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Draft country programme document**

Bulgaria***

Summary

The draft country programme document (CPD) for Bulgaria is presented to the Executive Board for discussions and comments. The Executive Board is requested to approve the aggregate indicative budget of \$2,250,000 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and \$6,000,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the period 2010 to 2012.

* E/ICEF/2009/8.

** Submission of this document was delayed because of the need for internal consultations.

*** In accordance with Executive Board decision 2006/19, the present document will be revised and posted on the UNICEF website, along with the results matrix, no later than six weeks after discussion of the CPD at the annual session of the Executive Board. The revised CPD will then be presented to the Executive Board for approval at the second regular session of 2009.

Basic data[†]
(2007 unless otherwise stated)

Child population (millions, under 18 years)	1.3
U5MR (per 1,000 live births)	12 ^a
Underweight (% , moderate and severe)	2.5
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, 2006)	7 ^b
Primary school enrolment (% , net male/female, 2006)	93/92
Survival rate to last primary grade (% , 2005)	95
Use of improved drinking water sources (% , 2006)	99
Use of improved sanitation facilities (% , 2006)	99
Adult HIV prevalence rate (%)	0.05 ^c
Child labour (% , children 5-14 years old)	..
GNI per capita (US\$)	4 590
One-year-olds immunized with DPT3 (%)	95
One-year-olds immunized with measles vaccine (%)	96

[†] More comprehensive country data on children and women are available at <http://www.unicef.org>.

^a National MDG report 2008: is a NSI U5MR data of 11 per 1,000 live births.

^b The 2005 estimate developed by WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA and the World Bank, adjusted for underreporting and misclassification of maternal deaths is 11 deaths per 100,000 live births. For more information, see <http://www.childinfo.org/areas/maternalmortality/>.

^c Ministry of Health data.

Context and challenges for children and women

1. Bulgaria has made substantial progress in previous years in ensuring sustainable economic growth and aligning its legislation and standards with the European Union (EU) *acquis communautaire*. An ambitious reform agenda to advance child rights in the areas of social inclusion and child protection and welfare has also been pursued. Bulgaria acceded to the EU in January 2007.

2. The Government has aligned its social inclusion policies with the EU through development of a National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010. The report sets as key objectives the reduction of child poverty and creation of conditions to achieve social inclusion, ensure equal access to quality education and health care, and promote child participation in policy formulation.

3. Challenges in promoting social inclusion, however, remain. The percentage of the population at risk of poverty has been fluctuating between 14-16 per cent over the past years. A higher risk of poverty is reported among children between the ages of 0 and 15 years (17.8 per cent); among single-parent households (25.1 per cent); and among children from multi-member households (31.5 per cent).¹ Vulnerability to poverty of Roma and rural population is higher. Out of all children dropping-out from school, more than 50 per cent identify themselves as Roma. While the under-

¹ Eurostat data: Population and social conditions/Living conditions and social protection/Income, social inclusion and living conditions.

five mortality rate stood at 14.8 per thousand² in 2007, rates are higher in areas with a predominantly higher Roma population.

4. The Government of Bulgaria undertook a number of steps towards adopting an intersectoral and holistic approach in the area of child protection and child welfare. The child protection system reforms began with the adoption of the Child Protection Act in 2000. The State Agency for Child Protection was established as part of the Council of Ministers and mandated to strengthen co-ordination in the field of child protection. At local level, Child Protection Departments were established with primary responsibilities for case management, implementing child protection measures and consultation with families and children. In 2008, Parliament approved a new Strategy for Children for 2008-2018 as a key policy framework document. De-institutionalization of children in public care is an explicit priority of the Government. The State Agency for Child Protection has the responsibility to coordinate and provide methodological guidance. In November 2008, the Council of Ministers adopted a National Action Plan for Institutional Care Reform for 2008-2011.

5. Review of the data since 2001 indicates that the number of children in specialized institutions has fallen by 42.3 per cent. At the end of 2008, 7,276 children were residing in a total of 140 specialized institutions.³ Eleven new types of alternative community-based social services for children and young adults are now in place in the country.

