Executive Summary

The Country Programme cycle (2010-2012) ended in 2012. Based on an invitation from the Government of Bulgaria, the UNICEF Bulgaria Country Office (CO) engaged in a broad consultation process and prepared the new five-year Country Programme for 2013-2017. It was adopted by the Executive Board in September 2012. The new partnership aims to achieve greater equity and social inclusion, strengthen children’s rights monitoring, influence the change of social norms, build a society of solidarity and respect, and share knowledge and good practices from Bulgaria across borders. Strengthening partnerships between UNICEF and the Government of Bulgaria was mutually confirmed during the meeting of the UNICEF Executive Director, Anthony Lake; and the President of Bulgaria, Rosen Plevneliev.

To create an enabling environment to realize children’s rights, the Bulgaria CO continued to provide substantial input into key policy developments. In 2012, policy advocacy efforts resulted in the adoption of the Action Plan on Justice for Children and the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion. ‘A Promise Renewed’ was signed, followed by a commitment from the Ministry of Health (MH) to initiate home visitation services to reach the most marginalised children.

Bulgaria has reached a tipping point in regard to child care system reform. The efforts of government and many international and national partners aimed to ensure the sustainability of reform progress, quality of new services, and results for children. UNICEF and its partners successfully completed a three-year demonstration model project of foster care in nine regions of Bulgaria, which led to a number of legislative changes. The approach was scaled up by the government with EU funds. An external evaluation showed that foster care has become well established and recognized, although further support was recommended to maintain a high quality.

In line with the national agenda and UNICEF’s regional Call to Action to ‘Stop placing children under three in institutions’, the Bulgaria CO supported developing innovative services to prevent institutionalization of young children and is viewed by the government as a subject matter expert in the process of closing infant homes in Bulgaria. The Ministerial Conference ‘Ending placement of children under three in institutions: support nurturing families for all young children’, organized by UNICEF and the government under the patronage of the President of Bulgaria, brought together experts and 24 country delegations from Europe and Central Asia in November 2012. The conference reaffirmed the commitment of all states to stop placing young children in residential care and provide better support to families.

The main shortfall in 2012 was the inability of the Bulgaria CO to influence poverty reduction. Bulgaria was hit hard by the economic crisis and the government prioritized strict fiscal discipline. This had a positive effect on macroeconomic stability and a negative effect on the poorest families with children who were left out from social assistance schemes. Poverty continues to deprive boys and girls from 65% of the families with three or more children.

Despite significant efforts by the Bulgaria CO, effective and cross-sectoral budgeting still remains a challenge and hampers the development of integrated services more responsive to the needs of children and families.

The Bulgaria CO enhanced and broadened partnerships with the business sector, applying the ‘Child Rights and Business Principles’ platform. A closer partnership with the Office of the Public Ombudsman was also pursued.

Country Situation as Affecting Children & Women

Bulgaria continued to struggle in 2012 with the negative effects of the economic crisis. The government exercised stricter fiscal discipline to preserve its macroeconomic stability. The employment rate in 2012 for the 20-64 age group was 63.9% (Eurostat), and the unemployment rate almost doubled to 11.5% for the July-September 2012 period (NSI). The 2011 youth unemployment rate was 21.8%. Gender disparities are present in the labor market, as women are paid on average 20% less than men.
To support necessary public sector reforms, the government has access to European Union (EU) Structural Funds, but still struggles to make full use of these resources. For example, the implementation rate was 32.76% for November 2012). According to Eurostat, Bulgaria has the highest ‘at risk of poverty after social transfers’ threshold in the EU at 22%, and the share of severely materially deprived is 44%.

Austerity measures have stalled the government’s goal of increasing the standard of living to 60% of the EU average by 2020, and have slowed down the progressive realization of children’s rights. The social protection system is under strain, with budget allocations for social welfare shrinking from BGN 891 million to BGN 691 million between 2009 and 2010. At the same time, the budget for child allowances decreased by 24%.

It is to the government’s credit that funding for child protection services and for the integration of children with disabilities was largely preserved, while funds for means-tested social assistance were cut by more than half. Through concerted efforts and careful prioritization, the country was successful in advancing children’s rights regarding protection. This was seen in the reduction of the number of children in residential care institutions, which dropped by over 40% between 2001 and 2011 (in terms of the rate per 100,000 children). According to the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP), at the end of 2011 there were 4,791 children in institutions, while in 2010 the number was 5,695. During the last five years, the number of foster families increased tenfold, and in 2011 more children at risk were placed in alternative family care than in residential care, thanks to strengthened preventive child protection services and the development of innovative alternative types of care.

Strong government commitment to system change, backed up by UNICEF advice and EU Structural Funds, played an important role in reorienting policies and resource allocations. However, policies and practices are still not sufficient with regard to preventing risks and family separation. The risk of institutionalization remains high for the most disadvantaged, minority groups, and children from poor families. Children with disabilities still represent 46% of the total number of children in residential care (SACP). An important bottleneck to be addressed is the fact that social services are funded based on service capacity and often do not take into account the actual number of beneficiaries, quality, and results for them. Stigma and discrimination against the marginalized and disadvantaged contribute to family separation and increase the risk for social exclusion, as well as affect the access to and quality of services.

There are still significant disparities among various groups in the country’s population of 7.3 million, the majority of which comprises people of Bulgarian ethnicity and two dominant ethnic minority groups: Turks (8.8%) and Roma (4.9%). Nearly half of the child population (44.6%) is at risk of poverty and social exclusion. While the overall poverty rate is 20.7%, poverty affects two-thirds (65%) of families with three or more children, most of them Roma. Poor families live in remote rural areas and in suburbs of larger towns, often in inadequate housing. In settlements with a Roma population, 47% of the dwellings do not have appropriate sanitary conditions, compared with the national average of 7%.

Although the right to free health access is guaranteed under the law, an increasing number of children whose parents do not have health insurance cannot access health services, and 12% of children aged 0-3 years are not assigned to a doctor. Overall, the infant mortality rate is low at 8.5 deaths per 1,000 live births for 2011, but in some areas of the country it is three times higher, up to 33 deaths per 1,000 live births. The situation is worse in Roma settlements, where access to health services is difficult and parents and caregivers generally have received a low-level education and have inadequate parenting skills. In these settlements, nutrition is also of poor quality and does not meet the requirements for the child’s age. Moreover, sanitary conditions are below standard. The percentage of children with low birth weight has increased, and stood at 8.7% in 2010. HIV/AIDS prevalence remains low, although a 20% annual growth of newly registered cases has been recorded.

Children’s access to education is also marked by ethnic disparities. According to the 2011 census, 23.2% of Roma children do not attend school, compared with 11.9% among the Turkish minority and 5.6% among ethnic Bulgarians. Roma girls are more likely than boys to drop out earlier from school. Overall, preschool enrolment rates at age five have reached 80%, but primary school enrolment rates (grades 1-4) have declined, while the rate for higher levels (grades 5-8) was only 80.6% in the 2010/2011 school year. The
inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream education has been promoted, and the government is committed to pursuing further steps to improve access and outcomes. The overall quality of education needs special attention, as more than 40% of Bulgarian ninth-graders were found to be functionally illiterate in the latest survey of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Similarly, one in every five people aged 20-29 years old is functionally illiterate.

Further progress in the realization of children’s rights is within reach, and now entails tackling the root causes of violations related to structural poverty, prevailing attitudes, and social norms. Bulgaria is showing sensible progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, there are still challenges, especially in relation to maternal health and child mortality as the gap between urban areas and the rest of the country is growing wider, especially in districts with large minority groups (e.g., Roma).

Regarding emergencies, Bulgaria has a moderate risk of floods and earthquakes.

**Country Programme Analytical Overview**

The current Country Programme (2010-2012) ended in 2012. The Bulgaria CO engaged in a comprehensive consultation process to develop the new Country Programme Document (CPD) for 2013-2017 with relevant partners. In addition to the Situation Analysis, a Determinant Analysis was conducted for two key areas (i.e., Child’s Right to Family Environment and Young Child Well-being), and informed the design of interventions under the new Country Programme.

