

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The “Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child” was passed by Parliament with no objections or abstentions. It further translates the CRC into domestic law defining monitoring and implementation mechanisms at national and regional levels. This is the culmination of a multi-year partnership between UNICEF, government, and civil society, which succeeded in spite of an extended period when the full parliament rarely met due to a boycott by the opposition over election results.

Albania’s first Demographic Health Survey was completed with support of UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA and several donors. Results were launched by government and media throughout the country. The DHS generated reliable data, including on access to insurance and health services that helps in identifying significant inequities.

Building on the experience from setting up local models for effective coordination of social services for children, UNICEF and Austrian Aid assisted Government to initiate the reform of social services. A well-attended national conference brought together central and local authorities, civil society and experts. Participants agreed on the need to include in all local government units statutory social services for the protection of the most vulnerable.

Albania’s desire to join the European Union accelerated some reforms, while also consuming much political energy on issues that did not always benefit marginalised children. The EU opinion on Albania’s application for EU membership, which extensively drew on UNICEF and UN inputs, recommended membership to be considered only after addressing several challenges. Those of particular concern to children included: functioning of parliament to pass key reforms, depoliticisation of public administration to reduce high turnover, improvements in anti-corruption, and reinforcement of human rights for minorities, children and women.

Albania is one of eight global pilots for UN reform. In 2010 much effort was spent on evaluation of the reform process as well as formulation of the next five year programme of cooperation. UNICEF staff and management devoted significant time to carve space for children and equity on the wide-ranging UN agenda.

2. COUNTRY SITUATION AS AFFECTING CHILDREN AND WOMEN

In 2010 the World Bank classified Albania as an upper middle income country. Poverty levels have dropped from 18 to 12 per cent in the past 4 years. Economic growth continued even in 2009, albeit reduced compared to previous years, but inequities persist. Outward migration and migration from rural to urban areas have led to a concentration of poverty especially in remote mountain communities where up to 26 percent of people are considered poor. Dependency on remittances remains very high. Sparsely populated rural areas make it difficult to organise services for children while overcrowded peri-urban areas face the opposite challenge. Albania’s economic aid scheme has not been sufficient to lift poor families out of poverty. The targeting mechanisms are cumbersome and absorb resources and staff capacity that could be re-directed towards lacking social services for the poor.

Albania’s Social Inclusion Strategy describes “at risk children” as those with social challenges, economic difficulties, as well as those with health, cultural or geographic challenges. A poor family typically faces multiple inequities placing a child on a low development trajectory that continues the cycle of poverty into adulthood. By age 3, a child who does not get proper care and nutrition can remain one year behind her peers—a loss of opportunity that cannot be made good or reversed. More investments and

coordination between sectors is required especially for the group aged 0-3. Children from Roma families continue to be among those at greatest risk of being left behind and excluded.

The Albania Demographic Health Survey (DHS) confirms this inequity. Mortality rates in rural areas were more than double those in urban areas for both under-fives and infants. Infants and children in mountain regions had mortality rates almost three times higher than children in the coastal regions. In rural areas only 57 percent of women had four or more ante-natal care visits compared to 82 percent in urban areas.

The request for informal payments remains a major obstacle to access health services. The DHS found that 72 percent of women reported paying for care that they could have received for free while 36 percent of women reported avoiding medical care in the preceding 12 months as they could not pay. Financial protection for health is low with 60 per cent of the population having no health insurance. Out-of pocket expenses including formal and 'informal' (unofficial) costs of accessing health services place a higher burden on poor families. Albania's investment in health as a proportion of GDP is less compared to her neighbours and needs to grow to help meet the above challenges.

Access to pre-schooling, key to school readiness, remains below 50 percent and is much lower in poor communities. The new draft law on pre-university education emphasizes the quality and accessibility of pre-school education, especially for the transition year to school. To reach the objectives of the pre-school strategy by 2015, it is estimated that the budget for ECD would need to increase from the current 6.9 percent of the total education budget to 14.8 percent. Falling net enrolment for grades one to five (88 percent) and grades one to nine (94 percent) show that Albania is not on track to meet its MDG targets.

Government's focus on EU accession led to many laws being fast-tracked, including the anti-discrimination law or legislation related to juvenile justice. However, the capacity to implement and monitor such legislation, especially in regional and local governments, is inadequate. Consequently, the EU opinion on Albania's application for membership notes that Albania needs to "take concrete steps to reinforce protection of human rights, notably for women children and Roma, and to effectively implement anti-discrimination policies".

Natural disasters contributed to increased hardships for the vulnerable populations. Thousands of hectares of property were damaged and human lives impacted from severe flooding that occurred around Shkodra in January and again in November 2010. While the government responded quickly to support the evacuation of several thousand people, recovery was more challenging, even as the inadequacy of prevention measures contributed to the second flooding.

Sources:

Albania Demographic Health Survey
(http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pub_details.cfm?ID=997&ctry_id=72&SrchTp=ctry)

Progress Report 2008 – 2009 of the Albania Social Inclusion Strategy 2007 – 2013

Commission Opinion on Albania's application for membership of the European Union
(http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2010_en.htm)

MDG Progress Report 2010 (<http://www.un.org.al/editor-files/file/Albania%20National%20MDG%20Report%20-%20July%202010.pdf>)

Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Albania (<http://www.un.org.al/editor->

[files/file/Human%20Rights/Human%20Right%20in%20Albania/Women%20Rights%20CEDAW%20Recommendations.pdf](#))

Convention On The Rights Of The Child: Second, Third and Fourth Periodic Report (<http://www.un.org.al/editor-files/file/Human%20Rights/Human%20Right%20in%20Albania/Child%20Rights%20Government%20Report.pdf>)

3. CP ANALYSIS & RESULT

3.1 CP Analysis

3.1.1 CP Overview:

Albania is a middle income country with a fast growing economy. However, not everyone is benefiting equally from economic and development gains. The relatively small budget and capacities of UNICEF Country Office are therefore focused on children that are left behind, drawing on globally tested programme strategies and good practices.

