



**Republic of Macedonia
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
UN ACTION PLAN – “WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN”**

Skopje, November 2006

1. INTRODUCTION

As a UN member and as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Republic of Macedonia is under the obligation to ensure conditions for the exercise of children's rights. In the context of the obligations under the UN General Assembly Resolution (A/REC/S-27/2) which also contains the Action Plan envisaging specific goals that member-states have committed themselves to realizing, the Republic of Macedonia hereby submits its National Report on the Implementation of the UN Action Plan – "World Fit for Children"

For the implementation of the Plan in all of its stages, it was necessary to involve all relevant factors and available resources from both governmental and non-governmental sector in the country. Since such a multidisciplinary approach created certain difficulties in coordinating all the relevant stakeholders, the Republic of Macedonia submits its Report with a slight delay. The Report has been prepared on the basis of inputs from the relevant in-line Ministries and other relevant institutions, such as the Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia; consultations with the UNICEF Office in the Republic of Macedonia; and taking advantage of other relevant data on complementary issues related to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Macedonia. A wider debate regarding the WFFC National Progress Report (NPR) with all involved parties from the Government and non-governmental sector and aimed at analyzing and exchanging of views on the findings in the Report, due to different constraints, has not been organized in the process of the preparation of the Report. It is however planned to take place in the near future - in the course of 2007.

The Report is also based on experiences and critical considerations connected to other similar activities preceding the preparation of this Report, which have been organized for the purposes of implementation of the UN Action Plan, such as:

- the discussion (and adopted documents) at the Special Session on Children - "A World Fit for Children" that was held in Skopje on 20 June 2005, organized by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the UNICEF Office in the Republic of Macedonia. This national special session was the first such session in the Region;
- discussion on the National Action Plan on the rights of the child in the Republic of Macedonia, held in September 2005, organized by the National Commission for preparation of the National Action Plan. The purpose of the discussion was to exchange views on the finalization of the NAP between members of the Commission, representatives of the children population in the Republic of Macedonia and representatives of the non-governmental sector, as well as representatives of the UNICEF Office in the Republic of Macedonia. All members of the National Commission on Children presented and explained sections of the NAP within their field of expertise and talked about experiences gathered in the process of the Plan development, which was followed by a Q & A session for the other participants in this discussion;
- Discussion at the inter-ministerial meeting for review of the realized obligations and goals under the UN Special Session on Children 2002,

which was held in Skopje on 16 June 2006, organized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the UNICEF Office in the Republic of Macedonia. The purpose of the meeting was to take stock of the achieved results in the context of the NPR preparation.

2. MAJOR NATIONAL ACTION TAKEN FOR CHILDREN AND TOWARDS THE WFFC TARGETS SINCE 2002

This section contains the explanation of the contents and basic principles incorporated in the NAC and other strategic documents for child protection. The attention is focused on the targets of advancing child protection in the Republic of Macedonia as related to the WFFC targets, then on the policies for attaining the targets and the terms for their realization.

The basic thematic challenges identified at the Macedonian Special Session on Children – “A World Fit for Children” are: investing in children, municipalities fit for children, social exclusion of children and improvement of the quality of public services for child protection.

The primary problem in respect of the issue of investing in children is poverty and unequal level of development of municipalities, then the economic policy, lack of understanding for the need to invest in children and lack of good organization in the health care system. In connection with the issue of creating municipalities fit for children in the framework of the decentralization process, the primary goal is to eliminate the lack of recreational centers in municipalities, and dealing with the problem of lack of municipal structures to turn the attention to youth problems, inappropriate conditions in schools and unequal conditions for education. As regards the issue of social exclusion of children, the main problem is the lack of possibilities for active involvement in the economic, social and cultural life in the society as a result of the differences between developed urban and rural communities. As for the issue of improving the quality of care provided by public services for children, the focus is on social protection services, health care and education.

At this session, first of this type in the Region, the Skopje Declaration and Agenda for Action were adopted which envisage short-term, mid-term and long-term goals that the Government of the Republic of Macedonia is to realize.

The Skopje Declaration pays special attention to the increasing trend of children being subjected to all forms of violence, abuse, discrimination, social isolation and exploitation, including to trafficking in children. It is necessary to have greater political will, then to mobilize and allocate the available resources for children that would define Macedonia as a country fit for children, at the national and at the international level. The basic goals set forth in the Declaration are the following:

- Strengthening the national action for children by developing time specific National Action Plan;

- Establishment of the necessary coordination and mobilization of resources;
- Promoting healthier life, better quality education and protection of children from abuse, exploitation and violence;
- Monitoring of the progress made at the national and local level in order to follow the process of exercise of children rights.

