

EDUCATION SECTION  
PROGRAMME DIVISION



# CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

## CASE STUDY: MACEDONIA

UNICEF 2009

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**DEVELOPING CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS IN  
THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA:  
A CASE STUDY**

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**22 December 2008**

## ACRONYMS

<b>BDE</b>	Bureau for Development of Education
<b>CEE/CIS</b>	Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
<b>CFS</b>	Child-Friendly Schools
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>EMP</b>	Education and Modernization Project
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product
<b>KPA</b>	key performance area
<b>KPI</b>	key process indicator
<b>LOI</b>	language(s) of instruction
<b>LSBE</b>	life skills-based education
<b>MICS</b>	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
<b>MoES</b>	Ministry of Education and Science
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PIRLS</b>	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
<b>PISA</b>	Programme for International Assessment
<b>SSE</b>	school self-evaluation
<b>TIMSS</b>	Third International Mathematics and Science Study
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund

## CONTENTS

<b>CONTEXT</b> .....	5
<b>Overview</b> .....	5
<b>Issues and education challenges</b> .....	5
<b>Current situation</b> .....	8
<b>PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION</b> .....	9
<b>Overview of the Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) programme</b> .....	9
<b>The development of Child-Friendly Schools in Macedonia</b> .....	10
Starting out: Setting the standards and creating partnerships .....	10
Revealing the gaps: Conducting a baseline study .....	11
Developing a strategy .....	13
National level .....	13
<i>Developing CFS policies and legislation</i> .....	13
<i>Curriculum development and review</i> .....	13
CFS principles in the curriculum .....	13
Life skills-based education .....	14
Effectiveness analysis in numeracy and literacy .....	14
Multiculturalism and violence prevention .....	15
Local level: School pilot .....	15
<i>Selecting schools and developing the CFS structure</i> .....	15
Selecting pilot schools .....	15
Forming project teams and working groups .....	15
Delivering content .....	16
<i>Child rights sensitization workshops</i> .....	16
<i>School self-evaluation and school-based workshops</i> .....	16
<i>Activities for school-based change</i> .....	17
Sustainability and scaling up .....	19
<b>OUTCOMES</b> .....	20
<b>CFS initiative outputs and outcomes</b> .....	20
CFS infused into policies and legislation .....	20
School-level outputs .....	20
<b>IMPACT OF THE CFS INITIATIVE</b> .....	21
<b>ANALYSIS</b> .....	23
<b>FUTURE DIRECTION</b> .....	26
<b>Vignette: Teachers and pupils learn to analyse and understand gender</b> .....	29
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	31

## **A CASE STUDY OF CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS IN MACEDONIA**

### **CONTEXT**

#### **Overview**

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,<sup>1</sup> in the heart of the Balkan region, is a country with a long and rich history. A landlocked nation bordered by Kosovo, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania, Macedonia's mountainous terrain has long been a crossroads for both traders and conquerors. More recently, Macedonia has worked hard to encourage global trade and to take the steps necessary to join the European Union.

In 1991, Macedonia, the poorest of Yugoslavia's republics, was recognized as an independent country. Although Macedonia's ethnic Albanians called for autonomy, major violence was avoided. The resulting 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement now provides the basis for a stable, multi-ethnic society, with improved civil rights for minority groups and two official languages: Macedonian and Albanian. Political divergence occurs sometimes between political parties, and in 2004, parliament approved redrawing local boundaries and granting greater local autonomy in predominantly Albanian areas (UNICEF, 2008). Following elections in 2006, a process of decentralization was initiated, devolving authority to 84 municipalities.

Macedonia has a population of approximately 2 million people,<sup>2</sup> of whom 64.2 per cent declare themselves to be Macedonians and 25.2 per cent declare themselves as Albanians.<sup>3</sup> Smaller ethnic minorities include Turks (3.85 per cent), Roma (2.7 per cent), Serbs (1.78 per cent), Bosnians (0.84 per cent), Vlach (0.48 per cent) and others (1.04 per cent). The majority of the population, 64.7 per cent, belong to the Macedonian Orthodox Church; other Christian denominations comprise 0.37 per cent. Muslims comprise 33.3 per cent of the population. Most Albanians, Bosnians and Turks are Muslims, as are a minority of the country's ethnic Macedonian population. Most of the Albanian ethnic minority live in the western part of the country, and little ethnic mixing exists outside urban centres such as Bitola, Kumanovo and Skopje.

Like other countries in the region, Macedonia is going through a period of transition to a free, market-based economy. The process has been prolonged and accompanied by relatively high unemployment despite a relatively well-educated population and rich farmland and mineral resources. Moderate economic growth has meant rising concern with issues of child poverty; 66.6 per cent of households with children were reported as poor in 2005 (UNICEF, 2007).

In March 2004, Macedonia applied for full membership to the European Union (EU). As part of its ongoing membership expansion efforts and in recognition of Macedonia's progress with regard to the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the EU granted Macedonia candidate status in December 2005. As yet there is no fixed date for commencing negotiations. In accordance with the Copenhagen Criteria for EU membership, the main challenges for Macedonia include achieving stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy; the rule of law; human rights; and respect for, and protection of, minorities (UNICEF, 2008: 19).<sup>4</sup>

#### **Issues and education challenges**

Issues of access to education in Macedonia primarily affect poor children, children from certain ethnic groups and older children bound for or enrolled in secondary school. Although marginalized children are affected most profoundly by issues related to educational quality, improving quality is a concern for the entire education system.

Macedonia is likely to achieve Millennium Development Goal 2, ensuring that all children will be able to complete primary school by 2015, because access to primary education is quite good. Recent data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) estimate that 95 per cent of children attend primary school, with no significant differences between girls and boys, rural and urban areas, or geographical regions (UNICEF, 2008). But access to any organized form of early childhood education is extremely low, at 10.7 per cent, and access to primary education falls off markedly for poorer children, especially for those whose mothers have low rates of education and for children from certain ethnic groups. Only 63 per cent of seven-year-old Roma children, for example, attend primary school. As the *UNICEF 2008 Situation Analysis of FYR Macedonia* aptly notes, “Limited educational access is both a symptom and a cause of child poverty.” (2008: 55).

Transition rates to secondary school are also lower for children in the poorest households, but completion rates worsen for all girls and boys in secondary school – as many as 40 per cent of teenagers do not finish secondary school. Not surprisingly, school leavers have a level of skills that is not on par with other countries of the EU and of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (UNICEF, 2008: 56).

Various indicators of educational quality point to the need for change in how the system attempts to achieve inclusiveness – serving the needs of *all* children with equity – enabling them to claim their right to a good education in a safe and healthy environment that allows and encourages their participation, in accord with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Macedonia ratified the CRC in December 1993 and has adopted international policies that call for inclusive education as a strategy to achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals. To date, however, reforms related to inclusiveness are grounded more firmly in policy than in practice. Conforming with the OECD categories of special needs education, i.e., students with disabilities, with difficulties and with disadvantages, Macedonia reports less than 1 per cent of children as having special needs. This falls short of the expected disability rate of 2.5 per cent, according to the European Academy of Childhood Disabilities. Local schools and communities do not have a system for tracking enrolment of local populations or for working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure EFA at the local level (UNICEF, 2007a). The situation is especially urgent for Roma, who have particularly low attendance and retention rates, corresponding to a long history of marginalization in Macedonia and across Europe. Compounding concern for the Roma is the comparatively high rate of growth among school-age populations and the disproportionate representation of Roma children in residential care facilities and special schools.

Low school effectiveness is another urgent challenge facing Macedonia. National scores on international assessments suggest that Macedonia’s education system as a whole is not effective and education is not achieving the expected learning outcomes. In a 2002–2003 survey comparing combined scores from three international tests – the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Programme for International Assessment (PISA) – Macedonia ranked the

lowest on absolute disadvantage of the nine countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) that participated.<sup>1</sup>

Macedonia is also among the lowest in the region in terms of average achievement and within-country differences. The results of the 2001 PIRLS, for example, indicate that Macedonian students' achievements differ with regard to their gender and language of instruction (LOI). Girls achieve better results compared to boys, and students whose LOI is Macedonian achieve higher results compared to students who study in Albanian (Naceva and Mickovska, 2003, cited in UNICEF, 2007a).