With rapid positive changes taking place in laws and the creation of new institutions, capacities of those institutions need to be developed to enable them to work effectively for all children. This effort is challenged by a high turnover of staff, loss of institutional memory and the fast tracking of additional legislation. The public discourse and the media are often pre-occupied with party politics, and UNICEF staff worked to keep issues affecting marginalised children in the print and electronic media, in the parliament and in public debates. Research and data collection, analysis and dissemination were used to determine where inequities exist and what causes them, identify and advocate for policy change, and lobby for budget allocations. All programme support is grounded in human rights conventions and resulting accountability and capacities, helping to ensure that the most poor are first in line, not last. Energy was directed to teachers who found ways to reach out to children who may be difficult to teach, judges who sought alternatives to prison for juvenile delinquents, health workers who reached out to households that did not know how to obtain health care services for their children, or social workers that identified and protected children from dysfunctional families or at risk of neglect and abuse. Those with claims to their rights were also mobilised to seek and demand better services for their children – for example through parents participating on school boards or young people engaging as youth parliamentarians. Gender was in focus by ensuring that services do not marginalize but rather engage women, and by taking an unwavering stance on high profile occasions to change public tolerance of domestic violence.

3.1.2 Programme Strategy

3.1.2.1 Capacity Development:

Albania's EU membership aspirations have led to the quick creation of institutions to meet new standards, in preparing staff for which, capacity building has a crucial role. UNICEF focus therefore has been on capacity development directed at improved delivery of critical services to children, especially the disadvantaged.

A good example of the strengthening of institutional capacity is the support to the department of prisons to meet international standards related to juvenile justice. A juvenile rehabilitation centre was constructed by the EU and opened in 2010. UNICEF, with the help of an expert from the Netherlands, proposed a new philosophy for the management of the facility, including support to rehabilitation by civil society organizations. In line with UNICEF recommendations, the profile of correctional staff was adapted, job descriptions adjusted and daily work schedules developed. On-the-job training occurred alongside periodic twinning with the foreign expert. Cooperation from the Ministry of Education was secured for continuous educational programmes. The Kavaja Institute now has a regime appropriate for juvenile offenders aimed at their reintegration into society following their release.

Support to the Albania Demographic Health Survey included on-the-job training for INSTAT and the Institute of Public Health by the reputed experts (Macro International) to use state of the art tools and equipment for survey work. Newly acquired skills and equipment remain in place for use in future surveys and studies.

Together with NGOs, child protection units (CPUs) are being systematically established in major municipalities, based on agreements that local councils will eventually take over the units as regular staff functions. The CPUs have become a model for improved social service provision in municipalities.

The UNICEF representative is a Board member of the local Vodafone Foundation, the Young Albanian Professional Services (YAPS - a social enterprise) and the International Human Rights Film Festival, which helps to share experience in the management and oversight of such institutions and strengthen corporate responsibility.

However, little progress has been made in securing a stable funding base for institutions such as the child helpline, or the weekly TV show TROC which is authored and managed by young people.

3.1.2.2 Effective Advocacy:

In Albania, advocacy for social reforms especially for children and human rights is challenged by the lack of independent media, polarized party politics, and quest for visa liberalization and European Union membership that dominates the political discourse. UNICEF advocacy-related efforts have focused on addressing this gap, with special emphasis on equity and increased attention to the most marginalized children.

The UNICEF office developed an advocacy agenda as part of its annual management plan, which helped staff to focus on selected topics when raising attention to vulnerable children in public formal and informal debate. UNICEF also worked with high profile journalists from a variety of print media to improve investigative reporting on child welfare concerns. A key strategy was to encourage reporting not only of what officials and politicians report or think about a child rights issue, but about the issue itself, often through the voice or images of children. The focus again was on children who are not yet benefiting from economic growth. Issues such as child labour, environmental pollution harmful to children, and domestic violence were covered, and media packages were prepared for the dissemination of the results of the Albania Demographic Health Survey.

UNICEF joined several UN agencies during the 16 days of activism protesting violence against women. A strong coalition exists of NGOs and some UN agencies that consistently speaks out against child trafficking, child pornography, domestic violence and for more systematic support to child protection measures. UNICEF is frequently invited to speak at public events or universities.

UNICEF in Albania is a strong defender of the human rights approach, and regularly refers to the applicable human rights instruments to which Albania is a party.

UNICEF also works closely with other development partners and contributes to their respective analyses where children's issues are at stake. Taken together, such opportunities moved children's issues beyond one day events to a larger agenda with sustained debate in the media, in parliament and in the public.

3.1.2.3 Strategic Partnerships:

Particularly successful in 2010 was the collaboration between the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and UNICEF in convening and co-managing the sector working group on juvenile justice. The group is attended by a wide range of partners including Euralius, OSCE, Helsinki Committee, CRCA, the department of prison, the police and many other state and non-state actors. With the Ministry of MoJ being the driver of reforms needed for EU accession, UNICEF has a credible role related to incorporation of international standards for juvenile justice. Key donor agencies and civil society organizations provide financial and technical resources as required by the sector working group whose work has been critical in ensuring progress so far in justice for children.

UNICEF has been pivotal in bringing together government, the private sector and civil society to create the Albania child helpline, which provides free-of-charge round-the-clock telephone counselling to children in need.

Similarly, UNICEF has been able to convene the Ministries of Education and Environment, environmental NGOs and donors around the Child Led Environmental Education Initiative (CLEEN), which has introduced environmental awareness in the free curriculum and continues to promote environmental activities in primary schools.

The Country Office (CO) is coordinating with WHO and FAO to support the Albanian government under the MDG-F funded Joint Programme on Child Nutrition. The Ministries of Health Agriculture, Social Affairs, Education and Finance signed an MOU to commit to work together to improve child nutrition and household food security.

UNICEF is a board member of a large mobile phone company's foundation, and helps to direct funding towards social issues. As a member of the board of a social business that provides courier and cleaning services, UNICEF ensures that the business maintains the focus on hiring marginalised young people.

UNICEF's support to government in setting up a working group on social inclusion for better coordination among different ministries and donor agencies has been a challenge. The cross-sectoral nature of the social inclusion strategy may cause the group to lose focus or overlap with other existing groups.

3.1.2.4 Knowledge Management:

Currently, country capacity for research and data collection whether in government or in civil society and the private sector is limited, pointing to the need to support capacity building and knowledge management in partners as well as in UNICEF. There is also need to connect key decision-makers with international knowledge networks.

The recently approved Law on the Protection of Children's Rights provides for Child Rights Units (CRUs) as mandatory units in regional government. Accordingly in 2010, the CRUs were established in 9 of 12 regions. The CRUs monitor a standard set of child-related indicators and the implementation of relevant policies and action plans. They collaborate with equivalent observatories within civil society. Information generated by the two sets of entities is meant to inform child-related policies at the regional and local level, and contribute to the preparation of periodic national reports.

The national Social Inclusion Strategy remains a key monitoring framework for government and development partners. It captures many concerns about equity and children. UNICEF supported the government's first progress report on the strategy. The report made recommendations that directly relate to needed improvements in services for the most marginalized children. The progress reports will support the work of the social inclusion sector working group when it becomes operational.