6. A number of priority areas of action have been identified to further consolidate and improve the effectiveness of the child protection system. Despite the progress made, the alternative social services cannot adequately respond to the existing needs. Further efforts are needed to stimulate the development of foster care. In 2008, Child Protection Departments worked on 1,011 cases of children who are victims of violence, a number higher than of previous periods.⁴ According to a small-scale survey conducted by the Institute for Social Activities and Practices among children deprived of parental care in 2007, as many as 43 per cent of the children placed in residential institutions stated in interviews that there is violence among the children in the home in which they live.

7. A functional analysis of the child protection system in 2007, conducted with UNICEF support, identified inconsistencies among the functions of the various organizational units. The study found that the capacities of Child Protection Departments need to be further strengthened in relation to their statutory roles and responsibilities. Mechanisms for referral between the different child protection bodies responsible for case management require improvement. Establishing an effective child welfare system over the long run requires increased linkages between the child protection system and other social sectors, including education, and health care, according to their obligations as protection authorities under existing legislation.

8. Progress has been made towards administrative decentralization. However, a study conducted in 2007 by UNICEF revealed that several municipalities were not empowered to carry out further reform of residential institutions for children or to

² National Statistical Institute, "Population and Demographic Processes in 2007".

³ 2008 Annual Report issued by the State Agency for Child Protection.

⁴ 2008 Annual Report issued by the State Agency for Child Protection.

develop alternative community-based social services. The EU Structural and Cohesion Funds, which became available for municipalities and district administrations, create an opportunity for strengthening local systems and supporting the implementation of policies and local strategies. Small- and medium-sized municipalities are experiencing greater difficulty in accessing funding for developing adequate services, and this leads to uneven development of community-based social services for children and limited access of children and families to social services.

9. The second Government report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The report outlines the important progress made by the Government in furthering child rights and articulates the remaining challenges.

10. The global financial crisis is also having a significant and increasing impact on the country. The Government has estimated that economic growth will decline to 4.7 per cent in 2009. Effective use of public finances for social protection of the most vulnerable and investment in human capital become increasingly important priorities.

Key results and lessons learned from previous cooperation, 2006-2009

Key results achieved

11. The 2006-2009 programme of cooperation was the first such programme between UNICEF and the Government of Bulgaria. Its main goal is to support the realization of the vision of the Government for 2010. The country programme also supports Government efforts to ensure that all Bulgarian children grow up healthy, educated, informed, socially active and responsible in a safe, enabling and supportive family and social environment, and that feel secure in their development as young people. The midterm review of the programme, concluded in August 2008, recommended some adjustments for the remaining year.

12. Significant analytical work (such as the Assessment of the Public Expenditure on Children and Functional Analysis of the Child Protection System as well as expert discussions conducted with institutions and partners from the non-government sector) contributed to the development and adoption of the Integrated Plan for the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A series of studies helped to improve the development of policies for social inclusion by national partners and led to the adoption of child-focused policies on national and local levels. The involvement of national and international experts contributed to national efforts to develop standards for a minimum child protection service package, as well as to build the capacity of municipal authorities for planning of de-institutionalization and development of alternative community-based social services.

13. The cooperation facilitated the exchange of best practices and supported the development of models for family-type centres for children with disabilities. It also contributed to the formulation of a methodology for closure of residential homes for children with disabilities, as well as a district-based model for foster care. Complementing the Government's efforts to address persisting vulnerabilities and

ensure increased access to health and educational services for young people, services for prevention of school dropout and violence among children, as well as a national hotline for children, were tested and adopted for national implementation. Youth-friendly health services and a model for life-skills education for children in residential institutions have informed the new National Programme on Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS 2009-2015. In May 2007, Bulgaria was officially certified as having eliminated iodine deficiency disorders.

14. The country programme has contributed to development of broad partnerships with civil society, research institutes, the media and key opinion leaders, which have resulted in raising public awareness on child rights issues such as violence against children, children with disabilities, and children in institutions. These partnerships have brought attention to newly arising issues and have led to new alliances for children.

Lessons learned

15. Introducing structural and legislative changes to the child protection system has been a key priority of Government and its partners over the last five years. Implementing the reforms already started requires further capacity-building of national and local authorities to plan, implement and monitor policies for children. The achievement of a holistic and intersectoral approach to child development and well-being requires enhanced coherence among health, education, social protection and other child-welfare-related systems.