The Agenda for Action which envisages short-term, mid-term and long-term goals (2005-2007) is a preparatory stage in the process of full realization of the National Action Plan for Children.

The group of short-term goals to be accomplished by the end of 2005 include: reform of juvenile justice, finalization and adoption of the National Action Plan for Children, preparation of a periodical Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, establishment of a body in charge of coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the National Action Plan for Children, establishment of a working group at the inter-ministerial level for planning and monitoring of investments in children by increasing the public budget allocation by 10% in 2006, separate actions against violence against children, National Youth Strategy, standards for primary health care of newborns and mothers, identification of categories who are most vulnerable to social isolation and children who do not enjoy social protection and health care, implementation of activities related to the Roma considering the Roma Decade (2005-2015), education reforms.

The group of mid term goals to be realized by the end of 2006 include: special government sessions on promotion of children's rights, precise definition of provisions related to the definition of a child, minimum standard of living, non-discrimination and obligation to guarantee the welfare of each child, especially parentless children and children with special needs, development of separate programs at the local level for prevention of social isolation and exclusion of children and local level action plans, as part of Municipal Action Plans, education for children with special needs, peace education and change of lifestyle, improvement of the education process in all its aspects, development National Action Plan on Motherhood, involving the young in Youth Councils and Working Groups to debate children and youth related issues, strategy on the minimum standards in the public services work in the area of education, health care and social protection with a focus on individual child protection.

The group of mid-term goals to be realized by the end of 2007, include: preparation of a National Report on the "Word Fit for Children" Action Plan, program to raise the birth rate and family planning, monitoring system for the education process at the national and local level with a focus on Roma children and children belonging to the other minorities, second follow up Government session to review the progress and implementation of the Agenda for Action, rationalized health care facilities network by overcoming development differences among municipalities and procedures for creating a data base and national level health statistics.

The group of documents that the Republic of Macedonia has adopted as a result of obligations assumed upon acceding to the World Action Plan includes the National Action Plan on Children's Rights in the Republic of Macedonia, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in March 2006. The National Action Plan has the purpose of defining the policy of the Republic of Macedonia in respect of children's rights that would ensure establishment of standards to secure relevant level of protection of children's rights, then elimination of all types of discrimination by reducing the poverty level, as well as establishment of the highest standards in education, health care and social protection. The Plan elaborates strategic goals which on the short, mid and long term basis are to be completed in the period from 2005 to 2015. The document contains review of what has been realized that far and presents in greater detail the long-term plans of the Government for advancement of children's rights in the Republic of Macedonia. The underlying idea is to strengthen the role of children by attaching absolute priority to their rights and interests.

The National Action Plan consolidates all tasks and goals to be undertaken by the Republic of Macedonia in order to ensure full exercise of guaranteed rights of children, based on the principles of equality, access, quality and efficiency. The basic principles upon which this Plan is based are:

- prohibition of discrimination – which is to be integrated in the legislation by envisaging equal opportunities and conditions for exercise and protection of children's rights; provisions envisaging that upon adoption of specific decisions and undertaking measures related to children, all bodies and individuals are obliged under the law to respect the principle of non-discrimination, prescribing penalty provisions for non-application of this principle;
- The child's best interest – this principle is of primary importance and has absolute priority in designing the Government policy and in adopting concrete decision and undertaking measures and activities related to children;
- involvement of children - in the legislation and in undertaking measures and activities related to children, the child is to be treated as a subject and holder of rights and duties, and not as an object of rights whereby the child's rights always depend on the rights, status and position of the parents. Children are to be enabled to participate in the decision-making processes on issues of local relevance in their environment, and to express their opinion in all permitted manners by peaceful gathering, children's associations, organizations, at schools, units of local self-government and similar.

3. RESOURCE TRENDS FOR CHILDREN

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia does not have a separate budget for implementation of the Government policy for protection and

advancements of children's rights. The activities undertaken in this area are financed under the budgets of in line ministries and of specialized institutions. Despite the fact that the National Action Plan envisages increase of the budgetary allocation by 10% in 2006 and establishment of a working inter-ministerial body to plan and monitor investments in children, thus far there have been no significant changes made. In the course of preparation of the NAP it was particularly difficult for the National Commission and especially for the Ministry of Finance, to design the budget for implementation of activities envisaged under the NAP. In fact, such a budget has still not been genuinely implemented. The growing awareness that budgeting for certain specific activities is an issue that needs to be paid greater attention to in the future, facilitates faster and positive changes in this respect.

4. DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF MONITORING INSTRUMENTS TO TRACK WFC/MDG TARGETS

As of the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child until presently, the Republic of Macedonia has not designed a specialized institution to monitor the application of the Convention. Certain monitoring activities are implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as other ministries in terms of implementation of the Convention provisions within the in line ministries' competences. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates the preparation of periodical reports on the application of the Convention and serves as the link with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In the Committee recommendations issued after the defense of the Initial Report of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia on the Convention, it is stated that the office of monitoring the implementation of the Convention is to be entrusted to a mechanism/institution in the Republic of Macedonia for purposes of greater consistence and ensuring greater efficiency. This issue is elaborated in the introductory part of the NAP and was presented accompanied with relevant information for consideration by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. In fact, the idea was that the National Commission for Children's Rights, in charge of preparing and implementing the NAP, to be the mechanism/institution to be charged with monitoring the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, this has not been realized in the practice.

Therefore, for the purpose of increasing the credibility of the National Commission and of providing greater authority in the performance of its tasks, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has decided to raise the level of representation in the Commission. Consequently, the nominated representatives of all in line ministries are state counselors competent for issues covered by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. With such membership composition, the National Commission is expected to de facto assume the role of a coordinator and supervisor of the implementation of the Convention in the Republic of Macedonia. At the same time, the experiences of other countries in this area are used in strengthening the professional capacity of the Commission. It has been determined that the Ombudsman on Children's Rights in the Republic of Macedonia, who is also a member of this Commission, will have a major role in monitoring the implementation of the

Convention. The practical experiences and observations of the Ombudsman are of invaluable significance. One of the tasks of the Ombudsman is to point out practical cases, which he/she deals with and which might be indicative of the functioning of the protection of children's rights in the Republic of Macedonia and of the everyday implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the country.

Certain deficiencies noted in the past should be overcome in the future in order to improve the monitoring and the implementation of the Convention. Generally, they are related to the processes of decision-making and coordination of the administration, but they also reflect in the field of protection of the rights of the child. Based on the experience in the implementation of the NAP, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- certain timelines for realization of scheduled activities envisaged under the NAP are not met but prolonged, which leads to the conclusion that they have not been realistically set, and that their dependences on other related factors have not been taken fully into account during the planning process;
- the indicators for measuring the efficiency in the implementation of the NAP are general and do not point to clear effects that are expected to be achieved; therefore confusion may arise as to how to assess the efficiency in the NAP implementation;
- more regular revisions of the NAP are required on the basis of realistically undertaken activities;
- administration capacity strengthening is required for continuous, systematic gathering and analysis of data on the basis of which political decisions are made;
- the successful functioning of the National Commission on Children's Rights, as an appropriate monitoring mechanism, and consequently the successful implementation of the NAP, depend greatly on the management skills of the Commission Chairperson and the ability to publicly promote the work of the Commission, thus mobilizing the public opinion in order to improve the protection of children.

5. ENHANCING PARTNERSHIP, ALLIANCES FOR CHILDREN AND PARTICIPATION

The children partnerships and alliances established with UNICEF, with other specialized UN agencies, other international organizations, as well as with non-governmental organizations, strengthen day after day. This is required by the real situations, since matters related to the protection of the rights of the child are multi-sectored and require multidimensional approach. The National Commission for Children's Rights of the Republic of Macedonia also includes representatives of the children population in the Republic of Macedonia aiming at better articulation of their interests, and for the purpose of making the voice of children heard and their needs accommodated.

A sizeable part of the aforementioned activities are carried out with the assistance of the international community through:

- PHARE/CARDS programs (VET1, VET2, VET3, VET4)
- the World Bank, through the Project for Education Modernization
- German support for reforms in vocational education – GTZ – and in the adult education – IIZDVV
- Support from the Austrian government through the EKO NET Project
- the USAID project of the US Development Agency
- SOROS support
- various donations (for instance, donation by the People's Republic of China in computer equipment) etc.

6. ACHIEVEMENT OF WFFC PLAN OF ACTION AND RELATED MDG TARGETS

In accordance with the assumed obligations for undertaking activities at the national level, the best manner of considering what has been realized and what is yet to be realized is to examine the state of affairs in the Republic of Macedonia in different areas through the activities of the in line ministries, and in view of the defined issues that are emphasized in the World Plan of Action.