Several surveys were supported: a Demographic Health Survey (DHS) was finalized in collaboration with several UN and donor agencies. It provided statistically sound, internationally comparable estimates of demographic and social indicators. A detailed dissemination and data utilization plan ensured (and continues to ensure) wide use of data. Media was assisted to use and cite DHS data extensively, in an understandable format for the public, and over a sustained period. A nutritional survey is underway in the most affected regions to generate a baseline for the joint programme on child nutrition.

Another household survey was developed to help reform social assistance with a view to break the transmission of poverty from one generation to the next.

3.1.2.5 C4D Communication for Development:

Preventing Injecting Drug Abuse: UNICEF supported the national AIDS control programme and NGOs to conduct baseline quantitative research to better understand risk behaviours amongst 14-22 year old young men who inject drugs. Qualitative research was also carried out to assess adolescents' access to harm reduction services. The findings were used to develop a National Action Plan for Most-At-Risk Adolescents.

Based on this research Albania has adapted and implemented the "Break the Cycle" approach where injecting drug users are encouraged to stop introducing adolescents into injecting drug use. Initial results show that injecting drug users are responding well to the notion that they have a role to play in protecting young pre-injectors. Adolescents are beginning to report that their requests to try injecting for the first time are being rebuffed by older injectors.

Environmental Protection: A communication for development campaign has been developed to encourage children and staff of primary schools in and around Tirana to recycle plastic waste as part of the environmental education programme. Based on a baseline assessment of waste challenges, plastic was chosen. The behavior change is discussed in the classroom, among children, at home with parents, and TV spots are also broadcast to reinforce the change. At the same time a system was put in place to allow children to collect plastic waste at school and to have it collected and recycled by a waste recycling company.

Improved feeding practices among young mothers: Materials to promote improved feeding and care practices for new mothers were developed and refined through pre-testing. Draft brochures were shown to mothers at MCH clinics to determine if the material was clear. The materials were revised based on the feedback from mothers especially the less educated who require more basic information in a clear format.

Reducing violence in schools: Bullying between students and violent ways to ensure discipline by teachers are a widely reported phenomenon. A campaign has started in primary schools to help teachers to adopt a new way of ensuring discipline in class, without resorting to physical or psychological violence to discipline children.

3.1.3 Normative Principles

3.1.3.1 Human Rights Based Approach to Cooperation:

Given Albania's status as a middle income country focused on increasing economic growth and accession to the EU, and given that much legislation has been reformed for the purpose, human rights tend to be considered issues that are 'over and done with'. Albania has ratified virtually all human rights treaties, and UNICEF assists authorities to fulfill their resulting obligations. UNICEF reminds authorities and the public that the more democratic and free the society, the more discussions about human rights should take place. Specifically, UNICEF assists Albania to retain a focus on non-discrimination of minority children and those that are vulnerable and are born to parents that are poor, and contributes a human rights based analysis to the work of partners.

Following recommendations of the Committee on the CRC and a multi-year effort, Albania adopted the law on the "Protection of the Rights of the Child" was adopted. It translates the CRC into domestic law defining implementation, monitoring and reporting mechanisms by central and regional authorities. It also provides for the office of the Child Rights Commissioner.

Many remaining development issues for marginalized children have a strong human rights angle - such as birth registration, protection against sexual exploitation and pornography. The human rights approach helps to better understand the interplay of multiple forms of discrimination that typically follow the same children or groups and put them at a life-long disadvantage. Access by marginalized groups to better early childhood care programmes is considered critical for a good trajectory that ensures children develop to their full potential. Moving development interventions from the "periphery" to the center - rather than the other way round as it is typically done - has become a key element of UNICEF advocacy.

Support continues for programmes by young people on State Television - a forum where the country is exposed to child rights issues. UNICEF also supports the setup of Albania's first TV station run by Roma.

UNICEF is a lead sponsor of the annual International Human Rights Film Festival of Albania, which always has a section on children's rights and includes space for debates, including with young people.

3.1.3.2 Gender Equality and Mainstreaming:

Social data are generally disaggregated by gender and do not reveal major gender inequalities in most parts of Albania. However, societal attitudes still tend to perpetuate stereotype gender roles. Of great concern is the extent and general acceptance both among men and women of domestic violence. Both the change in attitudes and the elimination of gender-based violence is likely to succeed only when it also focuses on children.

Government has adopted a National Strategy on Gender Equality and Prevention of Domestic Violence and has mainstreamed gender into several other policies. Implementation is supported by a joint UN programme, under which UNICEF supports a network of Youth Parliamentarians that are elected by their peers. Youth Parliaments conduct outreach activities and host discussions on the role of young women in elections.

In response to a UNICEF gender self-assessment in 2009, the office has put in place some steps to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in UNICEF supported programmes. A gender review step has been introduced into the review of NGO proposal for UNICEF support. A trained gender focal point conducts this review and has provided actionable feedback to staff on areas where proposals lack a gender perspective. The suggestion most commonly noted in the feedback is the need to collect gender disaggregated data and to ensure that training programmes (such as for pre-school teachers or medical personnel) or reform plans (such as for health insurance or social assistance) consider whether existing gender inequalities are being addressed and that no new ones are created.

Another gender audit was done for the UN in Albania by ILO, and the UNICEF led child nutrition programme was one of the programmes scrutinized. Findings were considered useful and will be addressed in 2011.

3.1.3.3 Environmental Sustainability:

With the communist era legacy of abandoned industrial complexes, hurried urban development on marginal lands, and rapid economic growth much of which took place without environmental considerations, Albania suffers heavily from environmental pollution and hazards. Eager for change and affluence, much of the population has quickly developed an appetite for disposable items of all types—but lacks the systems to cope with the growing volume of waste.

Environmental awareness and action is slowly changing in Albania and children in particular have demonstrated an enthusiastic capacity to learn and to act as stewards of the environment. Protective environmental behaviors move from child to parent creating a ripple effect over time.

Since 2008 UNICEF has been supporting Ministries of Education and Environment to integrate environmental education into grades 1 -5 of compulsory schools. The nationwide effort covers about 20% of classrooms so far or about 1000 teachers. The programme promotes positive attitudes of children and parents to protect natural resources, involving children and schools in recycling of plastic waste and conserving energy and water. The programme has been funded by the Dutch Government and is now supported by the UN coherence fund. In addition to a child friendly curriculum, the effort also introduces an environment kit that takes children outdoors to learn about air, water and soil.

