report writing skills;
- Excellent written and spoken English;
- Knowledge of Romanian and/or Russian would be an asset;

The qualifications and skill areas required from the consultant provided by the Terres de Hommes NGO:

- University degree in related field
- Proven knowledge of the child care; system in the country
- Experience in project evaluations would be an asset;
- Excellent written and spoken Romanian, fluency in English.

Supervision arrangements

The evaluation (supervision of an international expert and guidance to the Terres de Hommes NGO will be managed by the UNICEF Country Office,- Child Protection Team, supervised by the Chief, Child Protection Section with technical and methodological support of M&E Officer. The management of the evaluation will include development of the terms of reference, assignment of the evaluation team, liaison between the evaluation team and partners / stakeholders involved, as well as quality assurance of the report.

Tentative Timeframe and Tasks distribution for International consultant

Time	Tasks	International Consultant
December 2011	<i>TOR finalized and reviewed by Regional Office</i> <i>Final TOR forwarded to potential institutions/consultants for bidding, bids / applications received</i> <i>UNICEF Internal process for International consultant/ contract preparation and signature</i>	
January 2012	Detailed methodology and work plan elaborated	2 working days
January 2012	Desk Review	7 working days
February 2012	First in-country mission: Field visits, additional collection interview with professionals, beneficiaries and interim validation of the findings (meeting with the stakeholders)	10 working days in-country mission
March 2012	Draft Evaluation Report prepared in English	7 working days
March 2012	<i>Draft Report reviewed by Country Office and shared with Regional Office for review and comments</i>	
April 2012	Final Report prepared, comments from Country Office and Regional Office incorporated (including PPP and key findings summary)	4 working days
April 2012	Second in-country mission Presentation of the final findings/validation round table / Final Report disseminated / Launch	3 working days in-country mission
Total		33 working days

Procedures and logistics

Time frame for this work assignment is from December 2011 until April 2012.

For international consultant UNICEF premises will be available during the time spend in Moldova if needed. UNICEF will provide printer, photocopying services, and other similar services. It is expected that consultant will bring her/his own laptop.

It is expected that the Terres de Hommes NGO will provide all logistics related to the evaluation, including meetings and field visits.

Any specific information - regarding work schedule considerations, special procedures, for example on security and travel conditions will be provided by UNICEF.

Products and payments for International consultant

- Draft evaluation report in English (including findings, conclusions and recommendations) – end of March 2012
- Final evaluation report fully complies with UNICEF standards and is approved by UNICEF, including executive summary and PPP (in English) – by end of April 2012

An international expert will be paid 30 % in advance for the work and 70% after the completion of the final products mentioned above. UNICEF will pay for all related in country mission travel expenses and provided DSA during her/his time in Moldova.

Terres de Hommes NGO will be responsible for translation of the report in in Romanian and printing.

The report (in both its format and content)- will have to comply with the UNICEF-adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standards and criteria of UNICEF Global Evaluation Report Oversight System (GEROS) Review, which will be made available to the Evaluation Team at the beginning of the consultancy. The report will have to contain an assessment of the evaluation methodology, including its limitations and will not exceed 120 pages including Annexes.

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/outputs are incomplete, not delivered for failure to meet deadlines.

Description of official travel involved:

The consultancy will involve travel to Moldova. Prior to starting the assignment, the selected candidate must undertake Basic Security in the Field e-training.

Annex 1

Legislation and Government documents

- National Strategy and Action Plan for reforming residential care system (2007-20012)
- National Development Strategy
- Law on Child Rights, No 338-xiii of 15 December 1994
- Family Code Nr 1316-XIV from 26 October 2000 (extracts)
- Available official statistics on the situation of children and reports from the Government

UNICEF documents

- Assessment of the child care system in Moldova ,UNICEF 2009
- Child Abandonment in the Republic of Moldova, UNICEF 2006
- At home or in a home, UNICEF RO 2010
- UNICEF Country Program Document (2007-2012) and Mid-Term evaluation (2009)
- Committee on the Rights of the Child , Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention, Concluding Observations, second and third periodic report of the Republic of Moldova, CRC/C/MDA/CO/3, 2009