Although the intent of legislation is for children to study in their mother tongue, the number of qualified teachers varies dramatically by ethnic group (UNDP, 2004). The approximate student: teacher ratios are 15:1 for ethnic Macedonians, 20:1 for ethnic Albanians, 30:1 for ethnic Turks and 525:1 for Roma. These report data indicate that "it is difficult and yet possible for teaching to be conducted in the Albanian language, very difficult for teaching to occur in the Turkish language, and practically impossible in the Roma language."

Other challenges of educational quality include maintaining safe school environments and fostering respect for school property; doing more to ensure gender parity in achievement; finding ways to encourage students, parents and community members to be more involved in school support and management; and promoting awareness of children's rights and an appreciation of all ethnic cultures in Macedonia. Because of the ethnic separation that often exists in schools among both students and educators, as well as ethnocentric curriculum in two languages, little understanding and appreciation of minority ethnic communities exist (UNICEF, 2008).

Quality is compromised by a lack of resources (UNICEF, 2008: 57). What resources are available are stretched to capacity by demand for primary and secondary education. Schools are large and often overcrowded, and many facilities are deteriorating and in need of repair. There is widespread use of double shifting, and student-teacher ratios at both primary and secondary schools are higher than elsewhere in Europe. The number of hours a child spends in school has been linked repeatedly to educational quality, but Macedonia has the shortest instructional day of any education system in the region (World Bank, 2007). There are insufficient educational materials and inadequate levels of access to information technology education, despite the recent initiative to introduce computer hardware into every school. There is also a lack of incentives for teachers, with few opportunities for training and professional support.

An overview of the education budget provides insight into some of the reasons for the struggle to provide quality education. Over the past seven years, approximately half (44–57 per cent) of total budget expenditures for education have been allocated to primary education, but more than 85 per cent of these funds were used for salaries, which suggests that improving educational quality is not receiving the attention it deserves (UNICEF, 2008). Although data on funds actually spent in the education sector are not available, information on planned expenditures for 2001–2007 suggest a generally positive trend, with funding increased by 38 per cent. As a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), funding for education peaked at more than 4.5 per cent in 2003 and then fell to 3.5 per cent of the GDP in 2006. Since then,

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of absolute disadvantage refers to being at a low level of achievement relative to a common international benchmark.

funding levels have increased, and by 2008 they had reached 6 per cent – so the Government has surpassed its target of allocating 5 per cent of the GDP to the education sector by 2010 (Perezniето, P., and Uzunov, V., forthcoming). Attention must now be given to ensure that funds are allocated to these urgent matters of improved quality.

Implementing reforms across the system has been hampered by some administrative inefficiencies and frequent changes in political leadership. In particular, reforms introduced through donor-assisted projects tend to be short-lived. When projects end, the reforms themselves tend not to be systemically sustained. As a result, most of Macedonia's more than 400 central primary and secondary schools are still characterized by traditional, teacher-led methods and centralized, fact-based curriculum. Although transitions from one government to the next have been peaceful, frequent changes of government may result in unfinished education priorities from one government overlapping with new priorities and new solutions to education problems in the next. The capacity of the Bureau for the Development of Education (BDE) – the organ of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) directly responsible for curriculum, assessment, and teaching and learning in schools – is often stretched severely.

## **Current situation**

Macedonia's MoES is attempting to address issues of educational access and quality through its strategic goals. These goals include ongoing efforts related to decentralization; improved access to education for the more vulnerable groups of society; improvement in the quality of learning and the relevance of education; establishing standards for school effectiveness; and attaining more efficient resource allocation while improving educational outcomes.

In a November 2008 address, the recently appointed Minister of Education and Science stated the priorities of the Government elected in July 2008. "Knowledge is strength, knowledge is power" is the banner statement, and related priorities include obligatory secondary education; Information and Communication Technology; and inclusive education (Stojanovski, 2008). The latter includes the provision of books in 2008–2009 as a stimulus measure for children from families who are recipients of special welfare donations from the Government of Macedonia and the MoES, and inclusion of children with disabilities so they can remain and study in primary and secondary schools. As of 2008, free textbooks are also to be provided for all students through high school. The Computer for Every Child project is also part of the National Strategy for the Development of Education, 2005–2015.

There is an ongoing shift in the education system towards a culture of evidence, transparency and accountability (UNICEF, 2006). Before 1991, for example, the assessment of students and the granting of school diplomas was left to teachers and schools. With decentralization, Macedonia has recognized the need for standards, targets and performance monitoring. One indication of this has been its participation in international assessments such as TIMSS, PISA and PIRLS. Another is the establishment of a new assessment authority in the MoES and the considerable progress that has been made on reforming the Matura/Baccalaureate examination.

The largest reform education initiative to date is the Education and Modernization Project (EMP), introduced to assist the Government in its efforts to improve the quality of learning and to develop an efficient and decentralized education system. With support pledged by the World Bank for 2005–2009, the project provides an agreed framework for donor support and has two major components: improving education quality and participation, and capacity building for decentralized education. By the time CFS was launched in 2006, the EMP had introduced 322

of the country's schools to the restructuring process. As of 2008, the reforms had been introduced in all schools and municipalities.

Included in implementation of the EMP was the restructuring of in-service training for teachers, which was placed in the hands of service providers. In an effort to increase relevance and incentives at the school level in keeping with the decentralization reform, schools were given budgets and options to choose what topics and which service providers they wanted for training. Given the choice, during first years of the EMP schools largely selected Information and Communication Technology and English for in-service training. The quality of in-service provision through this mechanism often revealed a low capacity among the in-service providers. Ongoing concern for low scores on international assessments, for limited in-service training capacity, and for schools' lack of attention to in-service training in literacy, science and mathematics compelled the MoES and its donor partners to search in 2008 for ways to ensure system-wide training in specific types of in-service training for teachers in these critical areas. This is one of the several systemic concerns in which the Child-Friendly Schools initiative is able to make an important contribution.

## **PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION**

### **Overview of the Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) programme**

The CFS approach to education reform is grounded in a commitment to each child's right to an education of high quality. In Macedonia, child-friendliness is defined in terms of these dimensions of education: (1) inclusiveness, (2) effectiveness, (3) health, safety and protection in school environments, (4) gender responsiveness and (5) involvement or participation of students, parents and community members in the life and work of the school and the community. Given its socio-historical context, Macedonia added a sixth dimension that other countries have considered as part of inclusiveness: respect for children's rights and multiculturalism. By design, these six areas correspond to the major areas of access and educational quality facing Macedonia. Viewed together, the six dimensions offer a vision of high-quality education towards which the education system can move, and the CFS initiative overall provides a way of helping schools reach the quality standards set within each of the dimensions.

An agreement between the MoES and UNICEF in 2006 to move towards a CFS approach in education aligned well with the timing of the Education and Modernization Project. Through the EMP, the Government had made strides towards increasing the participation of various stakeholders – teachers, principals, other school personnel, parents, community members and municipalities – in the operation of the school. The EMP provided a structure for addressing issues related to quality and for moving towards decentralization. The EMP, however, was designed to allow schools (and the school system) to figure out on their own what the gaps were and to decide on their own the standards of educational quality to which they would aspire in each of seven categories. In contrast, the standards or outcome indicators of the six CFS dimensions established norms and set high standards to which schools can aspire to improve the quality of the entire education system.

During the first three years of the CFS initiative, more than 11,000 individuals were touched by the CFS pilot school initiative. Nearly 5,000 individuals benefited from the pilot project in the first five schools (4,534 students, 287 teachers and school personnel, and 150 parents and community members). More than 6,600 individuals experienced some dimension of the CFS

pilot in the additional five pilot schools (6,202 students, 364 teachers, principals, pedagogues and psychologists, and approximately 150 parents). With the introduction during Year 2 of CFS principles into the national law on primary education and into the curriculum, and with the introduction of life skills-based education (LSBE) into the primary school curriculum, all primary school children in Macedonia will benefit from the CFS initiative during the years ahead. The leveraging of additional resources will take place in 2009 as UNICEF and the BDE work together with the World Bank and the EMP to implement the training of trainers and of all Grade 1–3 teachers in literacy and numeracy to improve educational quality in 2009.