UNICEF ensures that the programmes it supports do not have a negative impact on environmental sustainability.

Two occurrences of severe floods in 2010 in the same district are indicative of the need for improved disaster preparedness and disaster prevention, among others, through better regulation of construction in flood prone areas. Disaster preparedness will be further stressed by the UN in the next programme cycle.

3.2 Programme Components:

Title: *Social advocacy, planning and information*

Purpose:

In spite of Albania's economic gains and reform efforts, many children and their families remain excluded from fully enjoying their rights; inequities are especially prominent among the peri-urban and remote poor, ethnic minorities, and children with disabilities. This programme component focuses on ensuring the rights of marginalised children through evidence based policy reforms, budgeting for children, advocacy in the media and better monitoring of child rights at national and local level. In 2010 UNICEF planned to support:

- the review of the cash transfer programme to make it work for children;
- the development of indicators around social inclusion for use by government;
- establishing or strengthening national and regional institutions to monitor child rights, as envisaged in the new legislation of child's rights;
- the development of decentralized social services for excluded groups in Tirana municipality;
- heighten the profile of children in public debate, including through assistance to the media to produce investigative reports for TV and print media on social protection and children's rights, with a focus on remote areas.

Resources Used:

Total approved for 2010 as per CPD: USD 530,000

Total available for 2010 from all sources: RR = USD 169, 823; OR = USD 406,720; Total = USD 576,543.

List of donors:

Thematic Funds for Policy Advocacy & Partnership

UN Coherence Fund (multi-donor)

Result Achieved:

a. Results

The law on the "Protection of the Rights of the Child" was unanimously approved by the Parliament. The law further translates the CRC into domestic law defining implementation, monitoring and reporting mechanisms by central and regional authorities. This is the culmination of a multi-year partnership between UNICEF, government, and civil society. which succeeded in spite of an extended period when the full parliament rarely met due to a boycott by the opposition over election results.

Nine of 12 regions now have functioning child rights units (CRUs). These CRUs are embedded in regional government. They monitor a standard set of indicators relevant to marginalized children, provide information for the development of regional or local action plans, and monitor progress of those. An equal number of Child Rights Observatories have been set up that complement the functions of CRUs with the perspectives and concerns of civil society.

The current social assistance scheme has raised some concern over errors in exclusion and inclusion and the government, helped by the World Bank, aims to improve targeting. To support government in the reform of social transfers and to make it work for children, UNICEF supported a Household Survey to better understand the depth of poverty, the impact on children, and how the social assistance scheme can be adjusted to help children escape the transmission of poverty. Earlier, support was obtained for government to consider the introduction of universal child benefits, which however was not considered feasible at present.

UNICEF supported the Municipality of Tirana to set up an agency to assess needs, and manage, outsource and monitor the provision of social services in the city. The municipality was also assisted to improve the design and set up procedures for the allocation of child friendly public housing for excluded groups.

The situation of children and marginalized groups has little priority in national and local media. UNICEF worked with media to research a series of major child-related stories that were widely published by well known journalists. Among others, these included iodine deficiency in remote poor communities, child labour in mining areas, and violence in schools. Support continued to Albania's only youth-led TV programme (Straight Talk), covering issues such as corruption or mismanagement in schools, abuse of drugs and alcohol in school, and environmental pollution.

As part of the UN communication working group, UNICEF supported members of the UN Press club to be trained by the Inter Service Press agency. Their capacity to report on development and child rights issues was strengthened through training and networking with their peers in Italy.

UNICEF supported the organisation of several events and frequently spoke at national and local occasions to highlight the need for more equity and attention to vulnerable children, the need to reduce the time spent by juveniles in detention awaiting trial, unemployment among marginalized youth, domestic violence and child pornography.

b. Constraints

Reforms required for EU accession are prioritized by government, and unless specifically required social issues tend to receive less attention. Even where specific policies or legislation are required, as was the case for the development and passing of the anti-discrimination law, capacity to implement often remains inadequate. Also, political tensions between parties are high. The boycott of Parliament by the opposition distracts the media and delays serious debate on important social reforms.

c. Studies and Evaluations

1. Evaluation of the National Children's Strategy and Action Plan (2005-2009)
2. Monitoring Report on Social Inclusion 2007-2013, reflecting progress made related to poverty reduction and social inclusion.

d. Partnerships

UNICEF facilitation is strengthening civil society engagement and ensuring its collaboration in the monitoring of the situation of children in regional child rights units and the civil-society-run observatories. Along with USAID, the Swiss Cooperation, WHO, and UNFPA, UNICEF contributed to the preparation of the Demographic and Health Survey. A group of donors and UN agencies are coming together to harmonize support to the social inclusion strategy, though a common support plan is yet to be generated. Under the chairmanship of UNICEF, an ever larger group of development partners from foreign missions and the private sector has contributed to the annual International Human Rights Film Festival in Albania.

Future Workplan:

Future Areas of Focus for 2011

- Further reform of the cash transfer mechanism in Albania to make it work for children;
- Institutionalization of periodic reports on social statistics, especially social exclusion and child poverty;
- Strengthening the capacity of the Child Rights Commissioner and the National Agency on the Protection of the Rights of the Child, both of which received a renewed mandate from the recently adopted child rights law;
- Expand work with media to report more on issues related to marginalised children;
- Support young people's role in TV programming on social issues, and identify a sustainable funding basis for the weekly "Straight Talk" show.

Title: *Children's health and development*

Purpose:

A child born to a parent who is poor is more likely to be undernourished, less likely to receive adequate care and stimulation during its early years, less likely to have ready access to health services when needed, less likely to attend pre-school and hence less likely to succeed in school as well as more likely to drop out of school. One disadvantage will cause another, and unchecked inequities will accumulate over the life of a child from the womb to adulthood. A child born to poor parents faces many more obstacles before it can reach its full potential than other children. This programme component aims to help marginalised children have access to quality services at critical phases, including pre-natal care, safe delivery, post natal care and nutrition, readiness for school through pre-school participation, and full participation in at least primary school. In 2010 UNICEF planned to support:

- Improved policies and standards for maternal and child health preventive services, as well as improved services through well-trained health care providers and community based actions and demand.
- Interventions to improve the nutritional status of women and children including micronutrient deficiencies.
- Increased use of statistics from the completed Demographic Health Survey (DHS) for policy development.
- Demonstrating the positive effect of adequate community participation in pre-schools and parenting practices, especially in marginalized groups. This includes support to community based pre-schools models, birth registration, and improved parenting practices.
- Increasing institutional readiness for pre-schools through development of standards, didactic materials and library supplies, training, and assisting government to estimate needed investments.
- Improved school governance through strengthening parents' boards and student governments, with participation of minority groups, to reduce school drop outs and increase quality in targeted schools in 3 regions.
- Strengthening institutional capacities to reduce school drop-out through support to teacher training bodies, implementation of national Roma Strategy, scaling up hidden drop out model.
- Expanding Environmental Education to additional 1,100 teachers and their schools to increase awareness among children, increase child-led community environmental actions, and to expand the use of relevant participatory education methods.