Strong policy advocacy efforts supported the work related to child care system reform, early childhood development (ECD), juvenile justice, children’s rights monitoring, child participation, prevention of early school leaving, and in particular, the rights of the most disadvantaged Roma children.

Knowledge management and sharing good practices contributed to the development of key government policies and strategies, including the following: Operational Programme for EU Structural Funds for 2014-2020, National Strategy for Roma Integration, Government Policy for Justice for Children, draft Child Act, and others.

Complex reforms of social welfare and child protection systems were pursued by the government, although they were slowed down by the financial crisis. Based on good practices and models developed with support from UNICEF, the government accessed EU Funds for the national scale-up of major interventions in child protection. Demonstration modeling of foster care in nine regions was completed in 2012 with great success, showing that good quality family-based care can be developed in a country completely relying on residential care until recently.

Bulgaria made a big breakthrough in reforming the child care system, which was unanimously recognized at a number of international gatherings in Sofia in 2012, including those organized by the International Federation of Educative Communities (FICE), International Foster Care Organisation (IFCO), and EUROCHILD Network. This was complemented by the Ministerial Conference co-organized by UNICEF and the Government of Bulgaria, that brought together experts and 20 high-level state delegations from Europe and Central Asia. The conference reaffirmed commitment from all states to stop placing young children in residential care and provide better support to families.

The ECD interventions aimed at strengthening intersectoral cooperation and reaching out to the most marginalized children and families. As this is an underdeveloped area for the country, capacity gaps exist at all levels, from parents and communities to policy makers. The Bulgaria CO supported developing ECD standards and approaches to support parents of young children. Particular attention was given to strengthening the role of the health sector in reaching out to the most marginalized children.

Communication for development (C4D) interventions at the national and local levels, and partnerships with civil society, media, and the private sector further contributed to social mobilization and alliances for children’s rights. The Bulgaria CO used an integrated approach combining policy advocacy, communications,
social mobilization, and fundraising around selected issues. The number of corporate and individual donors was increased, and new fundraising channels were introduced, with priority given to pledges. Using business associations and the Global Compact platform, UNICEF embarked on large-scale corporate engagement for children. The strong visibility and leading role of UNICEF is supported through mass media, the local UNICEF Web site, and a very active Facebook page that brings together 70,000 supporters.

**Effective Advocacy**

*Mostly met benchmarks*

Advocacy efforts were mostly organized around two key areas: a child’s right to live in a family environment, and the well-being of young children. In addition, the Bulgaria CO advocated for relevant policy and legislation changes in relation to other priorities from the Country Programme (CP), such as juvenile justice, children’s rights monitoring, child participation, and prevention of early school leaving. The underlying theme in all advocacy efforts was equity and social inclusion, in particular for the most disadvantaged Roma children.

Bulgaria made significant breakthrough and reached a tipping point in regard to child care system reform. UNICEF and many national and international partners focused their advocacy efforts to sustain the progress and make the change irreversible. The government demonstrated strong political will to close large residential care institutions, and made important steps in that direction. UNICEF and nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners strongly advocated for shifting policies from deinstitutionalization to preventing institutionalization, i.e., more effective support to families, including alternative families. The importance of better support to families, especially those with young children, was the key message during high-profile visits of a French expert on resilience, Boris Cyrulnik, and three senior UNICEF officials.

In October 2012, three international conferences took place in Bulgaria, organized by local NGOs and international partners such as FICE, IFCO and EUROCHILD Network. All of the conferences, from different angles and for different audiences, examined the progress of the reform process and identified threats for its sustainability. In November 2012, this was complemented by the Ministerial Conference jointly organized by the UNICEF Regional Office (RO) and the Government of Bulgaria, bringing together leading international experts and 24 high-level country delegations from Europe and Central Asia. Best practices were exchanged and commitments confirmed to prioritize youngest children in the efforts to reduce the number of children in residential care.

Integrated ECD interventions were advocated for as a key factor for reducing disparities, promoting equity, improving health and education outcomes, preventing institutionalization, and reducing child mortality that still remains high among the most marginalized communities. The Minister of Health signed ‘A Promise Renewed’ and the ministry committed to testing the health visitation service to reach out to mothers and young children living in poverty and exclusion. The Ministry of Education is expanding access to preschool education to all four-year-old children.

The Policy Concept for Child Friendly Justice, developed and adopted in 2011 with UNICEF support, was followed by drafting a Plan of Action until 2020, laying the ground for a major and long overdue change. The Bulgaria CO supported drafting a new Child Act and its presentation in Parliament. However, a public debate lead to its temporary withdrawal and exposed conflicting views in society about child rights. Further awareness raising and social mobilization efforts are planned to overcome the obstacles. The Bulgaria CO also started to build alliances and advocate for establishing an independent children’s rights monitoring body.

In all policy debates, UNICEF systematically brought attention to the multiple deprived children from the poorest Roma families. In the process of developing a National Strategy for Roma, the Bulgaria CO made sure that children were not left out.
Capacity Development

Mostly met benchmarks

The Bulgaria CO contributed to the capacity development of the child protection system, including juvenile justice. Emphasis was put on better planning and monitoring of social services, demonstration modeling of preventive and alternative services (especially in regard to preventing institutionalization), and effective policy development (in regard to juvenile justice, prevention of early school leaving, and maternal and child health).

Particularly successful, was the effort to strengthen the capacity of the government to access EU funds for child protection interventions, especially with the MH in their effort to close residential care institutions for young children.

The Bulgaria CO supported capacity strengthening of national and local authorities to manage programmes related to the national agenda for deinstitutionalization, provide community-based services, and fulfill children’s rights (including the right to participation) through the Child Friendly Municipalities (CFM) approach.

The Bulgaria CO continued to build the capacity of NGOs for participating in the policy development process and independent monitoring of children’s rights. The NGO Network for Children, developed with UNICEF support, remains the most vocal advocate for children’s rights.

The Bulgaria CO also engaged in applying the ‘Child Rights and Business Principles’ approach, as per the UNICEF global agenda, by starting to build the capacity of the corporate sector to effectively promote and fulfill children’s rights.

Communication for Development

Mostly met benchmarks

The Bulgaria CO is applied an integrated C4D approach through communications, social mobilization, and fundraising. The focus was on promoting family-based care and alerting others on the damaging effect of residential care, including children in conflict with the law, importance of early years in life, support to families, and child participation.

The ECD campaign, which started in 2011, continued with a three month documentary series called ‘Life as it is – To be a parent’, produced together with bTV (the biggest TV channel in Bulgaria). It contributed to a better understanding of positive parenting and the role parents play in the early development of the children. The documentary focused on parents’ need for support and provided a very good platform for the testing phase of parenting support groups.

Towards the end of 2012, the Bulgaria CO continued with the promotion of parenting support approaches. In addition, more emphasis was placed on young children living in poverty and in marginalized communities. Strong advocacy by the Bulgaria CO led to the signing of the ‘Promise Renewed’ by the Minister of Health and ministry agreement to test the health visitation service in one region.

The main thrust of the C4D efforts was related to the deinstitutionalization process, including developing alternative and preventive services at the community level, government policies and cross-border advocacy, as well as changing attitudes and behaviors of professionals and parents.

The CFM initiative proved to be a valuable tool for children’s rights promotion at the community level. An international conference of Child Friendly Cities (CFC) was organized in Sofia. More than 120 participants from six countries joined the event aimed at strengthening the network of CFC in Europe, improving communication, and sharing best practices with members of the Bulgarian CFM Network and children.

UNICEF supported the Golden Apple advocacy event organized by the National Network for Children, which
recognized the contribution of prominent individuals to realizing children’s rights in Bulgaria. The ‘Become a Benefactor’ advocacy campaign, focused on developing the giving culture in Bulgaria through promoting monthly giving, started in December 2011 and continued during the whole of 2012.

