

# **The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

## **Country programme document 2010-2015**

The draft country programme document for The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (E/ICEF/2009/P/L.12) was presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comments at its 2009 annual session (8-10 June 2009).

The document was subsequently revised, and this final version was approved at the 2009 second regular session of the Executive Board on 15 September 2009.

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*Basic data*<sup>†</sup>  
(2007, unless otherwise stated)

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Child population (millions, under 18 years)	0.5
U5MR (per 1,000 live births)	17
Underweight (% , moderate and severe, 2006)	2
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, 2006)	4
Primary school enrolment (% net, male/female, 2005)	92/92
Survival rate to last primary grade (% , 2004)	98
Use of improved drinking water sources (% , 2006)	100
Use of improved sanitation facilities (% , 2006)	89
Adult HIV prevalence rate (%)	<0.1
Child labour (% , children 5-14 years old, 2005)	6
GNI per capita (US\$)	3 460
One-year-olds immunized with DPT3 (%)	95
One-year-olds immunized with measles vaccine (%)	96

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

## Summary of the situation of children and women

1. Since independence in 1991, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has made steady progress in ensuring political stability and economic growth in a multi-ethnic State. A political settlement of the inter-ethnic conflict in 2001 was established through the Ohrid Agreement. The country was granted European Union (EU) candidate status in December 2005 but has not yet received a date to start the negotiation process for EU accession. Since 2003, the country has enjoyed real gross domestic product growth of up to 5.3 per cent per year, reaching a gross national income per capita of \$3,460, compared with \$1,763 in 2000. The current global financial crisis, however, may act as a break on economic progress.

2. National statistics reflect encouraging progress in achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and in improving the situation of children and women. For example, according to United Nations estimates, the under-five mortality rate fell from 38 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 17 per 1,000 live births in 2007, and a similar trend has been noted with the infant mortality rate and the maternal mortality ratio.

3. However, the social-economic agenda for children remains unfinished, and there are three interlinked challenges to the fulfilment of the rights of children and women: continuing high rates of child poverty and social exclusion; enduring disparities in access to services and in health and education outcomes; and poor linkages among accountabilities, policies and spending.

4. First, increasing levels of poverty show that not all citizens, children in particular, are fully benefiting from recent positive economic developments. In 2007, more than 60 per cent of households living under the relative poverty line, compared to 41 per cent in 1997, were households with children. Unemployment remains high, at approximately 34 per cent, and disproportionately affects young

people (age 15-24) who face an unemployment rate of 54 per cent. With the recent global economic downturn, these statistics may deteriorate further.

5. Social exclusion, particularly among ethnic minorities such as the Roma is another concern, as are disparities in access to services. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted that it is “deeply concerned” about the difficulties that some Roma experience in obtaining registration and other personal documents related to the provision of social services.

6. In education, the World Bank has noted substantial differences in the amount of spending on schools with different ethnic compositions. Regarding primary school completion, children from the poorest quintile have a 62 per cent completion rate, against a 99 per cent rate in the richest quintile. The worst indicators in education are observed among the Roma, with only 61 per cent of children attending primary education (58 per cent girls). The primary completion rate is only 45 per cent, against the national average of 83 per cent. Children with disabilities are another group that tends to miss out on education: it is estimated that only 10 per cent of such children are in school. Only 11 per cent of all children 4-6 years old attend pre-school. This is considerably lower among ethnic minorities; only 4 per cent of Roma and 2 per cent of Albanian children 4-6 years old attend pre-school. Low scores in international comparative examinations of learning achievement indicate that accelerated efforts are needed to address issues related to the relevance and quality of primary school education. Moreover, authorities have noted with concern recent reports of ethnic-based segregation and violence in some schools.

7. Infant and child mortality rates vary significantly, depending on wealth quintile and ethnic background. High vaccination coverage with no gender disparities has been sustained over the past 10 years. However, there persist pockets of unimmunized children, predominantly from rural areas and from Roma and ethnic Albanian communities. While HIV prevalence remains low, at 0.1 per cent, maintaining that level will require sustained effort.

8. According to the 2005-2006 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), almost 70 per cent of children aged 2-14 years (72.7 percent for boys and 64.6 percent for girls) experienced at least one form of psychological or physical punishment from a household member, with 16 per cent subjected to severe physical punishment. Roma children as well as children from the poorest families have experienced severe physical punishment more than other children. Rates of domestic violence are high. The reporting and referral of cases of domestic violence and of child abuse are limited.

9. Following the 2000 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the country adopted a new code that regulates all aspects of juvenile justice. However, the degree of specialization of the system remains inadequate. A 2007 UNICEF regional study found that the country continues to have a high rate of children in conflict with the law. The Committee report also highlighted that responses emphasized punishment and custodial sentencing rather than prevention and rehabilitation.

10. With approximately 400 children and adolescents in eight public institutions, the Government is keen to accelerate reform of the child care system. Efforts are under way to close or transform all existing residential institutions for children with special needs, and in parallel to develop community- and family-based alternatives

such as small group homes and foster families. However, the Committee recommended that more effort be made by the State to integrate children with disabilities into educational and recreational programmes. Ten per cent of children 2-9 years old have at least one reported disability, with higher levels among Roma children and poor children.