Funding of the CFS initiative to date has come almost entirely from UNICEF Headquarters' thematic funding for girls' education and basic education, and from the Government of Norway. The BDE has also contributed, and each year is contributing increasingly more of its human resources for design and implementation of the CFS initiative, especially related to professional development activities and capacity building. It is also contributing material resources such as meeting facilities to the ongoing work.

## The development of Child-Friendly Schools in Macedonia

“It was very important that we started out by using the CFS Framework (i.e., the six dimensions further divided into standards [outcome indicators], key performance areas and process indicators) to create a vision of the direction in which education should be reformed. Because we had the vision based on the framework, the next steps for reforms made sense.” – UNICEF Education Officer, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

### Starting out: Setting the standards and creating partnerships

As the UNICEF Education Officer observed in the above quote, the CFS framework, which articulated six dimensions of Child-Friendly Schools for Macedonia, provided a solid foundation for the development of CFS in the country. Conceptually, the framework offered a way for stakeholders in schools *and* for stakeholders at the national level to think holistically and comprehensively about the various components of education reform that the comprehensive baseline study examined systematically in 21 schools.

Where did the framework and the standards come from? UNICEF identified a team of individuals from the MoES and from area universities, including experts in child rights and in child-centred pedagogy, to be part of Macedonia's national CFS team. This team built on and used the materials and experiences of other countries in developing CFS. Particularly useful for developing its vision and standards was the manual *Assessing Child-Friendly Schools: A Guide for Programme Managers in East Asia and the Pacific* (UNICEF, 2006), which offered a menu of items from which to select what would be appropriate for Macedonia.<sup>5</sup> An invitation to participate in a CFS workshop in Thailand provided the opportunity to observe and talk to educators and visit schools in a country where Child-Friendly Schools had been functioning successfully for more than a decade. The Thai model was a good example of CFS in action for Macedonia for many reasons, including the Thai ministry of education's strong sense of ownership in the process. In addition, CFS principles are mainstreamed in the country's education strategy; there is active family/community participation; and CFS components are well developed.

Thailand and other countries began the CFS process by developing and implementing a Student Management Information System together with the school self-evaluation. The Macedonian national team realized that for the concept to be understood and accepted in their context it would be important to show in very practical terms what a Child-Friendly School was, how it could be achieved, and how it could be measured. So the team reviewed the outcome indicators, key performance areas and process indicators suggested in the *Assessment Guide* and adapted them for Macedonia. The resulting framework and standards provided the vision, and the study enabled stakeholders to understand the concepts in practical terms.

The outcome indicators were the broad standards to be achieved in each of the dimensions; the key performance areas (KPA) were the specific areas under each of the standards in which the school should be engaged; and the key process indicators (KPI) provided examples of products to be developed or concrete activities to be undertaken at the school level in order to achieve the standards prescribed in the KPAs. The team began this process by asking, “What concrete outcomes should be expected of a Child-Friendly School in Macedonia?” thus, developing a vision of CFS for Macedonia.

### **Revealing the gaps: Conducting a baseline study**

After constructing a collective vision of CFS in Macedonia, the national team proceeded with a baseline study. To guide its design, the national team asked the overarching question, “To what extent is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as expressed through the Child-Friendly School approach, included in the legislation, policy documents and programmes, in the actual teaching and learning process, and in administration of schools in Macedonia?”

The baseline study began with a comprehensive review of existing laws, guidelines and other documents, including tests, assessments, strategic considerations (e.g., EFA) and reports from other projects that had been conducted in the area related to the dimension. Next, the researchers divided into teams. They developed instruments to measure the various components under the key performance areas. Researchers conducted the baseline study in 21 schools, selected from among the schools that had previously carried out projects financed by UNICEF. They explored each of the six dimensions in four to nine schools. They interviewed key stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, parents, principals, school psychologists, school pedagogues) individually or in groups, administered questionnaires, reviewed school documents and spent time in classrooms. Afterwards, they analysed the data.<sup>6</sup>

The box below reproduces an example of the standards (outcome indicators), KPAs and KPIs, as well as the baseline study method of data collection and study findings related to policy under the ‘inclusiveness’ dimension, the key performance area of ‘all children attend school’ and the findings from the baseline study.

#### **A sample standard (learning outcome) for inclusiveness in a Child-Friendly School**

##### **Dimension 1: Inclusiveness**

Standard 1: *Equality among all children in the process of learning – all children are provided with equal conditions to participate in the teaching and learning process, regardless of their background or abilities.*

Key performance area 1: All children attend school regardless of their background or abilities.

Key process indicators (five components)

##### **Component 2: School capacities**

*Means of baseline data collection: Visual review of the school.*

Key process indicator, school capacities:

***The school facilities are physically accessible for all children.***

Baseline study findings: **Only one of the four schools visited is accessible to children with physical disabilities. The physical space of this accessible school (including the toilet) is on the ground-floor level only.**

Source: *Child-Friendly Schools: A situation analysis for FYR Macedonia* (UNICEF, 2007a).

Upon completion, the baseline study provided practical evidence of existing conditions and gave an overview of problems and gaps in the system. The framework and standards provided a vision of what a Child-Friendly School could look like and what it would mean for children, which enabled stakeholders to figure out how to take steps to move forward and to change the existing conditions.

The following are examples of the findings for each of the six CFS dimensions from the analysis of data from the school site visits:

*Dimension 1: Inclusiveness.* Some schools have made special provisions or created activities to accommodate and encourage attendance among vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities and Roma children. In general, schools lack inclusive education policies, do not create conditions to accept children with special needs and do not have cooperative relationships with the community to keep children with special needs in school.

*Dimension 2: Health, safety and protective environments.* Schools vary in their level of hygiene; only some schools have indoor water taps, toilet paper and soap. Schools that have security guards are generally perceived as safe by the parents and community, even though the guards may be unfriendly to children. There is a high tolerance of corporeal punishment among students, and schools do not discuss problems of sexual harassment and abuse. There is an implicit understanding of violence in schools, but there are no policies to define violence and proper student-teacher interactions, nor are there policies on alcohol, drug abuse, pornography and gambling.

*Dimension 3: Effectiveness.* Every school has at least a handful of teachers who practise child-centred teaching, and most teachers have attended some type of in-service training. But in general, learning processes are not child-oriented. Teachers plan for teaching but not for children's learning outcomes. The traditional model of teaching predominates. Low-achieving students are seldom encouraged, and students are rarely encouraged in individual thinking and problem solving. Only children with high marks usually participate in extra-curricular and out-of-school activities.

*Dimension 4: Gender responsiveness.* Both boys and girls have access to free school in Macedonia, and girls usually have better marks than boys. Yet textbooks and learning materials are marked by gender stereotypes, and there is no attempt to identify or correct gender insensitivities and bias in the materials. Teachers have not been trained to provide teaching with gender-sensitive content and approaches, and there is an absence of role models for girls and boys at different levels of schooling.

*Dimension 5: Participation.* Schools use little written communication, so decision-making and decisions can be difficult to trace. Parents sometimes participate in school activities and, technically, children may express their views in schools. But in general, schools do not have mechanisms that encourage parents and children to express their opinions and participate in schools. Students are not trained in democratic ways of expressing their opinions, and teachers often punish students who are perceived to express negative views.

*Dimension 6: Multiculturalism and respect for children's rights.* Despite the existence of a CRC curriculum and training for teachers on how to use it, confusion remains among children about their rights. Instruction is biased towards the ethnic group delivering it, and Macedonian children

have the least opportunity to learn about the culture, tradition and history of other ethnic groups living in Macedonia. Although space in ethnically mixed schools appears to be shared, 'good interethnic relations' are often considered to be the absence of open conflict between teachers and pupils from classes with different languages of instruction.

## **Developing a strategy**

Upon completion of the baseline study analysis, UNICEF and the national CFS team worked with individuals in the MoES, especially from the BDE, to formulate and to devise a strategy that included activity on both the national and the local level. On the national level, the team participated in and took advantage of the ongoing work in legislative change and curriculum development. On the smaller scale, i.e., at the school level, the national expert team, armed with the information from the baseline study, prepared a strategy for sharing the information with the pilot schools.