The end-of-year comprehensive advocacy and fundraising campaign focused on the complex needs of disadvantaged children, and built strong support for UNICEF’s unique role in the country.

### Service Delivery

**Fully met benchmarks**

The Bulgaria CO was not engaged in direct service delivery. The Country Programme aimed to improve government policies; promote accountability; and build capacity for planning, management, delivery, and monitoring of service provision. In order to reduce disparities in access to social services, focus was placed on the public sector and non-government service providers at the national, regional, and local levels. In this process, UNICEF worked with various partners (e.g., NGOs, civil society, local authorities, government) to develop new services. UNICEF indirectly contributed to better service delivery through the provision of technical assistance, advocacy, and support.

### Strategic Partnerships

**Mostly met benchmarks**

The Bulgaria CO continued building and expanding strategic partnerships at the national, subnational, and local levels to deliver results for children. In addition to the already existing strong partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) and SACP, close working relations were strengthened with the MH, Ministry of Justice (MJ), and Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (MEYS). The partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) was also strengthened, which was demonstrated through MFA providing free office premises to UNICEF and through an excellent collaboration in co-organizing of the Ministerial Conference.

The Bulgaria CO pursued stronger partnerships with the Office of the Public Ombudsman, the Presidency, and the Parliament; advocating for their more visible engagement on children’s rights issues.

Particular attention was given to partnerships with local authorities. While the CFM platform allows ongoing communications and collaboration with a number of municipalities, additional strong working relations were built with municipalities that are modeling new services for children (such as foster care and prevention of abandonment) or interventions in support of the most marginalized children and families.

Opportunities for new partnerships were systematically mapped out and pursued to scale-up advocacy and positive results for children. Close relationships were established with the Medical University in Varna, the Bulgarian Academy of Science, and associations of health care professionals to gain support for UNICEF’s ECD agenda.

UNICEF continued to strengthen and broaden partnerships with civil society organizations to ensure implementation of their valuable services for children and families, and to build their capacity to advocate for children’s rights. The National Network of Children (consisting of 109 NGOs) continued to be one of the main partners of UNICEF, providing leadership and voice in support of the children’s agenda.

Mass media provided generous support to UNICEF initiatives in Bulgaria by helping to create awareness, mobilize support, and influence social norms. In addition to the ongoing partnership with bTV, a strong radio campaign was launched through BG Radio at the end of 2012.

As per the private fundraising (PFP) strategy for income generation in Country Offices and the 'Child Rights
and Business Practices Initiative’, the Bulgaria CO continued engagement with the corporate sector, focusing on strategic corporate partnerships and relevant business associations. The Bulgaria CO mobilized its partners’ knowledge, expertise, and resources to raise funds for UNICEF and promote children’s rights.

**Knowledge Management**

*Partially met benchmarks*

The main knowledge sharing event in 2012 was the Ministerial Conference ‘Ending placement of children under three in institutions: support nurturing families for all young children’, co-organized by UNICEF and the Bulgarian government under the patronage of the President. It brought together experts and 22 high-level state delegations from Europe and Central Asia. Knowledge and best practices were shared between the countries, and a commitment to reforms was reaffirmed. There was impressive media coverage in Bulgaria, as well as in the region, which gave a strong message to a wide range of stakeholders. The conference also positioned UNICEF as a partner of choice for the government to share good practices from the country across borders, in the region and beyond.

The Situation Analysis of Children and Women, carried out in 2011, was widely distributed among partners and interested parties and used in public discussions. A Determinant Analysis was completed for two key areas, children without family care and young child well-being (0-3 years), and discussed with partners during the annual review meeting.

A number of evaluations, assessments, research and analytical papers, and best practice recommendations were developed and shared with partners. Valuable recommendations came from the comprehensive evaluation of the project ‘Expansion of the Foster Care Model in Bulgaria’. Findings from the study on Discrimination of Children in Institutional Care were officially presented to the government and informed the Plan of Action on Deinstitutionalization. Practices on home visitation from other countries were shared with key stakeholders from MH, MLSP and parliament, leading to the government’s commitment to establish an integrated health and social mobile service to reach out to most disadvantaged communities. Results of the demonstration modeling of family consultative services in three municipalities informed the government’s programme on closing infant homes in eight regions. For the first time, Bulgaria assessed the situation of child injury prevention and safety promotion and was included in the Child Safety Report Card 2012, managed by European Child Safety Alliance comprising 30 countries across Europe.

UNICEF worked with SACP on sharing best international practices for child participation leading to elaboration of the new child participation mechanism, shared with regional governments and other key stakeholders. The model is being tested in six municipalities.

The Child Friendly Municipality International Conference shared experiences from six different countries, including France, Belgium, Turkey, Belarus, Spain, and Bulgaria.

The TransMonnee database was promoted among partners, media, and the public and is being used by different entities within Bulgaria and abroad for information and research purposes.

The 2011 Annual Report was published for local audiences in a user friendly format, emphasizing good models and successful practices.

Some of the staff members received training in new important areas on the Monitoring of Results for Equity System (MoRES), C4D, and M&E, and then shared it with the rest of the office staff through presentations and meetings. Publications on key programme-related issues were shared amongst staff to support learning and knowledge gathering.
Human Rights Based Approach to Cooperation

Mostly met benchmarks

The Bulgaria CO prepared the new CPD for the period of 2013-2017. The CPD was submitted to the Executive Board and approved in September 2012. A strong human rights-based approach was used to prepare the CPD. The Situation Analysis looked at the bottlenecks hampering realization of rights, especially amongst the most vulnerable groups, like Roma children and families, children in institutions, and children with disabilities. The key programme strategies were designed to: (1) strengthen the capacity of duty bearers to develop and implement policies for realizing the rights of the most marginalized children, (2) improve children’s rights monitoring, (3) influence social norms, and (4) mobilize public support and strengthen awareness on the rights of the child.

The government carried out an assessment of the progress of implementing the National Strategy for the rights of the child.

The Bulgaria CO supported work on the new Child Act, a comprehensive piece of legislation aiming to streamline children’s rights in all areas, including strengthening systems and the capacity of duty bearers (i.e., the state and its institutions, NGOs, and civil society) in their role as service providers and advocates for children’s rights. It also looks at the roles and capacities of rights holders, in the case of families and parents, as the primary responsible parties for children’s well-being.

Public consultation of the draft Child Act caused turbulent debate, in which the key principles of children’s rights were opposed to the rights and responsibilities of parents. This revealed a serious problem with the lack of awareness of right holders to know and claim their rights. The debate outlined the need for further promotion of human rights, and especially the rights of the child in relation to the roles of duty bearers and right holders. Strengthened accountabilities of duty bearers and enhanced monitoring are needed, as well as better informed and empowered right holders.

The Bulgaria CO continued to closely monitor the status of implementing the CRC recommendations from the 2008 concluding observations. Former CRC members provided technical advice on assessing the draft Child Act in connection to the main CRC provisions. Recommendations were provided to the government for improving the draft legislation in line with the CRC provisions and the Committee’s observations and recommendations.

Gender Equality

Partially met benchmarks

The Bulgaria CO continued to be a member of the National Council on Gender Equality. In 2012, Bulgaria submitted combined fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh periodic reports to the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discriminations Against Women (CEDAW). Many of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the provided recommendations directly link to UNICEF’s work in Bulgaria, such as access to primary health care and employment opportunities for vulnerable women, especially women from Roma minority group; strengthening awareness on the rights of children and girls; and mainstreaming gender policy within key legislative provisions.

The issue of the need to collect gender disaggregated data was partially addressed through data collection for CEDAW reporting. UNICEF submitted a number of recommendations for the National Annual Plan of Action on Gender Equality between men and women, based on the concluding observations of CEDAW and the SitAn on children and women carried out in 2011.