Resources Used:

Total approved for 2010 as per CPD: USD 3,729,000

Total available for 2010 from all sources: RR: USD 196, 463; OR: USD 2,948,038; Total: USD 3,144,501

Donors:

Thematic: Basic Education and Gender Equality

Thematic: Young Child Survival and Development

Netherlands

USAID

Netherlands National Committee

UN Coherence Funds (multi-donor)

IKEA - Consolidated Funds From NatComs

Swiss Committee

Italian Committee

United Kingdom Committee

MDG Fund (Spain)

UN Trust Fund for Human Security

Result Achieved:

a. Results

Newly born children are now generally registered at birth. Legal assistance was provided for the remaining older children without registration. Civil census personnel were oriented to ensure that all children, including those from marginalized backgrounds, will be registered in future.

Over 85 percent of family doctors in a disadvantaged pilot region were trained in management protocols for common childhood illnesses. The courses are now accredited by the National Center for Continuing Medical Education.

The first part of an assessment of maternal and child health prevention services was completed. Recommendations will be made on how to improve standards of service. Public health authorities in Tirana and leaders of the Roma community have supported "immunization plus" activities including door to door screening for 590 Roma families, and orientated health providers on how to reach vulnerable populations with services.

The Demographic Health Survey was finalized and widely disseminated in a national seminar, thematic roundtables, extensive info packs, and an interactive website. Statisticians were trained on the management and analysis of social statistics.

UNICEF coordinates with WHO and FAO to support the joint MDG-F funded child nutrition programme. National ownership was firmly established through major consensus meetings and a memorandum signed between several ministries. Baseline nutrition surveys were completed. An assessment of the milling industry identified prospects to introduce mandatory flour fortification. More than 300 representatives of the food processing industry were mobilized to use iodised salt, and some 80 inspectors were oriented on the quality control system. Custom authorities provide quarterly feedback on imported salt.

Following the new policy of mandatory pre-primary classes, UNICEF helped to prepare the curriculum and training of teachers, while the World Bank and the government cover the operating costs for 250 classes. Tools were developed to estimate the costs of providing pre-schooling under different scenarios, to be taken forward next year with the Ministries of Finance and Education. Books and didactic materials were provided to set up reading corners in pre-schools, starting with marginalised communities. It is anticipated that 900 ECD reading corners will be functioning in pre-schools with trained teachers by 2011.

With UNICEF assistance, the Ministry of Education developed an action plan to achieve 'zero drop-out' by 2013. The information management system was further developed to identify sources of marginalization and to collect more robust data. In a region with a large minority population, the local departments of social services and education jointly follow up on school drop outs.

Guidance and tools for functional student governments were developed, and regional parents' boards have been supported in three areas. A curriculum on Roma history, traditions and culture has been developed in one region, and is part of the teaching university coursework.

The Albania Reads initiative supported by IKEA completed the delivery of libraries to over 1500 schools and 470 pre-schools. In some rural areas, where over half the families have no books at home, the libraries are a lifeline for children and a much needed boost to classroom literacy instruction.

Environmental education was supported in 250 primary schools in Albania. The programme promotes positive attitudes of children and parents to protect and conserve natural resources, involving children and schools and encouraging recycling of plastic waste.

b. Constraints

National expenditure for health and education as a proportion of GDP remains low, leaving little space for much needed early childhood interventions for marginalized

children. Earmarked resources from donors do not always match high priority interventions, which has a constraining effect.

c. Studies and Evaluations

- Endpoint evaluation of environmental education
- Survey on knowledge gaps of primary health care providers on anaemia and nutrition
- Baseline survey on knowledge, attitudes and practices on nutrition and household food security
- Survey of flour fortification capacity
- DHS

d. Partnerships

- UNICEF participates in and sometimes leads a range of programming groups that bring together Government, UN agencies and development partners. The UNICEF led joint child nutrition programme is considered a good example of management practice and national ownership.
- Agribusinesses and the food processing industry are willing partners for nutrition programmes.

e. Future Workplan

- Support MOH in implementing a basic package of services for maternal and child health with special focus on the most vulnerable.
- Improve quality of child care services through upgrading skills of health providers and improved practices at community level.
- Support and coordinate interventions for the reduction of malnutrition among children and elimination of micronutrient deficiencies.
- Follow up on the costing estimation for pre-schooling to secure local and national financial allocations benefiting especially marginalized young children.
- Evaluate existing ECD standards and curriculum in preparation of the next country programme.
- Further strengthen the education information system to pinpoint causes and remedies for school drop out; support a survey on education of children with disabilities.
- Strengthen institutions to address hidden-drop-outs; and to contribute to a framework for child-friendly schools.
- Strengthen students and parents' bodies to effect policies for inclusive education.

Title: *Child, youth and family protection*

Purpose:

Rapid economic growth in Albania has created more national wealth and reduced poverty, but also created imbalances and inequities among children. Children in some families need financial assistance to cope, while others may need to be protected from neglect, abuse or violence. Others have special learning needs, were not registered at birth, or need counselling to break a drug habit, support in court, or help finding a job when they get out of prison. This programme component seeks to strengthen the child protection system so that children of all categories have access to appropriate social services, a fair justice system, employment opportunities, and to participate as young people in decisions affecting them. In 2010 the programme aimed to support the following areas:

- Strengthening and expanding child protection services in municipalities and communes;
- Consolidating the success of the National Child Helpline;
- Generate consensus on policy options for the reform of social services as recommended by the evaluation of the Child Protection Units;
- Support a campaign to reduce violence against children in schools and residential care institutions;
- Help implement the national Foster Care Strategy according to agreed standards of

care and services;

- Support the reform of the child care system preventing baby abandonment and relinquishment;
- Support institutions to protect children with disabilities from discrimination through prevention, early detection and inclusive education;
- Advocate for measures against child pornography and stronger legislation;
- Follow up on the remaining complex cases of children not registered at birth;
- Promote access to services for most at risk adolescents to overcome and prevent drug addiction, and promote healthy lifestyles;
- Continue to promote alternatives to detention for juveniles and improved budgeting for juvenile justice;
- Enhance collection and use of data on juvenile justice;
- Further develop reintegration programmes for juveniles in the penitentiary;
- Develop strategies to address cases of children under the age of 14 who commit crimes.