### **National level**

#### ***Developing CFS policies and legislation***

The strategy at the national level was to insert CFS principles and standards into national policy whenever and wherever the opportunity arose. In 2007 – the second year of the CFS initiative – the Macedonian Parliament adopted the revised Primary Education Law to introduce nine-year primary education starting in the 2007/2008 school year. With this, compulsory primary education in Macedonia was extended from eight to nine years. Subsequently, the BDE developed the *Concept for the New Nine-Year Compulsory Education* as the national strategy document that defined the basic principles, aims and organization of the new structure for primary education. Members of the CFS national team participated in the development of the document. Because they had recently completed the development of the CFS standards and baseline study, team members ensured that the document reflected the CFS principles based on the findings of the baseline study (*Concept*, p. 56).

#### ***Curriculum development and review***

##### CFS principles in the curriculum

The adoption of the new, nine-year compulsory education structure was followed by a revision of curricula in all subjects and the addition of new subjects. Senior-level experts who were members of the national CFS team participated in the second-level commission, which reviewed all curricula to ensure consistency with the CFS principles and dimensions outlined in the concept. In this document, CFS dimensions of inclusiveness and effectiveness in all subjects are ensured through the commitment to pursue an individualized approach in teaching and learning while taking into account each child's potential based on her or his age and intellectual, physical, social and emotional competencies. To improve teaching and learning, formative assessment is introduced in addition to summative assessment.

The curriculum envisages learning not only about one's own but also about others' cultural heritage, traditions, authors and heroes from the history of all ethnic communities living in Macedonia. This takes place through such compulsory subjects

as history, music, English language, literature and arts. New subjects, such as 'Learning About Religions' and 'My Country and Me', are about the religious and cultural traditions of all citizens of Macedonia and directly contribute to the main goals of the dimension on multiculturalism.

In several subjects, topics are included for the purpose of correcting gender stereotypes and contributing to the dimension of gender responsiveness. This especially applies to history, where the position of women throughout the country's history is planned as a theme of discussion. Also, more space is envisaged for making historically important women more visible.

Finally, life skills-based education as a compulsory subject and livelihood skills as an elective subject were added to the curriculum for the first time. The content and activities of these subjects contribute to three CFS dimensions: safe, healthy and protective environments; multiculturalism and respect for child rights; and participation.

#### Life skills-based education

Two international consultants who had worked extensively to help countries of the region develop LSBE curricula also worked with Macedonia over a 12-month period to develop its LSBE curriculum framework and the actual curriculum. The LSBE subject, which spans all five grades of primary school, has four strands: (1) 'Me' focuses on a child's personal development; (2) 'You and Me' focuses on interpersonal relations, such as accepting similarities and differences, establishing and maintaining relationships, dealing with emotions, communication, dealing with violent behaviour, and conflict resolution; (3) 'Others and Me' includes such topics as child rights, non-discrimination, cooperation and enduring social pressure. The fourth strand is made up of the two areas that contribute especially to the child's emotional and psychosocial development: (4) 'The Environment and Me' and (5) 'Health and Me'. Early grade teachers, together with primary school pedagogues and psychologists, received training in teaching the Grade 1–3 life skills-based education curriculum so they could begin teaching LSBE for the first time in 2008. Training for LSBE curriculum in the upper grades (Grades 4–6 and 7–9) was scheduled to take place in January 2009.

#### Effectiveness analysis in numeracy and literacy

The key components of the effectiveness dimension in a Child-Friendly School are literacy, numeracy and life skills. With the introduction of a new LSBE curriculum under way, the CFS initiative turned to concerns about numeracy and literacy. Miske Witt & Associates Inc. provided technical advice to UNICEF at various steps along the way and accompanied the national CFS team through the first phases of the process. A general concern about the low PIRLS and TIMSS scores for Macedonia sparked the interest of the MoES and donor partners in finding ways to improve children's learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy. In 2008, Miske Witt & Associates undertook a study of the literacy and mathematics curriculum for Grades 1–3 and presented it to the BDE and its partners on two newly formed advisory boards for recommended action. The analysis pointed to certain weaknesses in the curriculum as factors that may contribute to low PIRLS and TIMSS scores, for example, comparatively low expectations in early grade mathematics and little attention to comprehension in early

grade literacy. The changes that will be needed to improve children's learning achievement will require other changes throughout the system, for example, the development of system-wide standards with developmentally appropriate benchmarks and clear connections to student assessment as well as enhanced in-service teacher training in these areas.

#### Multiculturalism and violence prevention

As noted above, the absence of open conflict between teachers and students from classes of different LOI is often considered to constitute 'good ethnic relations'. The potential for conflict is always not far below the surface. Through joint planning and work with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in 2009, UNICEF, together with the other agencies, will contribute to critical change in improving inter-ethnic relations and dialogue through its work with CFS, municipal child rights commissions and beyond. Related to this is the prevention of violence in schools, an area the baseline study and subsequent workshops revealed to be a void in the current curriculum and in teaching and learning in schools.

### **Local level: School pilot**

#### ***Selecting schools and developing the CFS structure***

In addition to this foundational work at the national level, the second prong of Macedonia's CFS strategy was to work at the school level alongside students, teachers, other school personnel and parents to find concrete ways to create child-centred, Child-Friendly Schools.

#### Selecting pilot schools

Two important criteria in the selection of schools for the initial baseline study and for this pilot schools project were: (1) the location of the school and (2) the languages of instruction. Schools were included from the central city area of Skopje, from some peri-urban communities, for example, at the outskirts of Skopje, from other towns in both the eastern and western parts of the country, and from some villages. Also included were monolingual schools (with either the Macedonian LOI or the Albanian LOI) and bilingual/multilingual schools (Macedonian and Albanian LOI, or Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish LOI). The presence of Roma children in the school population was also an important consideration. Of the 21 schools selected for the baseline, all were invited to prepare a proposal and apply to become one of the five CFS pilot schools. All 21 schools applied and five were chosen, using the criteria described above. Schools that serve Roma children were eligible to participate in the CFS approach and received priority.

#### Forming project teams and working groups

The CFS approach in Macedonia works within existing structures, including the BDE and the EMP. It also requests the formation of new committees and working groups as needed at different levels of the education system.

For example, each of the pilot schools has formed a CFS steering committee and six CFS working groups, one for each CFS dimension. The CFS steering committee is composed of six teachers, one to head each working group, as well as the principal, the pedagogue and/or the school psychologist. The steering committee meets regularly to plan, implement and analyse the results of the school self-assessment and to develop, monitor and evaluate the school CFS action plan. Each teacher on the steering committee is also in charge of a working group. The working groups are responsible for bringing change into the classroom and at the school level related to a particular dimension.

To launch and to support the work at the pilot schools, a national CFS team was formed of senior and junior experts who had received training in CFS principles. (The senior experts had also conducted the baseline study.) These team members visited the pilot schools twice monthly, conducting workshops and meeting with teachers, students, parents and other school personnel. In the third year of the project, two national advisory committees were formed – literacy and mathematics – to provide guidance related to the efficiency dimension. These committees will review training materials and strategies to support early grade teachers in these two areas.

## Delivering content

### *Child rights sensitization workshops*

As with the introduction of the first Child-Friendly Schools in Thailand and the Philippines, the work in Macedonia's pilot schools began with a school-based workshop on children's rights.

The CFS national team designed weekend-long child rights sensitization workshops for parents, teachers and children. The workshops for the parents and the teachers were identical and included sensitization activities intended to develop both a sense of empathy and theoretical knowledge about the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The workshops for the children covered similar themes, emphasizing learning through experience.

In the first segment of the workshop, the participants took part in exercises that asked them to make the link between child rights violations in practical situations and adults' responsibilities to ensure conditions for respecting children's rights. In the second part, parents and teachers watched presentations delivered by children that illustrated situations from everyday school life in which child rights are violated. In most of the schools, children enthusiastically demonstrated the violation of child rights to teachers, although in one school some of the children were reluctant to present their project because they feared consequences from some of the teachers. The teachers and the parents received the theoretical information with interest but expressed some disagreement with responsibilities that they have in protecting child rights.

### *School self-evaluation and school-based workshops*

Macedonia's national law on primary education requires all schools to conduct a school self-evaluation (SSE). The Education and Modernization Project introduced a seven-part SSE, which EMP pilot schools had administered through its working groups using action research methods. Child-Friendly Schools built on and expanded the EMP tool. The SSE tool also builds understanding about CFS concepts and uses a participatory methodology. Macedonia's pilot schools, with assistance from the national CFS team, undertook the self-examination in May and June 2007. Administering the SSE brought in stakeholders from each school community – parents, teachers and children – and allowed them not only to contribute their ideas but to build consensus around what these concepts mean in their particular settings.