UNICEF supported MLSP in carrying out research on discrimination towards children in institutional care, which had a strong gender aspect. As part of the findings, it revealed that boys in institutional care are more prone to labor exploitation, while girls become victims of violence and sexual abuse. Policy recommendations...
were provided to MLSP requiring changes in the plan of Action for Deinstitutionalization, to ensure that the rights of children, including gender rights, are protected in the process.

The demonstration work on a new integrated service continued to take gender into account, especially targeting vulnerable women, young mothers, and teenage girls with awareness and social skills development programmes on family planning and gender stereotyping. Family consultative centers in three demonstration municipalities actively promoted women’s participation in their work with marginalized communities.

**Environmental Sustainability**

*Mostly met benchmarks*

The programme activities of the Bulgaria CO were mostly related to policy advocacy and knowledge management, and therefore did not have a significant impact on the environment and climate change. In all Bulgaria CO supported activities, consideration was given to energy savings and environmentally friendly solutions.

The Bulgaria CO also tried to reduce its impact on the environment by applying an internal energy savings and recycling policy. Printing internal and external communication materials was carefully planned and reduced by using on-line sharing.
### Narrative Analysis by Programme Component Results and Intermediate Results

**Bulgaria – 0570**

**PC 1 - Social Inclusion and Reduction of Child Poverty**

**Constrained**

**PCR 0570/A0/03/001:** By 2012, Bulgaria advances the fulfillment of children’s rights through further reform of its child welfare systems.

**Progress:**

Work on policies and programs for children, and changes in regulatory provisions remained a critical determining factor for better long-term strategy planning by the government of the financial, technical, and human resources needed to ensure children’s rights to social protection. UNICEF’s programme work and advocacy efforts on the Child Act continued to promote the children’s rights approach. Knowledge sharing on best practices yielded positive outcomes and informed policies and strategies, such as adoption of the key policy concept and plan of action in the area of child friendly justice, adoption of the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion, and strategic inputs to new OP HRD. UNICEF continues to be seen by government as the subject matter expert on child protection issues.

UNICEF supported improvements in children’s rights monitoring systems through its analytical and research work. Research on the discrimination of children in institutional care revealed significant children’s rights violations. A comprehensive government-led evaluation of the first three years of implementation of the National Strategy for the Child (2008-2018) was completed, which revealed gaps related to information systems and a lack of systematic periodic reviews.

UNICEF’s continued support to the government in integrated early childhood development (ECD) strengthened the partnership with MH for developing integrated health and social services for the most vulnerable communities. Delays in finalizing the ECD standards were addressed by engaging in a partnership with a research institute from the National Science Academy, as lead partner in an age validation process. The testing phase of the parenting support model was successfully completed. UNICEF engaged a wide range of partners in an in-depth analysis of determinants for young children’s well-being (aged 0-3 years). The purpose was to identify underlying bottlenecks (including unclear governance and accountability systems for policy development, implementation, and budget allocation) and establish consensus on remedial actions.

UNICEF’s continued support to the government’s deinstitutionalization agenda and the development of an integrated social services provision system, particularly those supporting a child’s right to a family environment, opened an important discussion about reallocation of financial resources to critical services for children and families. UNICEF engaged partners in demonstration modeling and continued the ongoing transfer of knowledge and capacity to a critical mass of in-service professionals and policy makers, in regard to effective family support interventions and good alternative services (e.g., foster care). Determinant analysis was discussed with stakeholders from government and civil society, defining outcome monitoring indicators and suggesting actions for alleviating barriers and bottlenecks to ensure a child’s right to live in a family environment.

**On-track**

**IR 0570/A0/03/001/004:** By the end of 2012, national and local authorities practice effective cross-sectoral budgeting of policies and programs for children.

**Progress:**

Deinstitutionalization processes remained a critical determinant factor for the ongoing child protection reform. Transfer of knowledge and capacity to a critical mass of in-service professionals of the main deinstitutionalization government programmes aimed at strengthening monitoring and delivery, ensuring...
risks for children are low and sustainability is guaranteed. Lack of commitment and insufficient capacities within government partners constrained the reallocation of financial resources to critical services for children to participate in the Monitoring Committee of the OP HRD, and elaboration of Roma Inclusion Strategy provided for substantial evidence based inputs in new programme policies.

Strengthening children’s rights monitoring was addressed through continuous work on the draft Child Act. Discussions among government experts, NGOs, civil society, and parental organizations disclosed weaknesses in the awareness of duty bearers on children’s rights. Plans for addressing problematic areas were put in place, using UNICEF’s high-level expertise and knowledge of children’s rights.

UNICEF’s continued support to the government’s Justice for Children reform evoked new developments resulting in a comprehensive Action Plan for child friendly justice. Demonstration of innovative approaches to children in conflict with the law commenced in one region with UNICEF’s assistance.

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative was advanced and attracted greater interest from local governments, local organizations, and formal and non-formal children’s formations. An international conference held in June 2012 shared good ideas and positioned Bulgaria as the regional initiative’s engine and support to the Child in the City 2012 world conference.

Children’s participation was promoted through various initiatives at the local and national levels, and through a strategic partnership with SACP which resulted in demonstrating a school-based child participation model.

Technical assistance to MEYS contributed to the development of the draft National Strategy for reducing the proportion of children dropping out of school (2012-2020). Research on the reasons for non-enrollment of children in school was initiated. The findings will support planning specific measures under the strategy.

On-track

IR 0570/A0/03/001/005: The government implements programmes for vulnerable families in support of improved child care and protection practices.

Progress:

In consultation with MH and other stakeholders, a demonstration health visiting service was designed in support of young children’s (aged 0-3 years) health and development. The service envisages family visitations by qualified nurses to provide support, advice, and guidance to parents about child care and development. It aims to strengthen parental skills, identify risks for children’s well-being, and ensure appropriate support to families, with a focus on most the disadvantaged groups. A key objective is to improve coordination and exchange between the health and social sectors to address the needs of the most deprived. Demonstration modeling will be implemented in one region, starting in early 2013, to further expand the network of family support services. The work represents a major part of the government’s commitment to deinstitutionalization, using UNICEF’s technical expertise and knowledge. The Bulgaria CO also supported MoH to draft a proposal for rolling over the health visiting service to other regions using EU funding mechanisms.

Procedures and instruments for age validation of the ECD standards for children (aged 0-3 years) were developed and tested. Age validation started in 2012 and will continue in 2013, covering about 1,200 children. The standards will be used holistically to inform policies and practices addressing ECD.

As part of the ECD agenda, a programme for promoting positive parenting through group work was developed and tested with more than 240 parents. It targeted parents of young children and aimed to develop attitudes, knowledge, and skills conducive to the rights of the child.

The Bulgaria CO worked to engage MH in assessing the quality of care in maternal hospitals against World Health Organization (WHO) standards with a view of planning strategies and measures to improve maternal
care. However despite the efforts, no agreement was reached due to a lack of commitment from MH. The Bulgaria CO is exploring ways of working with the Professional Association of Gynecologists and Pediatricians to support this process.

On-track

**IR 0570/A0/03/001/006:** Municipalities provide community-based alternative social services in accordance with the adopted minimum package of social services.

**Progress:**

The Bulgaria CO continued to develop networks of family and child support social services, ensuring equal opportunities of access for the most marginalized and across the country.

As well, the Bulgaria CO provided technical assistance and transferred critical knowledge and skills to implement the government project on social services’ capacity development at the regional level.

A demonstration project is being implemented with partners in the Shoumen region to develop a network of family support and alternative care services, leading to the closure of residential institution for children aged 0-3. The support aims to provide: (1) outreach prevention services targeting the most marginalized families and children, (2) foster care for infants and children with disabilities, (3) day care, and (4) increased capacity of the child protection system. Experience was leveraged to inform the implementation of a government programme to close eight infant homes, as well as government policies and strategies on Roma integration.

Another demonstration of good practice was developed in the Vidin region with a Complex for Social Services, providing a comprehensive package of family support services (i.e., counseling, day care, foster care, and emergency placement) in the poorest region of the country. The Complex reached out to more than 200 children and families and strengthened the coordination and capacity of the regional stakeholders to provide social services.