Resources Used:

Total approved for 2010 as per CPD: USD 3,172,000

Total available for 2010 from all sources: RR= USD 170,481; OR = USD 1,485,148 ;

Total: USD 1,655,629

List of donors : Ireland, UN Coherence Fund (multi-donor), UNICEF National Committee (Sweden), MDG-Fund (Spain), UN Trust Fund for Human Security, Child Protection Thematic fund

Result Achieved:

a. Results

Albania's State Social services traditionally administered cash transfers, but were not able to provide or oversee protection for the excluded and marginalized children unable to access the services. To address this gap, with initial support from UNICEF, Child Protection Units (CPUs) now operate in 16 municipalities or communities. While UNICEF supported the design and start up cost, the CPU model is now supported by other donors. Over a three year period local governments have committed to assume the running costs of the CPU.

To further institutionalize social protection and care, UNICEF and Austrian Development Cooperation helped the Government to organize a national conference. The conference brought together central and local authorities, NGOs and experts from Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and the UK who reviewed models for the decentralized provision of statutory social services and the different roles of regulators and service providers. The Government expressed readiness to further reform social work to better help people to escape from the trap of poverty and social exclusion.

The National Child Helpline, now in its second year, remains an important component of the child protection system. It handles about 330 calls a day from children in need of counseling and referral including emergency services. All phone companies in Albania provide the calls for free.

Standards of foster care have been developed and approved by the Council of Ministers. Two manuals for social workers and foster families were tested and published. The government is about to de-institutionalize the first 80 children in Tirana and Shkodra, out of around 600 children in residential care.

Government's attention has re-focused on street children, particularly in Tirana. The number is not alarmingly high, but child abuse in connection with begging or trading remains a concern. Tirana Municipality is establishing a community centre and a CPU to better respond to the needs of children, especially Roma.

In 2010, more than 40 percent of sentences for juveniles used alternatives to detention. A new draft law on mediation extends discretion for mediation referral to judges and

prosecutors and makes it an obligatory option for consideration before court session. Police diverted 22 percent of juvenile offences to victim-offender mediation in piloted cities. However, average time spent in detention by juveniles awaiting trial is too long. UNICEF supported the newly opened Kavaja Institute for Juveniles, which now has a regime appropriate for its 40 juvenile offenders aimed at their reintegration into society following their release, in accordance with international standards.

UNICEF continues to co-lead with the Ministry of Justice the Juvenile Justice subcommittee. It convenes donors, government and NGOs to coordinate reforms. Work started to draft a strategy on justice for children, including for children under 14. An assessment of the budget needs for juvenile justice has begun.

As a pilot, injecting drug users were encouraged to stop introducing adolescents to injecting. So far injecting drug users are responding well to their role in protecting young pre-injectors. Adolescents have started reporting that their requests to inject for the first time are rebuffed by older injectors. The effect on the reduction of HIV and STI risks among adolescents will be evaluated. A National Action Plan for Most-At-Risk Adolescents is in place and authorities committed to integrate experience from "Break the Cycle" to increase young people's access to voluntary testing and counselling.

As part of a joint UN programme, Youth employment services commenced in the regional employment offices of Kukes and Shkodra providing career guidance and counselling. Materials on educational choices, employment opportunities and rights at work were disseminated through outreach activities. The centres also offer livelihood and employability skills for youth at risk and young informal workers.

A coalition of young people, Ministries and Parliamentarians promoted healthy and safe behaviours among adolescents. More than 1600 young people promoted healthy behaviours and rallied community support for implementation of the laws on alcohol and tobacco use.

b. Constraints

The existing rules for joint UN programmes sometimes become an obstacle to speedy release of funds due to uneven pace of processing.

Future Workplan:

- Consolidate child protection units
- Assist government in social service reform to institutionalize statutory services in each municipality and commune that can provide child protection
- Consolidate foster care and child care reform to avoid abandonment and institutionalization
- Help identify sustainable resource base for national help line
- Finalization of the Juvenile justice strategy, budget and action plan
- Enhancing data collection and analysis for juvenile offenses
- Further support to more extensive use of probation, mediation and legal and psychosocial support for juveniles
- Support for the decrease in numbers and time children spend in pre-trial detention
- Develop national standards for the essential package of intervention for Adolescents Most at Risks of HIV
- Support for improving the management of HIV treatment for children and the development of a national action plan for PTMCT
- Consolidate youth employment resource centers in Kukes and Shkodra; assist the provision of career counselling to 600 young informal workers, and livelihood and employability skills training for 200 youth at risk and informal worker
- Promote a wider dialogue for a sustained strategy for youth parliament.

Title: *Cross-sectoral costs*

This programme pays the salaries of all programme support staff as well as a share of stationery, rent, and travel budget.

Resources Used:

CPD Ceiling (RR only) = USD 144,000

Actual 2010 Allocation = USD 210. 495 (all RR)

Result Achieved:

This programme supports all programmes with cross-cutting functions, supplies, rent and travel budget. In response to 2010 floods, 50,000 USD of RR from other programmes was reallocated to this programme, and the amount was transferred in cash to cover the cost of rehabilitating schools, clinics and drainage in affected communities.

4. OPERATIONS & MANAGEMENT

4.1 Governance & Systems

4.1.1 Governance Structure:

The office has an Annual Management Plan (AMP) updated for 2010. It is complemented by a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and the UN Security Plan. The AMP was updated inviting participation of all staff, and approved by the CMT. It is meant to serve as a desk-top reference for all staff.

The AMP clearly communicates office objectives and priorities. It also describes accountability and performance expectation for all staff, and assigns specific responsibilities, such as for focal points, to specific staff members. The AMP describes the governance structure and mechanisms, including the role of statutory committees in managing risks, and their membership. It describes new or updated policies, such as for continuous professional development, UN coordination mechanisms, or specific procedures related to ethics and conflict management, travel or use of PCAs.

The CMT is the central management body advising the Representative on policies, strategies, programme implementation, management and performance, and how to keep human and financial resources focused on office priorities. Business and financial reports on key management indicators are prepared monthly and reviewed by the CMT. More detailed reports, including the Business Information reports, are reviewed quarterly.

In addition to the Contract Review Committee, a PCA Review Committee was created with slightly different membership, to advise on the adequacy of selection and risks attached to agreements with NGOs, which often are single sourced agreements. Gender control points form part of the criteria and checklists to be reviewed for these.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are updated by the Operations section and programme assistants and reviewed by the CMT on a monthly basis. The HQ-generated business information reports have begun to replace these office reports and have proven very handy.