The school self-examination tool contains a list of external indicators related to CFS dimensions, which describe a Child-Friendly School. The tool asks participants to assess the actual situation and the desired situation in their school on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest). Participants in the three stakeholder groups – children, teachers, parents – filled in the list individually, based on written instructions. As participants completed the list, they became more aware of the actual and the desired situation for a Child-Friendly School and of the gap between the two.

The national team produced a computer analysis of the self-examination results, comparing the answers of the children, parents and teachers for each school and comparing the desired and the actual situation within each group. The biggest differences in the SSE were between children's assessments and teachers' assessments. Teachers assessed the school situation most positively, but children assessed it quite negatively. In all cases and in all dimensions children's assessments were negative. Teachers opined that the schools already were child-friendly. The children disagreed.

The national CFS team members presented the SSE results to the teachers and encouraged them to explain the results. The national team prepared a checklist for teachers that asked them to locate who was responsible for improving each indicator on the list – parents, school administration and/or the local community.

What were the results? In all schools, teachers tended to view their own assessment as the most objective because they perceived that they know the situation best. In most of the areas for improvement, teachers located the main causes for the gaps in the lack of resources (equipment, infrastructure, salaries), and they found it difficult to suggest concrete activities and actions for change. Hence, both the national CFS team and the teacher working groups viewed the need for teacher professional development and additional resources as a logical recommendation for enabling schools to become more child-friendly.

After completing this activity, teachers began to develop school-based action plans. In each of the working groups, teachers identified priority areas and concrete activities for change.

### *Activities for school-based change*

In June 2007, Miske Witt & Associates presented a five-day workshop on the six CFS dimensions, emphasizing inclusiveness and focusing on the broad EFA inclusiveness definition and expectations in EU countries for implementation of inclusive education. The national CFS team of junior and senior experts then adapted and translated these concepts into presentations and activities for school-based workshops at the pilot schools. Some of the activities were suggested by and developed with teachers in the school-based workshops. The activities were straightforward and simple, designed to lead to changes in all six dimensions that were easily achievable and visible to everyone.

The working groups were then responsible for implementing the activities. The national CFS expert team was consulted as needed, and they monitored implementation in twice-monthly visits from September through December 2007. The school-based activities were realized with varying degrees of success in the five schools. In the schools where teachers participated in greater numbers, the activities were realized most successfully.

One of the activities was setting ground rules in the classroom, which were directed towards ensuring mutual respect between teachers and students and motivating children for learning. Once teachers and students had agreed on the rules, the rules were displayed in the classroom and remained on display throughout the school year. Other activities included teachers' identification of learning styles of children; examining textbooks for gender bias; and studying gender bias in physical education classes. Because teachers' and students' examination of textbooks revealed few female role models, students also made posters with photographs, illustrations and information about well-known women painters, writers, scientists and others.

With regard to healthy, safe and protective environments, children and teachers first decided on a means of expression, for example, drawing or writing. Then children mapped the places or objects in the classroom, the school building and the schoolyard that were, in their opinions, dangerous or unsafe for children. In another activity, school information boards were displayed prominently in a corridor in an attempt to create conditions that would encourage children to express their views on all issues of interest. Peer monitoring of violence during breaks was also initiated, as were efforts related to multiculturalism to make the symbols that were part of a school's culture more inclusive.

As might be anticipated in this context, multicultural activities related to the sixth CFS dimension – multiculturalism and respect for child rights – were the most difficult to implement in all pilot schools, so the national CFS team needed to provide continuous and frequent encouragement. Teachers would say they were committed to these activities but then would not carry them out. Reasons teachers gave for not following through included social pressure, their lack of power to make decisions in the school, and it was “not the right time” to make such changes.

Despite this reluctance or resistance, activities related to multiculturalism were implemented to some extent in every school. Activities were easier to implement

when they included the display of ethnic symbols belonging to ethnic groups that were not perceived as a 'possible threat', e.g., Bosnians, Roma, Vlachs. It was more difficult to integrate symbols of ethnic communities where the division is most emphasized, i.e., Albanian and Macedonian. The acceptance of symbols related to religious identity also was more difficult.

During the second semester of the school year, one of the senior experts offered a final training to all CFS pilot schools on alternative forms of assessment, using the lessons learned and concepts and materials developed through the Primary Education Project of the United States Agency for International Development, and sharing them with teachers of the Child-Friendly Schools.

At the beginning the teacher working groups found it difficult to organize themselves due to lack of meeting space and lack of a common meeting time. When comparing the launch of the CFS initiative in schools in August to the end of first semester, there was one visible and important change: The cohesion of all staff – especially in the working groups – in all child-friendly pilot schools. After the introduction of these activities it was anticipated that teachers would continue to plan similar kinds of activities on their own, although if this occurred the expert team was not made aware.

After one year of working in the first five pilot schools, five more pilot schools were added. This time the schools did not reapply but were selected from the schools with the largest Roma student populations, in keeping with the donor's request. In May 2008, the team presented CFS orientation and CRC sensitization training and conducted the school self-examinations with all five new schools.

In June 2008, the national team conducted an activity on violence. They conducted interviews with students in Grades 5–8 and focus group discussions with children in Grade 6 and 7 to assess the level of violence in schools. Results of the study showed a high level of violence in school and tolerance of some forms of violence. Certain forms of violence were not even recognized. These data will be used to inform the UN partnership programme on tolerance and the prevention of violence and will be related to the curriculum.

## **Sustainability and scaling Up**

In Year 3, UNICEF and the CFS national team presented a training workshop for all BDE advisers in the lower grades (1–3) on implementation of the life skills-based education curriculum. The trainers used the CFS framework to remind the advisers of the vision for child-centred education in Macedonia. The framework demonstrates clearly how LSBE contributes to all CFS dimensions: inclusiveness; effectiveness (i.e., what children learn); safe, healthy and protective environments; gender responsiveness and participation (if taught with awareness); and especially multiculturalism and child rights. The framework can assist the BDE in developing a vision of quality education that is based in child rights and in practical information.

In addition to the six dimensions of the CFS framework, workshop trainers presented the Convention on the Rights of the Child and highlighted the interrelated nature of the different dimensions. The team also presented an overview of the work during the first three years: the

standards, KPAs and KPIs, the baseline findings, how to use the CFS framework to put forth a vision of what schools can become, and how to use the SSE to get there.

## OUTCOMES

### CFS initiative outputs and outcomes

The list of CFS initiative outputs includes activities undertaken at both the national and school levels.

#### CFS infused into policies and legislation

Outputs at the national level can be seen in both national legislation and in the curriculum. In the new national strategy document, *Concept for the New Nine-Year Compulsory Education*, CFS principles have become the basic principles of Macedonia's education system. The principle of non-discrimination calls for protection of students against all forms of discrimination (p. 67)<sup>7</sup>; upholding the best interest of the child (p. 68) obligates "all participants in the education process, school staff, parents and communities to ensure the best interest of the child in all activities, decision-making and behaviour." The principle of active participation of students in school life (p. 69) must be ensured by schools on the basis of "the right of the child to receive and give information, participate in the decision-making processes and join organization for the purpose of articulating and expressing their needs and interests."

Given the multi-ethnic and multicultural context of the Macedonian society, a principle for 'understanding others and multiculturalism' was included (p. 71). This calls for understanding, tolerance and respect of others through the incorporation of content, methods and activities related to multiculturalism. For the first time, a commitment is also made to ensure a safe, healthy and protective environment, prevention and protection from violence, and opportunities for children to acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes that protect and promote their health ('principle on physical safety and health', p. 72).

Including the CFS principles in this legislation provides a platform for realizing all dimensions of the initiative in Macedonia. In addition, the compulsory subjects described in the 'Concept' section of the strategy document envisage the introduction of content linked to LSBE education (e.g., conflict resolution, coping with stress and health education) that is related to children's personal and social development (p. 86). Elective subjects include livelihood skills that will help children meet the demands of everyday life and will create opportunities for the local community to participate in developing the local curriculum.