The experience and knowledge gathered on the foster care demonstration and policy work was consolidated and used to inform the DI reform process through changes in the government’s policies and programmes. The demonstration project led to an increase in the number of foster families (i.e., a three-fold increase at the national level), and increased awareness. Support has shifted towards capacity building for implementation of an EU funded programme covering all regions in the country with sufficient budget allocation. Legislative changes in 2012 introduced provisions allowing for improved coordination of service planning and provision at the regional level, as a result of evidence-based demonstrations and good practices.

**PC 2 - Social Mobilization and Communication for Development**

Met

**PCR 0570/A0/03/002** By 2012, government, private sector, media, civil society, and the public enhance partnerships for programmes for children.

**Progress:**

Alliances and initiatives with relevant stakeholders, such as government, private sector, media, civil society, and NGOs were at the core of UNICEF’s agenda. The purpose was to increase awareness and understanding of children’s issues, and mobilize support for children’s rights with a focus on equity and social inclusion of the most disadvantaged.

UNICEF successfully leveraged partnerships to increase its exposure and influence. Joint media ventures with government departments and the business sector helped position UNICEF as a key advocate for children’s
rights.

Work with media partners led to the continuous promotion of family-based care; increased awareness about the damaging effects of residential care on children, especially on the youngest; recognition of the need to support families at risk; and increased support to children’s participation. Special emphasis was given to the most marginalized communities, families, and children, and influencing the attitudes of the mainstream population to reduce stigma and prejudice.

A long-term cooperation agreement with the most popular media entity (bTV Media Group) enabled UNICEF to increase the exposure of children’s issues. Involving celebrities and opinion leaders to advocate for children’s rights during the media campaigns and initiatives helped the Bulgaria CO to reach and engage new audiences.

Aligned with the global UNICEF shift to have more strategic engagement with the corporate sector, beyond leveraging of resources, the Bulgaria CO cooperated with business associations and some of the key actors in business sector. Previous corporate partnerships were maintained and expanded through the corporate social responsibility (CSR) approach, and four new partnerships were developed in 2012, accounting for the vast proportion of private sector income.

Moving beyond corporate donations and seeking to engage corporate partners from a strategic standpoint, local partnership agreements were established with the global supporters of UNICEF, like IKEA, ING, and H&M. These partnerships promote creativity and innovation and demonstrate the true spirit of partnerships for children on local and global level.

In regard to individual donors, the Bulgaria CO focused on the developing a ‘giving culture’ in Bulgaria, and more specifically on regular monthly giving which is still new for the country. In spite of many obstacles, progress was achieved and the number of pledge donors grew steadily. Efforts were also made to build internal capacity for engaging the corporate sector and private sector fundraising and to remove external obstacles.

The local UNICEF Web site was upgraded to support the communication, fundraising, and advocacy efforts of the Bulgaria CO. The UNICEF Bulgaria Facebook page reached almost 70,000 ‘likes’ and proved to be a useful communication tool.

- **Met**
- **IR 0570/A0/03/002/003**: Private sector, media, and individuals engage in sustainable, long-term social mobilization partnerships for children in Bulgaria and elsewhere.

**Progress:**

Local fundraising achieved stable growth in 2012 by expanding the existing corporate sector partnerships through the CSR approach (i.e., engaging employees, clients, and partners); increasing the number of corporate partners; developing the giving culture in Bulgaria; and increasing the number of individual monthly donors (i.e., pledges) in order to generate flexible income. To maximize the impact, the Bulgaria CO applied an integrated approach to communications, social mobilization, and private sector fundraising. In 2012, two integrated campaigns were conducted in January–March and November–December.

The key fundraising results were as follows:

- **Overall income** from local fundraising received in the bank before the end of 2012: US$628,346 (of which 78% is unrestricted funding).
- **Corporate partnerships**: US$477,438. Four new partnerships were established.
- **Individual donors**: Increased the income by 56% (compared to 2011) to the amount of US$146,845.
- **Pledge donors**: Increased the number by 30% to 703 regular monthly donors.
UNICEF Annual Report 2012 for Bulgaria, CEE/CIS

- **Emergency fundraising**: The Bulgaria CO launched an on-line appeal for the Crisis in the Horn of Africa collecting US$1,737.
- **Events**: An annual fundraising dinner on the occasion of the 66th anniversary was organized as an advocacy and donor recognition event, raising US$40,000.

The Bulgaria CO further developed and promoted new fundraising channels, such as online payment methods through the redesigned UNICEF Web site and direct debit. The monthly giving programme was widely promoted via a media campaign. The overall income for the year from pledges was US$63,704. A relatively high average monthly gift of US$10.38 was achieved.

The internal capacity for PSFR was strengthened and DonorPerfect was introduced. The Bulgaria CO managed to increase its fundraising income in 2012 in spite of the difficult economic situation in the country. As a part of the new Country Programme Management Plan (CPMP) for 2013-2017, a detailed and comprehensive fundraising strategy was developed to raise predictable and flexible funding for the UNICEF programme in Bulgaria and elsewhere.

**IR 0570/A0/03/002/004**: Government, media, private sector, and civil society organizations actively engage in the promotion of children’s rights.

**Progress:**

The Bulgaria CO worked in close collaboration with government counterparts and supported a number of strategic partnerships, including the National NGO Network for Children (representing 109 NGOs), and bTV (the most popular television channel in the country).

The Bulgaria CO applied an integrated approach to communications, social mobilization, and fundraising, focused on promoting family-based care, the damaging effects of residential care, importance of early years in life, support to families, and child participation, with special emphasis on children and families at risk. The ECD campaign continued with 12 documentary series entitled ‘Life as it is – To be a parent’ and contributed to a better understanding of the positive parenting. It was also a good introduction for the testing phase of ‘workshops for parents’ supported by UNICEF.

The Bulgaria CO advocacy efforts to support the UNICEF regional call for action to ‘Stop placing children under three in institutions’ continued with the following activities:

- An advocacy visit from the prominent French expert on resilience, Mr. Boris Cyrulnik, was organized in cooperation with UNICEF France and the UNICEF RO. There were 17 features in the media.
- Family Counseling Centers in Novi Pazar and Veliki Preslav were opened to reach families and children at risk, supported by an advocacy campaign about the importance of community-based outreach services.
- The Ministerial Conference ‘Ending placement of children under three in institutions: support nurturing families for all young children’, organized by UNICEF and the Bulgarian government under the patronage of the President of Bulgaria. It sent a message about the progress and challenges, especially about insufficient prevention and support to families at risk. The conference received attention from 27 media outlets in Bulgaria and 16 media outlets from other countries.

The Child Friendly Municipalities Initiative proved to be a valuable tool for promoting children’s rights at the community level. An international conference of Child Friendly Cities was organized in Sofia with 140 participants from six countries.

**IR 0570/A0/03/002/005** Fundraising costs
Progress:

This IR was specifically created to track results of the 25% retention of the gross income from local PSFR activities, as per private fundraising (PFP) guidance. As of 2013, all fundraising costs (including staff salaries) will be covered from this source.

In 2012, an amount of US$169,210 was accumulated. From this amount the salary of a Fundraising Assistant was covered as well as adjustments to the local Web site to facilitate fundraising, and the direct cost of the end-of-year fundraising campaign. Results of the campaign will be known at the end of January 2013.

An amount of US$120,706 was rephrased for 2013 to cover all PSFR staff salaries and other direct costs of fundraising.

IR 0570/P0/03/002/003 PSFR

Progress:

Following the request from PFP, this IR was specifically created to track PFP and the related results.

The Bulgaria CO received US$53,029 from PFP. The funds were used to cover the salary of one staff member (Fundraising Officer – Individuals, NO1), installation of DonorPerfect software, cost of travel and training of staff working on PSFR, and contracted services related to PSFR.