Legislative Reforms

One of the short-term goals of the National Action Plan, in which the objectives of the UN World Plan of Action for children have been transposed, is the reform of juvenile justice as part of the legal reform through adoption of a new law on juvenile justice based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In accordance with the activities envisaged under the Skopje Declaration and the Plan of Action, the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with UNICEF, has prepared a Proposal for the adoption of a Law on Juvenile Justice, which should be adopted by the middle of 2007. The draft law affirms the following commitments: greatest possible well-being and protection of children with acknowledgment of the need for a wide action to prevent juvenile delinquency; principle of legality; principle of socialization and development of children; principle of priority to preventive, educational and similar measures and restriction of repression; principle of liability of institutions competent for the development of children and for taking measures for their protection, care or assistance.

An important novelty introduced by the Law on Courts, which was adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia on 5 May 2006, is the formation of specialized court departments for juvenile crime at the first instance courts with extended competences, which according to the new organization and competences of the courts are competent to bring decisions regarding crimes for which prison sentence of over five years is envisaged, and regarding crimes and misdemeanors perpetrated by minors.

The introduction of alternative penalty measures is an important novelty of the 2004 Criminal Code. The purpose of the alternative measures is to ensure education, correction, and proper development of children by

providing protection and assistance for minor offenders, by supervising them, by their vocational training, and by developing their personal responsibility. These alternative measures include suspended stay of criminal procedures, community service; the implementation of these measures is defined by the Law on the Execution of Sanctions.

The Law on Misdemeanors adopted in May 2006 identifies the misdemeanor sanctions for minors as special type of sanctions. The Law protects children by prohibiting application of misdemeanor sanctions to children who at the time of committing the misdemeanor have not turned 14 years of age; junior minors (who have turned 14 but not 16) can receive only educational measures, while senior minors (who have turned 16 but not 18) by exception can receive fine as misdemeanor sanction. The Law envisages a special misdemeanor procedure for minors; this procedure is urgent and takes into account the psychological maturity, the sensitivity and the personal characteristics of the concerned minor.

With the amendments and supplements to the 2004 Law on Social Protection, foster parenting has been normatively improved in order to better motivate citizens to foster children in their families. A possibility is envisaged for a natural person to engage professionally in foster parenting, with the status of a self-employed person and being ensured thus recognized years of service and pension. The foster parents must have at least secondary education, be in good health condition, be persons with legal capacity against whom no legal proceedings have been instituted for deprivation of parental rights, and to have appropriate working space and equipment. This forms the basis to raise the quality of this form of child protection.

The 2007 Program of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia envisages amending the Family Law aiming at improvement of the protection of children victims of family violence, with clear definition of the measures to be taken and precise determination of the bodies authorized for their carrying out.

PROMOTING HEALTHY LIVES

Children health care in the Republic of Macedonia is carried out within the public and private health care facilities, and it is organized into three levels of health care:

- primary health care, which is carried out at the dispensaries for children of pre-school age at the health and medical centers, as well as at the medical units in the rural communities;
- secondary health care, organized in the specialist-consulting pediatric services, in the children's wards at general hospitals, the Institute for Protection of Mothers and Children in Skopje, the Institute for Mental Health in Skopje and the Special Hospital for Children's Diseases in Ohrid; and
- tertiary health care, carried out at the Clinic for Children's Diseases, which is part of the Clinical Center in Skopje, the Institute for Children's

Lung Diseases in Skopje, as well as organizational units for children at the other clinics and institutes.

There is no ethical or religious discrimination in the provision of health care. The psychophysically challenged children are provided with the same health care as the other children. In accordance with the active health care program for mothers and children in the Republic of Macedonia, lectures are organized in schools on family planning and sexual education, while health education in this area is also conducted at the dispensaries for protection of schoolchildren, youth and women through the activities of the counseling centers for pupils and family planning. Domestic and foreign non-governmental organizations are also involved in the prevention of teenage pregnancy, carrying out various projects.

Compared to 2003, the number of total children protection services in the public sector in 2004 increased by 2.5%, of which the number of preventive services increased by 0.5%, whereas the number of curative services increased by 3.1%. Of the total number of preventive services, the greatest part consists of services offered at counseling centers, followed by the community nursing services, while the preventive examination visits constitute the smallest part. Compared to 2003, in 2004 there was a decrease in the number of preventive services in certain health regions.

Reducing Infant and Under-five Mortality Rate (IMR, U5MR)

The data on mortality registered in the health care for children between 0-6 years of age show a slight decline, in comparison with its previous growth. Compared to 2003, the mortality rate in 2004 for children under 5 years of age was lower and amounted to 14.8 per 1000 live births. The distribution by age shows that there were 22.8% diseased children of 1 year of age. The percentage of children of 1-4 years of age was 52.4% of the total mortality, whereas the percentage of children of 5-6 years of age was 24.8%. These statistical data on the distribution of diseases by the age of the children show that the highest percentage of diseases occurs among children of 1-4 years of age, followed by diseases among children of 5-6 years of age, while the lowest percentage is constituted by children of 1 year of age.