The strategy document created a space for a life skills-based education curriculum. Already available are the actual curriculum goals and objectives for each grade, materials and activities for implementing the curriculum, and a permanent place on the school schedule for children in all grades of primary school. In addition, teachers, pedagogues and psychologists have been trained in LSBE and are supporting teachers in introducing the curriculum in the early grades. The anticipated outcome will be the realization of the LSBE learning outcomes at every grade level in students' behaviours and actions.

### **School-level outputs**

Other outputs to date in the effectiveness component include analyses of early grade literacy and numeracy curricula. A desired outcome will be the nationwide improvement during the next three years of student performance in literacy and numeracy in the early grades.

Taking into consideration each of the other CFS dimensions provides a way to examine the quality of the entire system, in concert with the MoES priorities. Since the Minister of Education and Science announced in November 2008 that inclusive education is among the priorities for the nation, one other output expected by mid-2009 is a comprehensive study of the 'inclusiveness' dimension of Macedonia's education system, which UNICEF expects to conduct in partnership with the MoES in early 2009.

Outputs at the school level are discussed in greater detail in the following section. Some of the key outputs at this level include the existence of teacher working groups for the six dimensions; school self-evaluations and related data for all pilot schools; and increased capacity for teachers, school personnel and students related to the six dimensions, especially regarding the rights of the child.

## **IMPACT OF THE CFS INITIATIVE**

The goal of a CFS initiative is to ensure that education is child-centred and conforms to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, so that all children can claim their right to an education of high quality. What impact related to this goal has the initiative demonstrated after three years?

Encouraging data are emerging from the original five pilot schools from quantitative data corroborated by both observational qualitative data and anecdotal evidence. Although there is a long way to go, the data suggest that CFS is indeed having an impact and is slowly moving schools and the entire education system towards being more child-centred and child-friendly. These schools conducted a self-evaluation when they launched the CFS initiative in 2007, and the schools repeated the SSE in 2008 using the same tool. The national CFS team compiled statistical data from these evaluations that confirm a positive impact of Child-Friendly Schools, especially on children and teachers.

Following a statistical analysis of the results of the SSE data, the CFS national expert team concluded that all stakeholders were giving a more critical analysis of their schools. In the first year, teachers rated the schools very positively in terms of the child-friendly dimensions, but students rated schools quite negatively. In 2008, teachers' and pupils' scores moved closer, which suggests that children are feeling more positive about the school environment and teachers are willing to be more critical. By the second year, teachers and students had worked on activities related to the standards during the school year, they had come to understand the categories more clearly, and they had learned from working with the team that honest answers would yield positive benefits rather than recrimination.

Teachers indicated that they noticed a positive change in the schools from 2007 to 2008. The national CFS coordinators interpreted these findings to mean that the SSE instrument is very appropriate to the actual needs of the school and, if the key performance areas and key process indicators are fully implemented, this will lead to achieving the desired outcome of a truly school that is truly child-friendly.

In addition to these data, observational and anecdotal data indicate that CFS is having a positive impact on children. Children are learning about their rights and they are participating more actively in classroom learning activities. A teacher from Bitola who described students' involvement in a CFS activity proclaimed, "Children were very happy to be involved in this activity!" The activity was to identify gender bias in textbook materials and to prepare posters of influential women to display in the school corridors. Teachers also observed that students learned critical thinking skills through this activity (see 'Vignette', p. 29).

Children's posters exhibited on classroom walls indicate that students are learning to identify the safe and unsafe spaces in their environment, both inside and outside the school. Students are also taking seriously the ground rules they develop. During a classroom observation, for example, when a sixth-grade girl observed a guest take out her cellphone to make a call, the student pointed to the ground rules on a poster on the classroom wall: "No cellphones in the classroom." The guest smiled and put away the phone. In several years it is anticipated that student achievement scores will show a demonstrable impact from the attention to the effectiveness dimension, especially in literacy, numeracy and LSBE. For the first years in these schools where student participation and the level of trust between teachers and students have been low, these indications of positive change are celebrated.

In addition to the positive impact on children, the CFS initiative is having a positive impact on teachers and school personnel. During the first four months, the national CFS team observed teachers' attitudes and actions changing. Whereas at the beginning of the semester teachers gave many reasons why they were not able to work together or not able to implement various activities, at the end of the semester the working groups were showing results – and the teachers were beginning to discuss difficult issues in constructive ways.

Manifestations of a professional culture of teaching in which teachers support each other in improving teaching and learning are in the early stages in Macedonia. The CFS pilot is both revealing the shortcomings and addressing them. For example, in one school, some teachers who did not participate in the CFS initiative or the working group activities ridiculed those who did, suggesting they were foolish for volunteering their time to do extra work for which they were not paid. Yet the teachers who started with the CFS work stayed with it and continued to volunteer to meet, including on Saturdays when the junior and senior experts would offer workshops.

In a system that is characterized by waiting for experts to give direction and instructions rather than by involving teachers in decision-making and nurturing teacher leaders, there is still much progress to be made. Although gaps from the Year 2 SSE still show, it appears that the institutional culture is beginning to change (Petroska-Beska, 2008). A 2004 report from the East Asia-Pacific region observed:

Among the most successful child-friendly school interventions are those which *enable and promote teachers as professional agents of change* and integral determinants of quality and effectiveness across all (five) dimensions. Teachers need to be seen, and to see themselves, as engaged in the development of the CFS on their own terms ... Teachers are confronted with the same barriers to successful learning from a poor school as are children. For their own development as individuals and as professionals, they also require a school that is learner-enabling, i.e., inclusive, effective, healthy and protective, gender responsive and engaged in partnership with the community (Bernard, 2004).

CFS also appears to have had a positive impact on parents and communities. They attended CFS workshops and participated in the school self-evaluation both years. Signs of strong involvement, however, are yet to come.

Impact can be demonstrated at the national level through the national strategy and concept documents, including the underpinnings of the curriculum that now include CFS principles and the introduction of the new LSBE curriculum. Life skills-based education would not be part of the national curriculum if UNICEF and the national CFS team not been participants in the curriculum development process.

Another way CFS has had an impact on education in Macedonia is through giving various education reform initiatives (e.g., donor projects and system reform efforts) a way to build upon existing strengths and integrate their work, sometimes called a ‘complementarity’ of the education reform initiatives. Because CFS is a holistic education reform framework, not just a single component of an education reform package, the Child-Friendly School format allows donors to bring their different agendas to the table.

The SSE is a good example of this. The CFS standards of school quality, which were set by the CFS national team, complemented the Education and Modernization Project’s school self-examination. Because the data collection process is parallel, the SSE of the EMP and of the Child-Friendly Schools initiative were combined. Unlike the EMP evaluation, students participated in the Child-Friendly Schools evaluation because the CFS process is child-centred. The national CFS team observed that with students actively involved, there was a high level of trust as well as efficiency; that is, students were reporting their opinions and attitudes from the outset. Stakeholders noted that the CFS school self-examination process was successful because, in Macedonia, “criticism is easier to accept from the inside.”

Implementing the school self-evaluation on an annual basis is a valuable tool for monitoring change and impact in the CFS pilot schools. In 2009, a comprehensive system of monitoring and evaluation will be put in place to evaluate the 10 pilot schools and progress at the system level as well. Concentric circles of impact are being considered in order to monitor change at the levels of the child, teachers and school personnel, the school, and national policies and legislation. Fullan (2000) observes that it takes three to six years to make the significant changes in schools that will support improved student achievement, and to sustain the change and take it to scale in an entire system requires even more time. Macedonia’s education system needs to put the mechanisms in place that will measure the impact of this change over time.

## **ANALYSIS**

The analysis of Macedonia’s experience in establishing Child-Friendly Schools and a CFS system is grounded in lessons learned in both the national context and in the context of CFS internationally. Macedonia intentionally drew on lessons from other regions of the world in conceptualizing its CFS initiative.<sup>8</sup> After three years, the Macedonia CFS experience underscores the importance of a number of these ideas – and challenges others.