The Bulgaria CO’s capacity for local private sector fundraising was significantly increased in 2012. In addition to one Fundraising Officer (NO1) who primarily focused on the corporate sector, two more staff members (Fundraising Officer, NO1 and Fundraising Assistant, GS4) were employed to engage with individual donors, primarily to develop a regular monthly donor programme (i.e., pledges). With the installation of DonorPerfect and training staff on its use, the office increased its ability to retain and use donor data. Using this software also responded to one of the audit recommendations related to data confidentiality and safety. Over 10,000 individual donors have been registered.

All staff members working on PSFR were provided with training and networking opportunities through the Fundraising Forum in Prague, DonorPerfect training in Budapest and Sofia, as well as training on pledge and face-to-face fundraising in Zagreb.

PFP funding contributed significantly to achieving the following results:

- **Overall income** from local fundraising received in the bank before end of 2012: US$628,346 (of which 78% unrestricted funding).
- **Corporate partnerships**: US$477,438. Four new partnerships were established.
- **Individual donors**: Increased the income by 56% (compared to 2011) to US$146,845.
- **Pledge donors**: Increased the number by 30% to 703 regular monthly donors.
Effective Governance Structure

As per the Audit Summary of Observations received at the end of 2010, the Bulgaria CO had a ‘satisfactory’ governance structure and practices. Further improvements were introduced in 2011 based on the Office of Internal Audit’s recommendations and continued to be applied in 2012. However, introduction of the Virtual Integrated System of Information (VISION) at the beginning of 2012 brought some changes that required adjustments during the year. The Bulgaria CO was successful in applying VISION and re-configuring the Table of Authority to create workable solutions.

In 2012, planning with partners was reflected in the annual work plan. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the office were spelled out in the annual management plan (AMP), and through individual performance planning.

Programme review meetings were held quarterly, while the Country Management Team (CMT) met more often, once a month on average. A set of indicators to be monitored by the CMT was defined in the AMP. Various internal committees (e.g., Contract Review Committee, Property Survey Board [PSB], Contract Review Body, and others) continued to function and followed up closely the implementation of UNICEF rules and regulations. However, regular information exchange, day-to-day coordination, and briefing on important developments and policy recommendations happened at regular weekly meetings with all staff.

The Staff Association was established in 2011 with elected representatives (instead of the previously existing Staff Focal Point), and two Joint Consultation Committee meetings took place in 2012.

Performance Evaluation Reports were completed on time.

The Bulgaria CO engaged in internal and broad external consultations for developing the new Country Programme (2013-2017). Along with the CPD, the new CPMP was developed and discussed with all staff at the office retreat, with support of the Human Resources (HR) Chief from the Regional Office.

A new staffing structure was jointly developed, submitted to the Regional Programme and Budget Review (PBR) in August 2012, and partially adopted. While keeping the same number of staff for a much more diversified programme, the PBR decision endorsed adjusting the structure to reflect the upstream policy work and cross-border knowledge exchange envisaged in the new Programme. The Bulgaria CO explored possibilities for cost savings and staff sharing with Romania, Moldova, and Turkey. However, some of the proposed solutions (e.g., sharing capacities of national staff) were found to be against the organization’s rules and could not be pursued. An agreement was reached to provide backup operational support between Romania, Moldova, and Bulgaria, and to share an ECD Specialist (IP) with Turkey.

Strategic Risk Management

The Bulgaria CO Risk Library was reviewed and amended at the end of March 2012, using an integrated process as part of the overall office management. Two high and four medium-high risks were identified that may impact achieving UNICEF’s objectives and results in Bulgaria. The corresponding controls and risk response were also revised using a structured approach for assessment and analysis. Improvements in some areas were identified, as well as some new risks.

High risks were associated with the country environment. Political sensitivity increased due to the start of preparation for parliamentary elections in 2013, which resulted in the extended implementation of programme components. Another high risk was identified in the area of systems and information technology (IT) structure related to the introduction of VISION, and the subsequent lack of experience and knowledge of the new system. Medium-high risks were associated with the aid environment and predictability of funding; partner relations; knowledge management and information sharing; and programme, process, procedures and controls.
The Bulgaria CO worked on mitigating the identified risks, especially in relation to the high-level risk areas, through the gradual implementation of the identified risk controls.

Training on SAP continued throughout the year with careful monitoring on the business processes and Table of Authority in order to maintain a clear distribution of roles. New staff that came on board later in the year were given on-line training as well as on-the-job support by VISION focal points. Budget monitoring was carefully exercised by both the programme and operations to ensure compliance with the system requirements.

A fire drill was carried out in March to check and reinforce staff preparedness for emergency situations. The Intranet-based Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) was regularly updated during the year to reflect some developments in the country, like earthquakes, which happened several times. On May 22, 2012, an earthquake close to the capital of Sofia caused material damage in buildings; schools and private homes were affected. The situation was monitored and reflected on EWEA.

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### Evaluation

The 2012 Integrated and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) was revised and adjusted to the changing needs of the Country Programme, actual work flow, priorities, and government plans and capacity. One study and two assessments were postponed due to recent programmatic developments and changes in the partners’ priorities, and are being inserted into the IMEP 2013.

To ensure better quality and adequate management responses, partners were informed and consulted on a regular basis during the preparation of all studies, research, and evaluations.

The Bulgaria CO benefitted from support from the UNICEF RO to critically review the Terms of Reference for evaluations, as well as review the draft evaluation report. The foster care evaluation benefited from such a review which improved its quality. Direct assistance from the RO M&E Adviser and regular information flow from the UNICEF headquarters (HQ) had a positive impact on planning and quality assurance of the M&E activities.

The national capacity for evaluations does not always allow analysis consistent with UNICEF standards. Although Bulgaria has some research institutions, gaps remain in the evaluation capacity, especially for evaluation of complex programmes and policies. The evaluation function is limited in the national institutional framework and usually only internal monitoring and audits are performed. Country-led evaluations are still not a priority. Mechanisms are in place to review the implementation of action plans, but often they require involving other stakeholders and are only document-based.

The ongoing projects funded within the framework of EU Structural Funds include to some extent certain monitoring mechanisms. However up to now, only one strategic evaluation has taken place on the ongoing implementation of the National Strategy for the Child and the results were presented at the end of 2012.

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### Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

There was significant improvement in 2012 for the Bulgaria CO in terms of information and communication technologies (ICT). A number of adjustments were performed to meet with the organization’s requirements, including upgrading to a Windows 2008 server, its virtualization, installing new backup facility, and installing Windows server update system automatic updates. A second and independent internet access through wireless (Wi-Fi) routers was established, a reflection of the Business Continuity Plan requirements. The office equipment provided timely, reliable, and secure information flow.

The relationship with the RO Information Technology Security System Division was further developed. As all business applications and email servers are based in the RO, the Bulgaria CO continues to rely on the IT
services provided. A Regional ICT meeting was held in Sofia in June 2012, bringing together the ICT Assistants from the region and strengthening cooperation between the offices. A newly appointed, part-time ICT Assistant took over the responsibility of ICT in 2012. His support was especially valuable in the process of relocating to the new office premises and the timely configuration of the internal network.

In 2012, the Bulgaria CO achieved the following additional improvements:
- A new channel for receiving recurring donations from credit cards was developed.
- The Web site performance was enhanced, including the mechanism for donations.
- The popularity of the UNICEF Bulgaria Web site and Facebook page was increased to around 70,000 followers. These Internet sites published current initiatives and brought transparency to the works performed by the Bulgaria CO.
- A mobile application for donations was in the development process.
- DonorPerfect was installed and staff trained to keep donor data safe and available for use.

As UNICEF tries to reduce its impact on the environment, the Bulgaria CO implemented several recycling policies, including responsible disposing of unusable electronic waste; creating a used battery collection spot; separating paper, plastic, and glass for recycling; and using recycled paper in the office. Various energy saving activities were also introduced throughout the year.