In respect of the infant mortality rate in the Republic of Macedonia, there is a declining trend. For example, in 1999 the number of stillborn babies per 1000 live births was 11.1‰, in 2000 it declined to 10.1‰, in 2003 it was 9.8‰ and in 2004 it was 11‰.

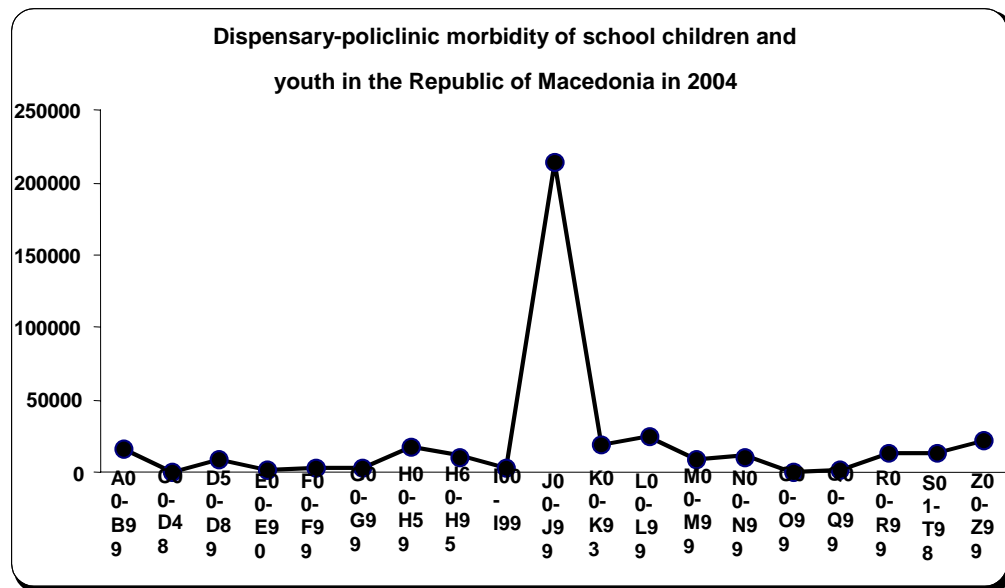
In order to decrease infant and children mortality rate, measures are undertaken under the Active Health Care Program for mothers and children in the Republic of Macedonia, under the Compulsory Immunization Program, by the Health Care Organization for protection of women and children at the dispensaries with counseling services for pregnant women, for infants and small children, and by providing community nursing services for pregnant women, nursing mothers and infants and small children up to 6 years of age. For the purpose of improving the health education of mothers, aiming at

decreasing the infant mortality rate, health education work is envisaged and realized and every year under the Active Health Care Program for mothers and children in the form of group work with pregnant women and nursing mothers (covering 25% of the pregnant women and nursing mothers) especially in the rural areas, where the hygienic, social and health standard levels are lower. The Program also envisages use of the media – radio, television and printed media – for the popularization of safe motherhood.

In spite of the undertaken legal and program measures, there are still disparities in the infant mortality rates between different socio-economic groups, i.e. there is negative correlation with the level of education of the mothers. For example, in 2003 the highest percentage (39.3%) was with infants born by mothers without primary education, and the smallest (3.2%) was with infants born by mothers with high education. There are disparities between ethnic communities as well, considering that the highest mortality is among children born by Roma mothers (13.9%).

In the field of health care of schoolchildren and youth in 2004, 398.685 illnesses were registered in total. This is 12.9% less compared to the previous year. The rate of morbidity was decreased to 7001.4‰ in 2004, compared to 7966.2‰ in 2003.

Table 1



Distribution by age shows that children in the 7-14 age group are mostly present in the overall dispensary-policlinic morbidity of this population, with even 55% share. Other age groups are present with 45% in total. (Table 1)

PROMOTING QUALITY EDUCATION

Access to quality basic education

Pre-school education

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy undertakes various activities on increasing the coverage of children with informal education with the aim of motivating a better start of the primary education, especially among the marginalized children. In this context, mention should be made of the continuation of the regular activities of the project "Street Children". 459 children have been registered in the day-care centre for street children. As an illustration, in 2005, 10 children of those in the day-care centre were included in the regular education, while in 2006 the number of such children was 20.