16. The 2007 regional meeting on child care reform, hosted in Sofia, highlighted yet again the value of sharing experience and lessons among countries in the region at different stages of reform and following different paths of reform. The meeting also emphasized the importance of financially sound solutions and ensuring models for dissemination of sustainable and innovative practice.

17. Data collection, monitoring and evaluation systems are not used sufficiently for child-related policy-making and policy implementation aiming to ensure equal access of all target groups to social services and even territorial coverage of these services. Municipalities, especially those that are small or medium in size, require support to leverage EU structural funds for investment in priorities for children and to strengthen efforts to address social exclusion and child poverty. The success of the child welfare system reform also depends on having more efficient public financial-management practices and strengthened capacities of oversight and quality assurance. A more effective mechanism for programme budgeting for inter-sectoral policies and strategies is also needed.

18. National fundraising activities have been successfully initiated and implemented. They have led to new possibilities for establishing networks and broad-based alliances for children and for co-sponsoring action on child-related issues. Stronger interaction with the private sector within a corporate social responsibility framework is needed to leverage additional resources and contribute to creating a fully protective environment for children.

Framework of cooperation 2010-2012

Summary budget table

<i>Programmes</i>	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	
Social inclusion and reduction of child poverty	1 200	5 700	6 900
Social mobilization and communication for development	600	300	900
Cross-sectoral costs	450	0	450
Total	2 250	6 000	8 250

Preparation process

19. The proposed three-year cooperation document was developed in close collaboration with the Government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and United Nations agencies. It is based on the recommendations of the midterm review conducted by the Government of Bulgaria and UNICEF, which has shaped the adjustment of the current programme and contributed to a vision of the future role of UNICEF beyond 2009.

Goals and strategies

20. The goal of this cooperation is to support the efforts of the Government for social inclusion of the most vulnerable children and families in line with the national and EU strategies, taking into account the principles and standards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also aims to enhance broad-based national partnership to mobilize support and resources for achieving local and global commitments for children.

21. This cooperation will also contribute to achieving benchmarks for sustainable policies and services that benefit children. These include a capacity to assess and analyse the situation of the rights of children and women; policies and laws that are child-focused and gender-sensitive; and adequate resources and capacities to implement plans and monitor implementation and follow-up.

22. The cooperation will facilitate the successful completion of social reforms in the best interests of the child. Through sharing good practices and drawing out lessons learned from its past experience, the Bulgarian model for child care will be consolidated and shared at the regional and global levels.

23. This cooperation will also support the mobilization of public support for local and global action for children.

Relationship to national and international priorities

24. The new Strategy for the Child for the period 2008-2018 sets as key objectives: to reduce child poverty and create conditions to promote social inclusion; to ensure equal access to quality education and health care; and to promote child participation in child-related policy formulation.

25. The Human Resource Development Operational Programme developed under the National Reference Framework for EU Structural Funding provides a clear opportunity for additional investment to the benefit of the most vulnerable children and capacity-building through two of its priority funding channels: Improving the Access to Education and Training, and Social Inclusion and Promotion of Social Economy.

26. The cooperation is linked to the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan focus area 5 on policy advocacy and partnerships for children's rights, and has been developed within the context of the Millennium Development Goals.

27. In addition, Bulgaria aims to align its financial contributions in the form of official development assistance for fighting poverty. The proposed partnership will also enhance the contribution of Bulgaria to the global support for children, including reducing child poverty.

Areas of cooperation

28. In alignment with the National Strategy for the Child 2008-2018, key results will centre on critical elements needed for completion of the reform of the child protection and child welfare system, namely, strengthening budgeting and local planning, and ensuring long-term investments for children. The expected results include the following: (a) quality and financial standards are developed for a package of integrated services that will support the family to provide the best start in life for children and prevent abandonment, institutionalization and violence; (b) capacity for planning for equal access to integrated services at municipal/regional levels is strengthened; (c) appropriate mechanisms are in place to monitor policies and strategic plans for children; and (d) resource mobilization and strategic partnerships for children are enhanced.

29. These results will be achieved within two strategic areas of cooperation: Social inclusion and reduction of child poverty; and Social mobilization and communication for development.

Social inclusion and reduction of child poverty

30. Consolidation of the child protection and child welfare reforms remains at the centre of Government efforts to promote social inclusion and reduce child poverty.