**Fundraising and Donor Relations**

The Bulgaria CO raised funds from different sources, nationally and internationally. Funds were received for the programme activities from Danish NatCom and Velux Foundation (US$214,000 for community-based social services), Swedish NatCom (US$46,730 for field work), and French NatCom (US$514,000 for juvenile justice). An additional amount of US$765,000 was committed from the French NatCom.

At the same time, efforts were made to maximize income from local private sector fundraising.

The following key achievements were reached in 2012:
- Overall income from local fundraising received in the bank before the end of 2012: US$628,346 (of which 78% is unrestricted funding).
- Income from corporate partnerships: US$477,438.
- Income from individual donors: US$146,845.
- Income from pledges: US$63,704 with a 30% increase in the number of pledge donors to 703 regular monthly donors.
- Emergency fundraising: The Bulgaria CO launched an on-line appeal for the Crisis in the Horn of Africa collecting US$1,737.
- Events: An annual fundraising dinner on the occasion of the 66th Anniversary was organized as an advocacy and donor recognition event, raising US$40,000.

At the end of the current programme cycle, the Bulgaria CO has reached 97% of the approved other resources (OR) ceiling (funds available) for the three-year cycle. Twenty-three per cent of the OR available in 2012 came from local private sector fundraising.

All of the donor reports were sent on time. Donor Focal Point monitored the due date and alerted the responsible Programme Manager. An external evaluation of the foster care project, financed by the British NatCom, was completed and the evaluation report was sent to the donor. During the year, nine Programme Budget Allotments (PBAs) expired and were fully utilized.
Management of Financial and Other Assets

The Bulgaria CO continues to implement the financial management recommendations from the Internal Audit, which was performed in 2010 with a ‘Satisfactory’ rating. Assignment of authority and delegations of financial controls were extended to reflect the office structure and to be consistent with the requirements of the new VISION system. The Table of Authority was reviewed to strengthen the segregation of duties. New supervisory controls were established, e.g., stamping of invoices for payment. There were procedures in place to ensure timely and accurate recording of PFP income. Contributions were reported at the end of each month to PFP with a table indicating the amounts received per PBA.

Bank reconciliations were performed in a timely manner to ensure the bank data and VISION data matched. Financial controls were used to identify and prevent possible gaps. The office received authorization to open a separate PSFR bank account in Piraeus Bank, one of the biggest corporate donors to UNICEF in the country. The agreement with the bank excludes any bank charges on the account. Bank charges decreased compared to 2011, due to improved payment management. There was a decrease in the interest received, due to reduced the bank interest rates and improved funds availability in the bank accounts, with requests for replenishment processed through Treasury in HQ.

In terms of cost management, in April 2012 the office moved to new premises provided rent-free by the government. After repairs were made in the beginning of 2012, with funding from the capital asset fund budget, the office saved the amount previously paid for rent (in 2012, almost BGN 53,000 or about US$35,000 at an 1.506 exchange rate as of December 2012).

An asset inventory was performed in the last quarter of 2012, in relation to the annual closure and in accordance with IPSAS requirements. All items corresponded to the VISION records. The local PSB committee met and made decisions for donating old ICT equipment to implementing partners.

At the end of 2012, the Bulgaria CO received a used vehicle from the closed Russian Federation Office, to replace the office vehicle which was over seven years old. This will allow for savings in the coming year.

The following were the Global Performance Indicators:

- 0% outstanding direct cash transfers (DCTs) over nine months (Management reports show one outstanding DCT, which in fact is a reimbursement of expenses and the technical error is pending in service call).
- 100% of regular resources (RR) spent.
- 40% of OR spent, the remaining was re-phased to 2013.
- Four PBAs were extended until the end of 2013, one until the end of 2014, and another three until the end of 2017. All the rest were used within the original duration of the PBA life. New PBAs were created for Swedish Natcom funding and for a locally funded project. PBA expenditure rate was 100% in 2012.

Supply Management

The Bulgaria CO does not have dedicated supply staff members and significant supply activities. In the Support Budget, procurement was represented in the purchase of basic network and communications equipment for the office. Programme supplies were used depending on the case of cooperation with partners, mainly referring to equipment supply. For local procurement, the office followed the general supply processes guidelines. Additional assistance was received by colleagues in the UNICEF RO and from the region. There was no international procurement in 2012.
**Human Resources**

Particular attention was given to developing the staff’s capacity through training and networking, including the following activities:

*Individual trainings:*

- Two senior staff members completed the Management Development Programme
- Operations Office completed CBI training in Zagreb
- Two senior staff members completed the International Executive Media and Television workshop in Vienna
- M&E Officer attended the UNICEF/UNODC Guidelines on Justice workshop in Vienna
- Social Services Officer attended C4D training in Istanbul
- ICT Assistant completed Orientation training in Geneva
- Communications and Fundraising team attended the Fundraising Forum in Prague, DonorPerfect training in Budapest in February 2012, Face to Face and Pledge workshop in Zagreb, and DonorPerfect training with trainers from the Croatia office in Sofia
- Corporate Fundraising Officer completed the CSR workshop in Geneva and the fundraising workshop in Bulgaria
- Social Policy Specialist attended the MoRES training workshop in Istanbul
- ECD Officer completed a study visit with government partners to UK, the WHO Training of Trainers on National Strategies for Mother and Child Health, the Supporting Families for Child Well-being conference in Ankara, and the UN Cares Focal Points training in Istanbul
- A representative attended the Fundraising Forum and the UNCT Leadership and Coordination Skills Workshop in Turin

*Group trainings:*

- Management Performance for Supervisors and Supervisees' training was delivered for all staff by an HR specialist from RO
- VISION training performed locally for new staff members
- On-line courses and webinars were also utilized as a way of learning

All Performance Appraisal Systems were completed by the end of February 2012 for local staff members. Two Peer Support Volunteers were available and provided support.

UNICEF also facilitated and conducted activities relevant to all UN staff in Bulgaria, including: leading the activities in terms of Security as DO and Country Security Focal Point (UN Department of Safety & Security), language exams, and the Interim Local Staff Salary Survey. As a result, the salaries of national staff were increased in 2012 by 7.9% for the GS category and 2.2% for NO category.

**Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings**

The office moved into rent-free premises provided by the government. This resulted in a cost savings from rental payments in the amount of 53,000 BGN, or about US$35,000 (at a 1.506 exchange rate as of December 2012).

There was improvement and cost reduction in travel expenses; US$73,660 for 2012 versus US$92,506 for 2011 (decrease of 20%). Optimization and obtaining new, better conditions on some operational expenses
was done in 2012, such as telephone costs, internet, video conferencing, office cleaning, office consumables, and various supplies.

**Changes in AMP & CPMP**

The Country Programme (2010-2012) ended in 2012. During the course of 2012, the new Country Programme for 2013-2017 was developed and adopted by the Executive Board. The new CPMP was also developed to reflect the changes of programme priorities and to ensure adequate management of programme, human, and financial resources, as well as UNICEF assets.

The Bulgaria CO engaged in broad internal and external consultations for the development of the new Country Programme. The new CPMP was developed with participation of all staff at the office retreat, with support of the HR Chief from the UNICEF RO. A new staffing structure was jointly developed and submitted to the Regional PBR in August 2012, which was partially adopted. While keeping the same number of staff for a much more diversified programme, the PBR endorsed adjusting the structure to reflect UNICEF core roles, primarily the change of social norms, upstream policy work, and cross-border knowledge exchange envisaged in the new Country Programme. In addition, the office capacity was strengthened in the two knowledge leadership areas, as per the Regional strategy. Use of external expertise and partnerships was envisaged as a way to further expand capacity and deliver results planned for the Country Programme.

The Bulgaria CO explored possibilities for cost savings and staff sharing with Romania, Moldova, and Turkey. However, some of the proposed solutions (e.g. sharing capacities of national staff) were found to be against organization’s rules and could not be pursued. An agreement was reached to provide backup operational support between Romania, Moldova, and Bulgaria, and to share an ECD Specialist (IP) with Turkey.