There are no outstanding audit recommendations.

4.1.2 Strategic Risk Management:

An ERM exercise was held in the last quarter; it included development of a Risk Profile and Risk and Control Library along with the development of Risk Control and Self-Assessment Matrix. The focus was on identifying all potential risks that could affect the achievement of the office's planned result for the remaining time of the current CP. CMT members were delegated to lead the process and all members had an opportunity to contribute. The draft documents were presented to the staff for finalisation and adoption.

The effectiveness of the current risk responses was assessed and the residual risks were identified and assessed in terms of likelihood and the possible impact on the achievement of the objectives. The Risk Profile of the office for 2011 indicates several high, medium and low risk areas. The detailed risk description and context of the risk, the current risk response or control, assessment of the current risk response or control in terms of effectiveness in addressing the root cause of the risks, the numerical rating of the likelihood and impact of the residual risks, level/significance of the residual risks and the risk area, and the action plan to manage the significant risks are presented in the Country Office's Risk and Control Library.

The office maintained and updated the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) ensuring that the office can continue critical services when exposed to natural or man-made disasters, failure of critical infrastructure, security threats or catastrophic loss. The office IT system was tested and proved to be operational throughout the simulated exercise. The Business Continuity Plan is part of an overall office crisis management plan.

The office conducted a financial self-assessment of five of the largest transactions.

The Representative prioritizes field or partner visits in accordance with the cumulative amount of transactions.

4.1.3 Evaluation:

Since becoming a UN reform pilot, the office updates its Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) within the UN country teams' common monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan. The UNICEF Deputy Representative is a member of the UN M&E working group and shares the office plans with all agencies so that studies and evaluations can be planned together to avoid overlap as well as to seek opportunities to combine with other agencies.

Evaluations conducted by the office are generally fair and impartial based on the selection process which tries to avoid conflicts of interest or over-reliance on a few experts. Good local evaluation capacity is somewhat limited to a few sectors, experts or institutions necessitating the use of external expertise. By pairing external international evaluators with national experts, however, UNICEF ensures objective assessment as well as national capacity building. Owing to language barrier, some information is inadvertently filtered or lost in translation but care is taken to minimize this risk.

Formal management responses are not usually done, but each major evaluation goes through several rounds of review and is wrapped up with a final debrief with office management as well as a formal presentation to the partners. An excellent example of effective use of findings was the evaluation of the functioning of child protection units, which led to a national conference and a higher level of reform. The external evaluation of the UN Reform effort did include a formal management response for each recommendation, and UNICEF provided extensive comments.

Through the regional office, the "PARC" facility was frequently used to ensure quality of TORs, inception reports or final draft evaluations.

4.1.4 Information Technology and Communication:

The office secures telecommunication services from a company selected under a UN LTA, and monitors the agreement with a view to improve the services. Video and Audio conference solutions were implemented and are used regularly for internal and for partner meetings.

Laptops with docking stations have replaced desktop equipment for all key staff as per the Business Continuity Plan. A new operating system (Windows 7) has been implemented. Older IT equipment has been donated to partners based on recommendation of the LPSB.

More staff are now using internet at home, and can access business applications remotely through the citrix mode. The office acquired two new servers and a tape

backup system to increase productivity of business applications and to provide better Disaster Recovery solutions.

The office improved office security through a new entry access system for staff and visitors. A new monitoring system for fire and theft alarms was installed. Analog cameras for recording and monitoring the premises were replaced with digital equipment for better on and off-site management. The improvements enable notification by cell phone-email of key staff in case of alarm.

4.2 Fin Res & Stewardship

4.2.1 Fund-raising & Donor Relations:

All donor reports were on time and are generally of good quality. Donors such as the Dutch government have praised UNICEF for high quality reporting, in particular, they are pleased with our effort to decode the expenditure attachment so that it is better linked to the original objectives. More than 70% of the annual OR ceiling was raised. All PBAs expiring this year were fully spent. PBA extensions are rare, this year one PBA was extended by 6 months, in order to align the funds with the school calendar.

Resource mobilisation efforts are constrained by the procedure of the UN reform pilot which proscribes heads of agencies to fundraise with donors locally. The UN Resident Coordinator leads resource mobilisation for the UN agencies and encourages donors to contribute to the common UN fund first, to thematically earmark second, and only lastly to earmark for an agency. In view of a shrinking pool of donors and the above regulations, UNICEF will need to redouble its efforts to present its unique needs and capability to deliver results on behalf of children.

4.2.2 Management of Financial and Other Assets:

The next audit is planned to take place in 2011 or thereafter. The office conducted a self-assessment of five of the largest transactions. The exercise revealed that files are complete, the selection of vendors is transparent and transactions were done according to the PO/SSA and according to the set standards.

Budgets were allocated to programme components and results as received. Expenditure rates were lower than expected at times, an issue that is frequently discussed by the CMT. While there is no instant solution, a certain unpredictability of funding contributes to this. Staff and partners tend to plan for what is at hand, but have to gear themselves quickly to respond to the magnitude of new funding when it becomes available.

RR was spent at 95 percent and only one PBA this year was extended for 6 months. This was due to the needed alignment of activities with the school calendar (teacher training could not be done during school holidays at the end of which the PBA expired). There was no quarter with more than 5 per cent of DCT outstanding over 9 months.

Efficiency gains as part of the UN reform are beginning but not yet fully evident or realized. The collaborative reform process is demanding in terms of time spent on additional reporting and inter-agency work. Among positive gains, the UN LTAs for printing services and event management are proving to be cost and/or time effective for programme and operations staff.

4.2.3 Supply:

Supply management follows UNICEF standards. Most of procurement in 2010 was from the local vendors.

CRC submissions for SSAs by programme staff have improved, especially following a clearer separation of submissions for SSAs or PCAs but there is room for clearer documentation of submissions and deliberations.

The office renewed all IT equipment and goods were procured through direct orders, according to the UNICEF LTA. In the fourth quarter UNICEF rapidly procured and delivered blankets for families affected by flooding in the northern part of Albania.

Procurement services are well managed by the Government of Albania (GoA), and mainly used for vaccines and HIV/AIDS drugs.

UNICEF participated or led establishment of UN LTAs. New LTAs were issued for printing and events management services; other existing LTAs were evaluated and extended for 2011.