*Starting with a pilot phase.* Introducing CFS concepts to a few schools in a pilot phase of the work was recommended from the Asia region. Macedonia began with five pilot schools in Year 1 and added five more pilot schools in Year 2. A pilot was especially important for learning lessons from schools and classrooms because primary schools have large student populations

and organizing for change can be unwieldy. *Preceding* the pilot phase, however, Macedonia developed its CFS framework of six dimensions with accompanying standards and then conducted a baseline study in 21 schools. Starting with a framework, standards and a baseline study was unique to Macedonia and was essential to the successful introduction of the CFS approach at various levels.

*Introducing all dimensions.* All of the CFS dimensions must be addressed over time, but implementing them is flexible, according to lessons learned from other regions. Each CFS dimension may be addressed with different emphases at different times, depending on priorities and resources, but the goal is to make progress on all of them in relative balance. In the 10 pilot schools, Macedonia introduced all six dimensions concurrently through a holistic approach. Not only has it been successful, but the approach of addressing all dimensions concurrently will continue to be developed through the roll-out of LSBE and through a plan to turn the 10 pilot schools into 'laboratory schools'. In this system, a regional education adviser will work with the former pilot schools to increase participation and learning in all dimensions in the school setting and to ensure that the lessons learned are communicated beyond the school to other schools in the region and across the nation.

Scaling up CFS to the national level, however, is different. Instead of introducing all six dimensions into schools through a parallel process of training and workshops, schools are being introduced to one or two dimensions at a time. For example, the LSBE curriculum being introduced across the nation primarily integrates concepts from two dimensions: 'health, safety and protection in schools' and 'participation'. A second example is the focus on 'effectiveness'. The MoES, together with the World Bank-funded EMP and UNICEF, have identified a critical need to focus on numeracy and literacy in view of Macedonia's performance on the PIRLS and TIMSS international assessments. It is likely that this partnership will make it possible to scale up professional development for early grade teachers in literacy and numeracy more quickly through this partnership.

*Collecting and using data.* The SSE and other checklists and assessments are important tools that provide schools with data for making decisions early on and for developing action plans. The data collected from the baseline study, for example, uncovered a problem with violence in schools. In some cases teachers perceived no violence, while students perceived and reported corporeal punishment as violence. In the child rights workshops, some students resisted presenting their dramatic sketches because they feared repercussions from the teachers. These data provide an opportunity for discussing and dealing with violence in schools in its various forms so that schools can become safe spaces and child-friendly.

In terms of data collection and analysis, the national CFS team of experts, which included more than one psychometrician, assumed responsibility for data entry and analysis across the schools during the pilot phase. This resulted in the excellent data cited above in the 'Impact' section. During the months ahead – in order for school stakeholders themselves to make sound, evidence-based decisions – teachers, community members, school personnel and students will need to learn how to decide what data to collect and why, and then learn to manage and analyse the data.

*Implementing change through strong leadership.* The international research literature as well as the implementation of CFS in Africa, Asia and other regions have demonstrated that leadership and management are critical to the school change process. In particular, school principals play a key role as leaders of change.

In some cases good relationships between teachers and principals can and do facilitate the adoption of the CFS approach in Macedonia. This is less consistent, however, because principals in Macedonia are political appointees and tend to be loyal to the municipality and political party that appoints them. Changes in school principals following elections and principals who are lukewarm to the change process have impeded the implementation of a CFS approach in Macedonia. If principals – the key agents in school reform and change – either resist or ignore the CFS approach, then pedagogues, psychologists and teachers must and have become key advocates for change.

*Allowing for the time that is needed for implementing true change.* It takes time to develop Child-Friendly Schools. Becoming a CFS – one that visitors can identify as ‘friendly’ when they walk through – and the concomitant improvement in the entire education system must be approached as a long-term process. This is why Macedonia continues to talk about its CFS *initiative* and does not discuss it as a project with a fixed completion date.

School and community stakeholders need to invest adequate time to ensure that the overall process is successful. This includes child rights sensitization, school self-evaluation and developing action plans for improvement. Successfully transforming a system to one that is child-friendly depends upon a range of factors, such as creating school-community partnerships, and fostering changes in teachers’ attitudes and in students’ abilities to take initiative. It is clear that these changes will take time in Macedonia, as they do everywhere.

On the other hand, during the three years that UNICEF, the MoES and national CFS teams worked together to introduce the CFS concept, Macedonia made a number of remarkable achievements. These are particularly evident in policy and curriculum development at the national level, in donor partnerships, and in the introduction of LSBE in primary schools across the country. As these national-level changes are introduced, important lessons are also being learned at the ground level in 10 pilot schools around the country. All of this change has taken place in the context of two elections and two new governments, and through a UNICEF Country Office that has only one Education Officer. Designing long-term strategies and seizing opportunities as they arise with the MoES, working with partners, building on past relationships and working with external technical assistance as necessary have been critical ingredients of beginning to develop Child-Friendly Schools and a CFS system throughout Macedonia.

*Involving stakeholders in participatory activities.* After raising awareness on child rights and conducting the initial school assessment, schools need further assistance to motivate and enable all stakeholders to move towards more in-depth self-assessment of child-friendliness. Involving local NGOs, critical friends, community-based organizations and others in providing assistance from outside the school can improve and strengthen implementation. Macedonia’s experience supports this lesson from other countries. School-community partnerships are still relatively weak, due in large part to the historic cultural divide between schools and communities. This is especially true in lower income or ethnically mixed areas, where communities have not been involved in education except peripherally. For child-centred education to become a reality, teachers and parents and communities need to share information about the well-being of the child.

*Nurturing partnerships and teams.* Creating and nurturing partnerships at various levels is important to creating Child-Friendly Schools. For Macedonia, the national CFS team of junior and senior experts needed to work well together to support the pilot schools, and they needed to work well with the school CFS steering committees and working groups. At the school level, teamwork is important not only between teachers but also between teachers and children as co-

workers. An effective implementation process depends upon the quality of assistance of facilitation provided by critical friends, e.g., other educators, agency technical advisers, consultants, from outside the school community. It is important to create a strong, supportive system so that teachers have access to information and assistance when they have challenges to overcome.

Not everyone outside the education sector understands the importance of Child-Friendly Schools and their role in education (e.g., United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Development Programme Assistance Framework). Because UN programmes are expected to work more closely together, this places particular demands on UNICEF and how it frames its mission. It also requires that the country director and other office staff not only support but advocate for CFS principles in a range of settings. The regional education adviser for the CEE/CIS region was particularly supportive and encouraging of the development of CFS in Macedonia, making professional development opportunities and funds available to the Country Office.

Because the Minister of Education and Science has changed frequently, key liaison personnel within the ministry have also changed. This can create challenges in building collaborative relationships with new government officials, particularly in regard to planning professional development for teacher and in making curriculum changes.

Macedonia's approach to CFS shares some similarities with other countries, but it is also distinctive in several ways.

Linking with the education ministry and with other agencies to develop Child-Friendly Schools has a solid precedent in other countries, but developing a partnership in its early stages with a large decentralization project is unique to Macedonia. Building a partnership with the Education and Modernization Project at the outset – rather than competing with or ignoring it, as happens too frequently in education reform efforts – was a hallmark of Macedonia's CFS initiative. The country's approach made a number of modifications to accommodate and to better integrate with the EMP, and from the beginning, it was committed to building on the work of quality improvement that EMP had already started. Prior to selecting its pilot schools, the CFS team met with the project and requested to work with EMP pilot schools and with the already-formed EMP working groups at the schools. The CFS team worked deliberately to integrate the CFS standards into the seven dimensions of EMP's school self-evaluation so that schools would not be asked to complete two self-evaluations and two distinct action plans. The Child-Friendly Schools initiative then incorporated gender responsiveness, children's rights, student and teacher participation, and other CFS areas into the school self-evaluation outcome indicators.

Macedonia is a relatively new, post-conflict country that continues to grapple with the elements of that conflict. Creating an explicit CFS dimension to focus on and articulate the importance of respect for rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for multiculturalism and for conflict resolution was proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of the work and also very necessary.

## **FUTURE DIRECTION**

The future direction of the Child-Friendly Schools initiative in Macedonia will continue to follow the CFS framework with its six dimensions and related standards.

The Bureau for the Development of Education, with the support of UNICEF, will continue to introduce the life skills-based education curriculum to all primary school grades, and ongoing support to teachers teaching this curriculum for the first time in all grades will be needed. Related to the dimension of health, safety and protection in schools is the concern for violence prevention raised through the baseline study and through subsequent research on violence. This will also be addressed in schools through the broader UN Joint Programme on prevention of domestic violence.