In the field of education and in other fields as well, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia pays special attention to the Roma population, in order to overcome the reasons for their marginalization. As part of the intensified activities that are implemented in the course of the Roma Decade (2005-2015) by the central and local government, provided for in the National Action Plans for education, health, housing, and employment, there are also activities relating to granting scholarship to Roma students, and the implementation of the Project for inclusion of Roma children in the Public institutions - Kindergartens in 15 municipalities, in partnership and financial support by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Roma Education Fund, UNICEF, and part of the local community has started. The main goal of the project is to improve and support the integration and reduce the neglect of the Roma children, by means of increasing the number of Roma children attending public kindergartens, one year before the start of the preparatory year. The definite solution of the problems of the Roma population is a continuous process that requires time.

CHILD PROTECTION AGAINST VIOLENCE, ABUSE, AND EXPLOITATION

In connection with protecting children from violence, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy undertakes many activities for the protection of victims of family violence, including children as well. The Republic of Macedonia has shelters for accommodation of victims of family violence where children, together with their mothers, are accommodated as indirect victims of family violence, in cities like: Skopje, Kočani, Bitola, Strumica, and Kumanovo. For example, in 2005, these shelters accommodated 74 victims of family violence, of whom there were 28 children receiving the necessary assistance and protection.

Children deprived of parental care

With regard to children deprived of parents and parental care, special focus is placed on the development of the form of social protection - care of children in foster families. This is done by: promoting this form of care; increasing the public awareness; continuous training for the persons caring for

the children; drafting the Regulations on the criteria for selection of foster family; the type and the number of beneficiaries who may be accommodated in a foster family; the type and the scope of the services of social protection that are provided to the accommodated persons; the amount of the compensation for accommodation; and the amount for caring. In terms of statistics, 135 families have been registered in the Republic of Macedonia which host children deprived of parental care. For example, in August 2006, 229 children were accommodated in foster families. The Budget of the Republic of Macedonia earmarked 11.950,068 denar for this purpose.

Disabled children

In the field of protecting the rights of children with physical and intellectual impediments and children with mental disorders, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is currently implementing the policy of deinstitutionalization. It is done through improving the out-of-institutional protection and undertaking other measures, in order to provide care for these children in home conditions. In conformity with the deinstitutionalization program, the process of accommodating the children who are at the moment cared for in the children's ward at the Special Institute for individuals with severe and profound development impediments, in Demir Kapija is being realized. Alternative form of protecting these children is their inclusion in the day-care centers and their accommodation in host families. Presently the Republic of Macedonia has 17 day-care centers where 270 children with developmental impediment are taken care of. To this end, in addition to the already drafted Regulations on the norms and standards for establishment and start of work of day-care centers by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, it is also foreseen to provide expert assistance in the Social Work Centers, the possibility for the child to attend the day-care center, as well as measures for financial support to the families. Families whose child is entitled to be placed in institution receive from the Social Work Center a periodical one-off assistance in accordance with amendments to the Regulations on establishment of the amount of the one-off financial assistance. This measure is intended to stimulate many families to keep the child in the home environment by giving them additional funds for childcare.

In the Republic of Macedonia, children with developmental impediments are entitled to special allowance. In September, 4.469 children were beneficiaries of this right and a sum of 10.974,536 denar was paid out to this end.

Protecting children from armed conflict

With regard to children under 18 participating in armed conflicts, it should be noted that during the 2001 armed crisis in the Republic of Macedonia, the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff of the Macedonian Army fully observed the obligations regarding the age of army conscripts.

In this context, it is important to underline that, during and after the 2001 crisis, the Ministry of Defense and the Macedonian Army provided allowance for the children of army officers killed in fighting. Subsistence was

also provided to a girl named Dušica Pavlovska who was wounded by gunfire. She was the youngest victim of the 2001 events, suffering from serious bodily injuries.

The 2002 adoption of the Law on Special Rights of Members of the Security Forces of the Republic of Macedonia and Their Family Members is considered to be an important progress in the cooperation between institutions of the Republic of Macedonia and families of killed officers and disabled veterans. Chapter 2, Section 5, of the said Law governs special rights granted to children of killed officers and disabled veterans. Children of security officers who were killed or died and children of disabled veterans are given priority when enrolling at state secondary schools or universities, without co-financing their studies, provided that applicants obtain the minimum required points at the open competition for enrolment. Articles 14-16 oblige the state to provide scholarships, free-of-charge accommodation at dormitories, and free-of-charge textbooks. The Ministry of Defense and the Macedonian Army maintain permanent contact with families of killed officers, mostly in context of the financial assistance for education of these children.

Article 60 of the Collective Agreement on regulation of labor rights, obligations, and responsibilities of employees in the Ministry of Defense, pays special attention to protection of children under 18. Employees are entitled to paid leave on grounds of pregnancy, delivery, maternity, and childcare. Regulations in army units that are directly under the General Staff explicitly prohibit a 24-hour duty shift of women who are mothers of children under 7.