Along with the CPMP, the Bulgaria CO also developed a five-year Strategy for Private Sector Income Generation. As per PFP guidelines, all costs of PSFR in the country, including staff salaries, will be covered from 25% of the total locally generated income. This is a challenging task, at least for the first two years of the cycle, and will somewhat limit the potential for raising funds locally.

The main changes made in the CPMP include the following:

- All UNICEF core roles and selected key knowledge and leadership areas will be financed with core resources (RR+IB)
- The seniority of key programme staff (NOs) was increased to deliver on high-level policy work
- The new role of Policy and Knowledge Coordinator (NO4) was created, replacing the Policy and Planning Specialist
- A small PSFR Team was formed and reports to the Representative
- An Income Generation Strategy was adopted.

The Bulgaria CO is allocated the smallest amount of IB under the Regional Envelope, for historical reasons. This has significantly affected planning of the use of RR. For that reason, the Bulgaria CO will submit a proposal to the Regional Office for revising the IB allocation in January 2012.
### Summary Notes and Acronyms

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<tr>
<th>AMP</th>
<th>annual management plan</th>
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<tr>
<td>BGN</td>
<td>Bulgarian Leva</td>
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<td>C4D</td>
<td>communication for development</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discriminations Against Women</td>
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<td>CFC</td>
<td>Child Friendly Cities</td>
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<td>CFM</td>
<td>Child Friendly Municipalities</td>
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<td>CMT</td>
<td>Country Management Team</td>
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<td>Country Programme Document</td>
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<td>CPMP</td>
<td>Country Programme Management Plan</td>
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<td>Contract Review Committee</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CRING</td>
<td>Country Report on Indicators for the Goal</td>
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<td>CRM</td>
<td>customer relationship management</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>civil society organizations</td>
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<td>DCT</td>
<td>direct cash transfer</td>
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<td>early childhood development</td>
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<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EWEA</td>
<td>Early Warning Early Action</td>
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<td>FICE</td>
<td>International Federation of Educative Communities</td>
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<td>HQ</td>
<td>headquarters</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>human resources</td>
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<td>information and communication technology</td>
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<td>International Foster Care Organisation</td>
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<td>IMEP</td>
<td>Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan</td>
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<td>information technologies</td>
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<td>Information Technology Security System</td>
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<td>LTA</td>
<td>long-term arrangement</td>
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<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MEYS</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Youth and Science</td>
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<td>MLSP</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour and Social Policy</td>
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<td>MoRES</td>
<td>Monitoring of Results for Equity System</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>nongovernmental organization</td>
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<td>NSI</td>
<td>National Statistical Institute</td>
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<td>National Statistic Office</td>
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<td>OR</td>
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<td>Programme Budget Allotment</td>
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<td>SACP</td>
<td>State Agency for Child Protection</td>
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<td>UNODC</td>
<td>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</td>
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<td>VISION</td>
<td>Virtual Integrated System of Information</td>
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In view of similar challenges across countries, the service approach can be beneficial for country offices. It addresses the issue with the high rate of infant institutionalization in Bulgaria. The key innovations of the model, piloted and proved to be effective by the Family Centres, include:

- Proactive approach – the Family Centres apply the proactive approach to identify and map the risk families and groups.
- Outreach services, provided on the spot by mobile teams, working directly inside the communities and homes of most marginalised families.
- Multidisciplinary structure of the personnel of the Family Centres involving social workers, nurse, a psychologist, community mediators, plus other specialists;
- Multiethnic composition of the personnel, involving social assistants and mediators – representatives of the segregated communities themselves;
- Flexibility of services and adaptation to the specific needs of different families and excluded groups is ensured by the programming approach – elaboration of targeted programmes for services and intervention based on the assessment of risks and needs during the mapping of vulnerable communities.
- Capacity building and supervision, provided by multidisciplinary team of experts and trainers.

Abstract

The CO supported establishment of a network of family-support services that prevent abandonment and neglect for young children in most marginalized communities. The approach was successful as it built on the strengths of the local communities, is pro-active and outreach in its essence and provides a comprehensive support to the complex needs of the most marginalized families. The service is an example of a combination of programme actions with C4D activities. It addresses the issue with the high rate of infant institutionalization in Bulgaria.

In view of similar challenges across countries, the service approach can be beneficial for country offices dealing with same issues.

Innovation or Lesson Learned

The key innovations of the model, piloted and proved to be effective by the Family Centres, include:
**Potential Application**

Beyond their original scope, the model of services, provided by the network of Family Consultative Centres, can be applied for promotion of equity. In particular:
- Reducing the gaps between and providing equal access of most disadvantaged children and families to basic services and social benefits;
- Enhancing the community mobilization and stimulating the awareness of most marginalized to early childhood development and the need to improve parental skills and childcare;
- Effective primary prevention of child abandonment and improvement of deinstitutionalization policies.

A number of pre-conditions need to be created and further developed in order to create favourable environment for the effective intervention of the Family Centres, such as:
- Partnerships and networking between all stakeholders at regional, municipal and local levels;
- Participation of disadvantaged communities in the process.

In addition, the development of the new services needs to be supported by on-going activities, targeted at overcoming the discrimination and stigma against Roma.

Understanding of equity, behaviour change and change of attitudes of general public, experts and policy makers will strengthen the implementation of policies directly affecting welfare of most disadvantaged Roma children and families.

**Issue**

Bulgaria has the highest rate of children under 3 placed in residential care in the region for reasons of poverty, lack of access to services, social norms and practices. The majority of children benefit from the country’s economic development and political stability, however the gap is widening for the most disadvantaged - the poorest Roma families, children in residential care and children with disabilities. Despite the progress in development of community-based services, still very few of them target most marginalized communities, and manage to apply an outreach, needs-based approach.

**Strategy and Implementation**

The main strategy is to improve the system of social services through testing of innovative services, building national and local capacities and advocacy for scaling up the model.

A demonstration project was launched in 2010 in one region to develop a network of health and social services to support family care and development of children 0-3, prevent family separation and close one residential institution for children 0-3.

3 Family Centres were opened by local authorities to provide services for prevention and support of young children and families at risk. The predominant mobile component is designed to reach the most vulnerable children in excluded Roma communities.

The Centers provide various services, organized in integrated programmes, designed based on the initial mapping of families in segregated communities. Services include: individual and group counselling for families, workshops for parenting support, self-help groups for developing parental skills, hands-on support to the most deprived families and children. The Centre supports informal groups of mothers for improving care for small children, increase knowledge and change attitudes and behavior with regard to health and reproductive health issues, family planning. Traditional harmful practices, e.g. early marriages and pregnancies, nutrition and care for young children are also addressed.

**Progress and Results**

The Family Centres demonstrated successful approaches for prevention of abandonment and neglect of most disadvantaged children and the social inclusion of marginalized communities. For one year of functioning of the Centres the outreach services brought about significant results:
- 1879 families from the disadvantaged communities in the region of Shumen were included in the mapping and the Family Centres started to provide services to most vulnerable children and families;
- Prevented abandonment of 54 children;
- No child below 3 years from vulnerable communities has been placed in residential care;
- In partnership with the other services in the region the Family Consultative Centres contributed to reducing the number of institutionalised children, placed in the Infant Home in the region from 107 in October 2010 to 22 by the end of 2012.
The FC will continue to be supported by UNICEF in 2013 with advocacy for ensuring state financing and replication in the marginalized communities across the country.

### Next Steps

UNICEF Bulgaria will provide support to the Government in the following areas:
- Development of a financial standard for the Family Centre in order to support the approval of the innovative service as a state delegated activity;
- Elaboration of detailed methodology package for establishment and functioning of Family Centres, based on the testing process. The package includes detailed training programme and training materials for the capacity building and methodological support of the Centre’s personnel;
- Methodological support and support to the initiatives of state institutions, municipalities and NGOs for establishing Family Centres in other regions and localities.