The training of trainers and related in-service training for teachers of Grades 1, 2 and 3 in literacy and numeracy will be conducted in 2009, with related supports put in place to assist teachers in their professional development in these areas. Plans for building additional capacities among stakeholders in other areas will need to be identified. In line with the attention to inclusive education recently announced by the Minister of Education and Science, an in-depth, comprehensive study of inclusiveness is also planned for 2009. Alternative funding structures will be explored according to the OECD categories of special needs education.

A comprehensive review of the gender responsiveness of the education system, though not yet under discussion, will be important. A gender audit can highlight for an education system both its strengths and weaknesses in gender responsiveness, as demonstrated through the reviews in Albania, Georgia, Kosovo and Romania (Miske, 2008). Although various stakeholders have resisted the notion that gender discrimination or gender bias exists in Macedonia (most likely due to gender parity in national enrolment), when teachers and students in CFS pilot schools began to examine their textbooks and to count the representation of women, they were astounded to see the absence of women figures. Similarly, a comprehensive gender review would reveal bias in other areas – as well as strengths. It would show clearly the gaps and what particular items need attention in a truly gender-responsive CFS system.

Of equal importance is attention to participation between and among all stakeholder groups in the schools. In a society with a socialist history such as Macedonia's, despite all decentralization efforts, schools are still perceived to be 'a concern of the state' rather than of local communities of duty bearers – parents, teachers, school personnel and other community members all working together to ensure the rights of all their children. It is imperative to nurture a child-centred culture with a focus on child rights and human rights as a prerequisite for genuine democratization of the society. Participation in its broadest sense as articulated in Macedonia's CFS Dimension 5 provides the opportunity to achieve this focus and this outcome.

Ongoing work at the school level will include heightened attention to student participation and contributions in school. The experience in Asia revealed that community adults and teachers tend to underestimate pupils' capability to identify school child-friendliness, express their views and participate in school change. The child rights workshops and the baseline study underscored the prevalence of this attitude in Macedonia as well. School action plans will need to include the involvement of students and student leaders on a regular basis. In addition, individual schools and the education system will need to increase their support for the 'teacher as learner'. This will involve the increased engagement of teachers in their profession through such activities as student-centred, classroom-based action research. Given the key role of school principals and other personnel in school change, support for school administrators through leadership training to help them learn how to nurture this participation and engage parents and the community with teachers and students will be critical. Finally, developing strong linkages through all forms (not written only) of active and regular communication with parents and other community members will be developed so that they come to understand and to act on their roles and responsibilities in supporting all dimensions of their children's education.

In addition to the attention given to children's rights through the LSBE curriculum, heightening all stakeholders' awareness of children's rights will take place through two other programmes. Increased attention to ethnic tolerance and to violence prevention through a new collaborative partnership with UNDP and UNESCO will support the development of Macedonia's sixth CFS dimension on child rights and multiculturalism.

At the national level, CFS will continue to respond to government needs and interests, such as the development of standards for the school system for all subjects. At the system level, careful planning is needed to build monitoring and evaluation into the CFS implementation process. Measuring the impact and tracking the outcomes of Child-Friendly Schools and the progressive improvement of these outcomes in terms of moving towards the CFS 'ideal' is an ongoing challenge in other countries and may be for Macedonia as well.

As Macedonia continues to place all its children at the centre of its education system, focusing on child-centred learning, it will enable all its children to claim their right to the high-quality education set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child that it signed one quarter century ago.

## Vignette: Teachers and pupils learn to analyse and understand gender



**Photo (above):** Few women were mentioned in Macedonia's history textbooks. Teachers and children in CFS pilot schools identified gender bias in learning materials and designed new posters and gender equitable displays to sensitize the entire student body to the importance of gender responsiveness.

### **Students and teachers develop gender awareness in a Macedonian Child-Friendly School**

Developing gender responsiveness in schools is a challenging dimension of Child-Friendly Schools. If parity or near parity exists between the number of girls and boys in a school, stakeholders often maintain that "gender is not an issue in our school." A 2004 evaluation of Child-Friendly Schools in one region of the world found that gender responsiveness was the one dimension most frequently left out of planning (Bernard, 2004). Because Macedonia and much of the region of Central and Eastern Europe have enjoyed high enrolment rates and parity or near parity between the numbers of girls and boys in primary school for decades, how to explore issues of gender bias and gender awareness was a challenge for the CFS national-level experts/trainers.

The Macedonian CFS researchers and trainers decided that the curriculum would be one of the first areas to which teachers would turn to think about gender bias in schools. For the baseline study that was conducted when the project was first launched, the researchers examined history textbooks and found few women featured in the books. Based on this information, when the trainers offered CFS training to teachers in the five pilot schools, they taught the teachers how to analyse the textbooks for gender bias. Then they taught the teachers how to help the children analyse their own textbooks, and the teachers

developed a strategy that included child-centred projects in which students could participate and learn to 're-vision' history from a gender-responsive perspective.

Teachers energetically discussed the outcomes of these activities in the CFS pilot school workshops. Twenty-eight teachers from the six CFS teacher working groups in a Bitola primary school met on a Saturday to discuss what students in their classrooms were doing related to the six CFS dimensions. The following text is adapted from the teacher leader's report for the teacher working group on gender responsiveness:

We analysed women in history – not only women in Macedonia but in the whole world – and how they have a role in history. Children in Grades 6, 7 and 8 did research and made posters. We gathered all children to identify the location of where to put the posters and decided on a central location so they would be visible to all. We analysed the textbooks of Grades 5–8 using a list of questions to guide our analysis of the content. We followed what other CFS schools have done: After the review done by the teachers, we did it together with the children. We involved the children in the history.

What was the outcome of this exercise? We noticed there are too few women represented in the materials. This creates a gender imbalance and there are too few women role models with whom girls can identify. "The children were so happy with this exercise!," one teacher said. "They were very happy to be involved in this activity." But we have some questions: Why doesn't someone pay attention to this when the textbooks are being written? A female teacher answered, "One reason is that more men are writing these books. Women do not write as much as men do. Women's role is to work at home and cook in the kitchen. The purpose of this activity is to build children's skills for critical analysis as well as to 'open the window' so that children think about stereotypes. So now, after this, we have some awareness of the issues."

The teachers continued to discuss what to do with gender-biased textbooks. One teacher said she is more flexible in her selection of materials to teach history. Another said she could not skip the textbook completely or children would be curious about why she did: "If I have time to analyse the textbook in advance, fine. If not, sometimes just by asking student the questions I have done enough." Another disagreed: "The child takes the textbook home and reads it there. The history textbooks are full of stereotypes. I can do my best for three hours."

A male teacher shook his head and said, "But we went through the whole curriculum and there was only Cleopatra – the textbook only had her!" A CFS team member suggested making an analogy to the classroom in order to illustrate this gender bias for students. Ask them, "If we have only two girls in the classroom, is that enough?" And, "How can we make sure that not only girls are watering the flowers?"

A history teacher said, "Let's think about the next step: Begin by writing a letter to the Bureau for Education Development. It won't be effective if only teachers from these five schools send a letter. But it's a start. We can also write to the newspaper and let others know about this."

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter referred to as 'Macedonia'.

<sup>2</sup> Macedonia has a population of 2,045,108 (UNICEF, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> MICS 2005/2006.

<sup>4</sup> Other primary challenges for Macedonia with regard to EU membership are to ensure the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to withstand competitive pressure and market forces within the Union and to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims for political, economic and monetary union (UNICEF, 2008: 19).

<sup>5</sup> *Assessing Child-Friendly Schools: A Guide for Programme Managers in East Asia and the Pacific*. (2006). Bangkok: UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.

<sup>6</sup> The entire team of experts was involved in establishing the outcome indicators for each dimension and in analysing the data. Two experts were responsible for the research and data collection on each of the dimensions. The exchange of information and experience among the researchers and the discussions to review and modify the material presented by each pair were integral to the process of creating the final product in this part of the research.

<sup>7</sup> Page numbers indicate location of the principle in the *Concept* document.

<sup>8</sup> *FYR Macedonia Situation Analysis* (2008).

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