One can conclude from the aforementioned that laws, regulations, other acts by, and relating to the Ministry of Defense and the Macedonian Army incorporate and enforce rights relating to child protection.

Elimination of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children

The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Macedonia is the responsible institution for drafting and operationalization of the National Action Plan for combating child trafficking. This Plan is part of the Strategy for combating human trafficking, which, in turn, is contained in the Action Plan for combating human trafficking (adopted in March 2006).

This plan attaches priority to rights and interest of children. It is based on the four fundamental principles, including those enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

There is close cooperation in the implementation of the Action Plan between the Ministry of the Interior and some international organizations (UNICEF, OSCE, IOM), as well as some NGOs ("For Happy Childhood", La Strada, Open Port, Semper, Association of Women's Organizations of Macedonia). Several seminars were carried out in the Ministry of the Interior, by the competent Subgroup on combating child trafficking, relating to capacity building in dealing with this problem. The training was related to: informing about real-life cases; how to act in certain situations; conducting interviews; providing protection to vulnerable groups of children; recognizing children who

are victims of labor exploitation, have been abandoned by their parents, or are potential trafficking victims; and activities on their prevention, identification, rehabilitation, and integration.

For purposes of better and facilitated organization of the work, in March 2006 the Minister of the Interior enacted, "Instructions on the treatment of Victims of human trafficking who are foreign nationals", as a bylaw. This bylaw includes special chapter on protection of children - victims of human trafficking.

Combating HIV/AIDS

Since the start of the program supported by the Global Fund for fights against HIV/AIDS, significant results have been reached in working with the young population:

1) Training was conducted for 756 experts on basis of HIV/AIDS prevention principles in working with targeted populations, such as:

- 76 medical officers trained on basis of principles for work of youth friendly services;

- 635 teachers in 176 primary and secondary schools in the country, trained for teaching the curriculum of *HIV/AIDS Prevention and Reproductive Health*;

- 45 military officers in the Ministry of Defense and the Macedonian Army, trained for education of military recruits on HIV/AIDS prevention.

2) Training was conducted for 228 women peer educators on HIV/AIDS prevention with young people;

3) A total of 11.252 young people in the 15-24 age group were involved, through peer educational activities inside and outside of schools, such as: peer educational sessions, condom awareness promotion, field peer informing (culture and social events), and services of the "*I Want to Know*" Youth Friendly Center;

4) 13,964 (18+) soldiers have been educated through educative sessions for the HIV/AIDS prevention and for promotion of safe behavior among young people;

5) 743 young girls are covered by educative activities for prevention of introduction to commercial sex work (through educative lessons, promotion and distribution of condoms, information-educative materials, such as brochures, handbooks, etc.);

6) A manual for teaching staff titled *Prevention of HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health* was prepared and published and it has been introduced in the teaching system of 176 primary and secondary schools in the country;

7) 180,897 condoms have been distributed among the young people;

8) A pilot education center for young people is in the stage of opening;

9) Five types of educational brochures, the circulation number of which equals 300,000 copies, while 20,000 posters are distributed among the young people.

10) A national media campaign about HIV/AIDS prevention among young people has been produced and broadcast which includes 6 educative shows, 5 radio messages and 12 printed messages in the daily and monthly magazines;

11) An interactive internet page for HIV/AIDS intended for informing the young population is in the preparatory stage.

Protect the earth for children

Children are one of the target groups on which the attention and activities taken by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning are focused. The care for children's health is reflected also in the strategic environmental protection documents. For example, measures and activities have been defined in the II National Ecological Action Plan, adopted by the Government in 2006, aimed at decreasing the health risks of children as one of the most vulnerable groups in regard to their exposure to risks.

There is a Public Relations Office at the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning. One of its primary goals is the ecological education of the youngest population. This education is realized through a number of ongoing projects and programs:

- Through the realization of the "Green Package" multi-media program intended for children at the age of 10 to 14; this Program has been realized in all primary schools on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia;
- The international program GLOBE has been implemented since 1998 involving secondary-school students, in addition to primary-school pupils; this program is used to develop a research attitude, to measure ecological parameters that are an input into the central GLOBE server and to define projects for better understanding of the Earth as a system;
- Support to and assisting the school eco-projects, including pupils in the campaigns for planting trees and grass in the school yards and on the bare localities near their place of living;
- Active inclusion of children and young people in the campaigns for marking the world ecological days – Day without Cars, Spring Day, Days of Ecology, Earth Day, World Environmental Protection Day, etc.