Field visits include assessment on the use of UNICEF financed supplies. Programme and operations staff monitor the quality and quantity of supplies for programme implementation, and assess the internal management capacity of implementing partners, including for procurement. When needed, the implementing partners are provided with the UN guidance on procurement and financial management.

4.3 Human Resource Capacity:

The office has a stable staffing structure, with no separations or new staff in 2010 and no unplanned vacancies. One post was moved from RR to OR following receipt of funding from the MDG-F; as per donor and UNRC preference, a new recruitment was required for which the incumbent of the previous post was recruited.

Staff motivation is generally good, even though few staff can see prospects for upward movement within the UNICEF office.

The AMP forms the basis of key assignments of the Performance Evaluation Reports (PER), and of individual work plans. International staff started using the new PER system, and initially find it to be time consuming. Staff are encouraged to participate in continuous professional education and to join and actively participate in recognized professional associations both to expand their technical and functional skills, and to provide an opportunity for professional networking.

Staff members are permitted and are actively using the option to take time off for preparation and completion of examinations for designated degrees, skills etcetera. In 2010, staff were supported for on-line learning of professional English writing skills. Many staff have not had recent training in emergency response, but the experience of responding to two floods in 2010 did not reveal gaps in staff response skills.

The office encourages staff members to resolve complaints or conflict through discussion with the supervisor, the staff association, the representative, the peer volunteer or another trusted staff member of her or his choice. Should these channels prove ineffective, staff members are aware of the contact persons at the regional and HQ locations.

Standards on HIV in workplace are implemented and periodic refresher trainings are conducted by the office HIV/AIDS focal point.

4.4 Other Issues

4.4.1 Management Areas Requiring Improvement:

Significant savings were achieved in 2010 through the UN long term agreements for procurement of fuel (28%); mobile communication (17%), travel (16%) and printing (20%). Due to frequent use of existing LTAs, the time saving of staff engaged in procurement is noteworthy.

4.4.2 Changes in AMP:

New programme related office priorities will be determined following the preparation of work plans with partners.

UNICEF's advocacy agenda will be updated.

Priorities will reflect the orderly closure of ongoing programmes as appropriate, and getting ready for the new programme cycle starting in 2012.

No major changes to the office governance structure and mechanisms are anticipated.

5. STUDIES, SURVEYS, EVALUATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

5.1 List of Studies, Surveys & Evaluations:

1. *Budget analysis and Public Expenditure Review*
2. *Costing child social inclusion policies*
3. *Albanian Demographic Health survey*
4. *The Evaluation Report on the National Children's Strategy and Action Plan (2005-2009)*
5. *Social Inclusion Strategy 2007-2013(Progress Report 2008-2009)*
6. *Assessment of milling industry in Albania for the purpose of flour fortification*
7. *End of Project Evaluation of Child Led Environmental Education*
8. *Assessment of knowledge gaps of health care providers on anemia and nutrition*
9. *Baseline survey on nutrition and household food security*
10. *Country Led Evaluation of Delivering as One Albania*

5.2 List of Other Publications

1. *The Evaluation Report on the National Children's Strategy and Action Plan (2005-2009)*
2. *The realization of the children's rights in Albania – annual report of the Observatory of Child's Rights*
3. *Ready for school*
4. *Various Brochures on Youth Employment*
5. *Break the cycle on injecting drug use in Albania - Various brochures*
6. *Information pack for BF and BFHI (posters, leaflet)*
7. *Social Inclusion Strategy 2007-2013(Progress Report 2008-2009)*
8. *Training manuals for teachers and HCW on IDD*
9. *Alternative Report 2005- 2009*
10. *Advocacy set for implementation of USI law*

6. INNOVATION & LESSONS LEARNED:

Title: *Rationalised Coordination of Joint Programmes*

Contact Person: Detlef Palm

Abstract:

This innovation is being shared to contribute to UNICEF and UN global thinking and policy for ensuring more coherent and practical coordination of joint programmes.

Innovation or Lessons Learned:

Many UN agencies typically consider themselves to be the implementing agencies of Government - UN programmes of cooperation. Under such prevailing views, UN agencies set up management structures for joint programmes, which are typically led by a UN project manager. Government is invited to management meeting, and the UN programme manager would typically report on "what the UN has done".

Under the UNICEF view, government authorities or CSO implement the programme activities, and the UN agencies provide individual or joint inputs. Consequently, UNICEF and other participating UN agencies asked the government to appoint a national programme manager, who was appointed by the lead minister as the coordinator of the inter-ministerial effort. The government management structure was cemented through a MOU between the involved ministries. During management meetings, to which the UN is invited, the government manager (or delegate) reports to the meeting on progress made

and constraints. UNICEF, as the lead agency for the UN, ensures that UN inputs into the government actions are provided in a timely and coordinated manner.

Even common guidelines issued by DOCO or an inter-UN body may be interpreted in radically different ways by UN agencies. Agencies read guidelines through the lens of their corporate philosophy and perhaps experience. These philosophies and experience can be dramatically different.

Potential Application:

The different programme approaches and philosophies, including those surrounding government ownership and responsibility or roles of UN agencies need to be discussed at a strategic level by the policy and programme divisions of the key agencies. "Common" guidelines need to be tested as to whether all agencies will interpret them in a similar way.

Issue/Background:

UNICEF was identified as the lead UN agency for the MDG-F funded joint UN programme on child nutrition, which has been the last of a series of joint UN programmes in Albania. UNICEF's concept of the management of the joint programme was different from the management practices commonly applied by the UN in Albania, and proved to be a success.

Strategy and Implementation:

UNICEF strategy as lead agency in this joint programme was to press for strong government leadership and coordination, placing government in the driving seat with a single government focal point at senior level coordinating the various line ministries in government. On the UN side, UNICEF coordinates the efforts of the three agencies (UNICEF, FAO and WHO).

Progress and Results:

With both UN agencies and government each having their elements more coordinated via their focal points, the overall management of the joint programmes runs more smoothly, avoiding pitfalls that are likely where there is not enough clarity on the coordination and implementation roles. Even the issue of having a joint UN office is not an issue as all agencies are clear on their roles.

Next Steps:

UNICEF and other agencies need to review guidance for joint programmes to arrive at a common understanding on implementation and coordination modalities and the respective role of UN agencies, government, and donors.

7. SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION:

UNICEF Albania frequently invites experts from the region (e.g. Bulgaria, Kosovo, Romania) to share lessons, contribute to research, or participate in conferences that might be of interest to them. UNICEF also facilitates the sharing of lessons by Albanian officials to other countries, within or outside the region (e.g. on juvenile justice to Moldova, on family affairs to Iran).