31. Special attention will be given to improving quality assurance of existing services and strengthening local capacities to implement best practices.

32. Technical support and fostering the exchange of experience regarding financial standards for child-related services and quality systems for integrated services for children will constitute a priority direction for cooperation. The identification and elaboration of early childhood care models and their subsequent national scale-up will contribute to the further promotion of social inclusion, especially among Roma children. The cooperation will further pursue support for the identification of best practice and knowledge generation for the establishment of a protective environment for children at risk of growing up outside their families, children with disabilities, children in conflict with the law, and victims of violence and abuse. A special focus will be placed on supporting the de-institutionalization process and the prevention of abandonment of young children to institutions.

33. Supporting the development of government budget allocations for specific social sectors, based on outcomes for children, will contribute to the sustainability of quality services for children and families. Opportunities for strengthened capacities of regional and local governments to plan the effective provision and delivery of integrated child and family support services will be a further priority in efforts towards the promotion of social inclusion. Tools for child-focused strategic planning, management and budgeting will be elaborated, documented and recommended for national scale-up. A specific focus will be on strengthening municipal-level absorption capacities for EU Structural Funds as one of the key policy and budgetary frameworks for achieving outcomes for children. Supporting EU policies and instruments through sharing best practice and strengthening inter-municipal cooperation will further enhance the involvement and role of the Government of Bulgaria in planning and developing the wider EU agenda for children.

34. Support will be provided for strengthening government monitoring and evaluation systems, as well as quality assessment tools focusing on national strategies, policies and plans for children and families. Stronger linkages will be established between evaluation conclusions, data analysis and best practices and the development of policies and national programmes. The work on the development and implementation of a child well-being index will continue through the national information system, as provided for in the Child Protection Act. Partnership with leading think-tanks and research institutions of Bulgaria will be pursued, while opportunities will be actively sought for sharing the models developed through UNICEF regional and global networks.

Social mobilization and communication for development

35. Within this component, communication activities will support all programme components and fundraising activities to facilitate changes in systems, attitudes and behaviours.

36. Strengthening the partnership with civil society, the private sector, key opinion leaders and the media around children's rights remains a priority. This will include partnering with local resource centres in developing, analysing and sharing good practices; and disseminating international scientific research in support of programmes affecting children. Support to good parenting practices, early childhood development, prevention of institutionalization, prevention of violence against children, and other priorities will be promoted through appropriate communication channels. The participation of children in shaping the policy agenda will be enhanced through broader consultation and involvement in decision-making.

37. Partnerships will be built with the media and private sector to maximize financial resources for programme implementation. Corporate alliances will receive major attention in the building of long-term partnerships. The involvement of celebrities in high-profile events will continue to be an important aspect of fundraising. In addition to fundraising for programme costs within Bulgaria, the office will initiate fundraising for children in other parts of the world, especially for emergencies.

38. The partnership with Bulgaria as a donor country will be further enhanced through shifting the focus to mobilization of both human and financial resources,

transferring expertise and good practices in support of children's causes around the world.

39. **Cross-sectoral costs.** This will cover operating costs, including utilities and rent, communication and related staff costs.

Major partnerships

40. Partnership-building will be the central strategy of the cooperation. Major national partners will include the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Labour and Social Policy, Education, Health, Finance, Interior, and Justice; the State Agency for Child Protection; the Ombudsman's Office; and the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria. Close collaboration will be established with institutes of research and science, universities, and policy development and analysis centres. Enhanced partnerships will be developed with civil society, NGOs, children's representatives and the media.

41. Close collaboration will be pursued with the European Commission on social inclusion and child poverty. Cooperation with the World Bank will be strengthened on social inclusion and early childhood development.

Cooperation modalities

42. The implementation of the current cooperation arrangement will be monitored through joint annual reviews, as well as an assessment of progress vis-à-vis established benchmarks that will be held in 2012.

43. Baselines will be established in each key area of cooperation through an independent evaluation and monitoring system that provides information on progress and a consolidation of the results achieved.

44. A new basis of cooperation and partnership will be developed with the Government at the end of 2011, as appropriate. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Agency for Child Protection will have overall responsibility for coordination of the cooperation for Bulgaria.