Mobilizing resources for children

In line with item 18 of the UN Declaration, which establishes that "the chronic poverty is the sole biggest obstacle to the satisfaction of the needs to protect and promote the rights of the child", the fact that a progress in

supporting small business and developing micro businesses has been made in the Republic of Macedonia deserves to be underlined. More than 95% of the registered business entities in Macedonia are micro and small-sized enterprises. Their development contributes to the decrease of unemployment and poverty and, along with that, to the improvement of the condition and of the rights of the child.

In the period of 2003-2005, progress was made in regard to the legal and institutional basis for the realization of several types of non-financial and financial support for the development of micro and small-sized enterprises.

The activities of regional centers for entrepreneurship is supported through the Agency for Support of Entrepreneurship, while the training of entrepreneurs and a system of voucher counseling are carried out and developed through the Human Resources Fund for Development. The financial support is provided through access to several credit lines for small-sized enterprises through the Macedonian Bank for Development Support for the bank system, and the Public Guarantee Fund – for entrepreneurs who cannot provide collateral to finance their own project.

In the field of culture, activities are undertaken in order to motivate the young people to participate in the cultural life of the society, to stimulate their creative abilities in all spheres of creativity, to become familiar with the cultural values of their own country and with the cultural values of other peoples, to increase the awareness about love and care for the national cultural heritage (material and spiritual) and the process of socialization in order to learn how to live together with children coming from different cultural, religious and social backgrounds.

The Ministry of Culture is making efforts to share the care for the future young generations with its financial and logistic support to the programs and initiatives of the institutions and the non-governmental sector in order to make young people's life easier and culturally richer. Some of the realized activities are the following:

- Financial participation in the traditional international painting children's competitions in the country (Young Bitola Montmartre) and abroad through the Children's Painting Studio in Bitola and the Association of the Painting Pedagogues of Macedonia;
- The Ministry is permanently donating children's books to the libraries;
- Financial participation in children's festivals such as Golden Nightingale, Dance Without Borders, The Prespa Nightingale, The Rainbow Festival of the Albanian children songs, and financial participation in The Ohrid Pearls, the international competition of young musicians of Ohrid organized by the Musician and Ballet Pedagogues of Macedonia-Skopje
- Participation of the children's line-up of the "Kitka" Folk Dance Performing and Cultural Society from Istibanja in ARTEK, the international children's folklore festival, organized by CIOF-UNESCO in Ukraine (July 2005).
- Realization of the project "The art days of children – orphans from the Balkan States" - Ohrid, in 2005 and 2006, organized by the Democratic Network, a non-governmental humanitarian cultural organization of Skopje

- Realization of the project “Promotion of human values” organized by the Red Cross of the city of Skopje and the project “Culture in the service of peace – cultural diversity – a possibility for dialogue and development” organized by the non-governmental organization ‘Without Borders” (intended for children from different ethnic groups and marginalized social surroundings)
- Realization of the project “This is our time” – a camp for intercultural learning, in July 2006, organized by Medjasi, the First Children’s Embassy
- Realization of the project “Not a single day without a smile – musical therapy in the musical cultural education of children at an early age with special needs” organized by the Center for art expression of children, musical therapy and psycho-physical relaxation “Dzundzule” – Skopje.

The intention of the Ministry of Culture is to include children in as many cultural activities as possible through the above mentioned realized activities, which are only a small part of the overall activities of the Ministry of Culture in order to enrich the spirit and cultural life of the young people.

7. SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED AND INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN SINCE 2002

The following could be the conclusions or lessons learned of this Report:

- The obligations that the Republic of Macedonia has assumed under documents adopted at the 2002 UN World Summit for Children have triggered the mobilization of the national capacities and resources (personnel and financial) in order to meet those obligations.
- The process of working out of the National Action Plan, which at the same time has been the first of this type in the Region and which was inspired by the World Action Plan, has increased the attention to children and concentrated the activities of the political decision-makers in the country aimed at promoting the protection of children. As a result of these activities, certain legislative reforms and institutional changes have also taken place (such as the set up of the Commission for preparation and implementation of the National Action Plan for Children in the Republic of Macedonia) that may initiate a new approach to monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The insufficiently developed budget planning has complicated the implementation of the NAP and the realization of the WFFCT (World Fit for Children Targets).
- In regard to this matter, generally there is a lack of systematic gathering of relevant data and analytical approach to their processing.
- There are no precise indicators to measure the realized goals of the NAP in which the WFFCT have been transposed.
- The identified shortcomings and positive results in achieving the goals of the World Summit for Children shall be a basis for upgrading the policy of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia related to the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.