11. A final challenge is the weak linkages among accountabilities, planning and expenditures, which hinder some policy commitments from being transformed into programmatic actions at both the central and local levels. As part of the Ohrid Agreement, municipalities have increased responsibilities in the provision of social services. However, while the devolution of responsibilities from central government to municipalities has contributed to the greater participation of all ethnic groups in governance, it has made the effective support to the realization of children's rights more complex. This complexity is compounded by the fact that municipalities differ in size, economic power, physical infrastructure and human resources.

12. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has made progress in establishing child rights monitoring mechanisms; however, capacities of national and local bodies are limited. The Committee has encouraged the State to increase its support for, and cooperation with, non-governmental organizations as part of the State's obligation to implement the Convention. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has welcomed legislative measures taken to combat violence against women but has noted its concern about the high prevalence of violence against women, including domestic violence.

## **Key results and lessons learned from previous cooperation, 2005-2009**

### **Key results achieved**

13. The beginning of the country programme coincided with the country receiving EU candidacy status, which provided the opportunity to link child rights principles and standards to the accession process. The programme supported the development of normative frameworks, including laws, policies, and standards; it also generated knowledge on children to inform policies and national strategies, and strengthened data collection and monitoring mechanisms on child rights, building the capacity of service providers and improving the quality of services for children.

14. Normative work contributed to the development of several key policies and frameworks: the Agenda for Action for Children and the Skopje Declaration in 2005 as the national framework for implementing child rights; the National Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy aiming to provide diversified quality ECD services and universal access to early learning opportunities for young children; Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), now to be implemented nationwide; and Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) standards, which are already in place in 350 primary schools throughout the country, benefiting some 250,000 children.

15. A comprehensive juvenile justice code, adopted in 2007 with the programme's technical support, now governs all aspects of juvenile justice, and is being applied by courts and social service providers. The cooperation also enabled the development and adoption of the national de-institutionalization strategy, which led

to a sharp increase in the number of community-based services. Day-care centres for children with disabilities grew from just 9 in 2005 to 22 in 2009.

16. New evidence that helped to shape policies and resource allocation for children included a Child Poverty Study in 2007, which influenced the Government to make a commitment to allocate EU funds for specific children's issues. The State Statistics Office included child poverty in its routine budget household survey, which informs the planning and budgeting strategies of all Ministries. The 2005-2006 MICS for the first time provided disaggregated data on specific child-related indicators. These are being used not only by line Ministries but also by the European Commission and World Bank. A qualitative research on most-at-risk adolescents (MARA) shaped the National AIDS Strategy, which prioritized HIV prevention among adolescents.

17. One of the main concerns of the Committee on the Rights of the Child was addressed with the establishment of the National Commission on Child Rights in 2007. There is now a functioning national institutional mechanism that monitors the implementation of the Convention, prepares progress reports on the implementation of the National Action Plan for Children's Rights, and holds annual Government sessions devoted to children's issues.

18. All 250,000 primary school students now learn Life Skills-Based Education, helping them to develop skills essentials for their daily lives, including skills promoting understanding and respecting the multicultural and multi-ethnic nature of their society.

### **Lessons learned**

19. UNICEF support for decentralization reform was an important element of the previous country programme. However, one lesson that emerged from a joint UNICEF-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) decentralization assessment in 2007 was that an unclear structure of accountability linking local- and central-level authorities had contributed to the slow pace of reform. The next programme cycle would need to address accountability issues, scale up municipal-level capacity in local planning and budgeting, and develop minimum standards for basic social services at local level. For this reason, greater emphasis has been placed on these strategies in the new programme.

20. UNICEF is a leader in promoting ELDS in the region. The programme of cooperation made headway in advocacy efforts and technical input, to the point where ELDS moved beyond the development stage to a 'validation' stage of the strategy. The recent validation of the ELDS showed that, on the whole, young children do not receive the care and stimulation for development that they need to reach their potential. Children 0-6 years old surpass international standards for physical health and motor development; however, there are apparent delays in cognitive, social and emotional development among children 3-6 years old who do not attend kindergarten. This suggests that the vast majority of children (only 11 per cent participate in early education) are not developmentally ready for schooling. This situation can have serious implications for their future educational performance and therefore for the efficiency of educational spending in the country. The evidence called for increased coverage of early educational opportunities, and counselling and support for families, both of which are priorities in the new country programme.

In order to do this effectively, accelerated and expanded intersectoral efforts are required to address the holistic needs of young children.

21. In the previous programme of cooperation, UNICEF supported a Roma education project that emphasized inclusion and integrated community-based approaches. A 2008 evaluation of the project, supported by the Council of Europe Development Bank, found that the outreach activities in Roma communities, teacher-training and parental involvement in schools represented an effective and sustainable model. Some 8,000 primary education children benefited, and over 400 Roma students out of the school system were enrolled. This model of inclusion went beyond the Roma project to inform the CFS approach and standards that are being mainstreamed in the education system through the ongoing reform. It will be further consolidated to incorporate the prevention of violence and promotion of life skills, particularly inter-cultural and inter-ethnic tolerance, and will be scaled up by the Government in the new programme of cooperation.

## The country programme, 2010-2015

### Summary budget table

<i>Programme</i>	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	<i>Total</i>
System strengthening for child rights	2 475	8 760	11 235
Child rights monitoring and social policy	1 665	3 000	4 665
Cross-sectoral costs	360	240	600
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 500</b>	<b>12 000</b>	<b>16 500</b>

### Preparation process

22. The 2007 midterm review and the joint United Nations strategy review in 2006 provided guidance on the direction of the programme. The process was managed in parallel with the development of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and was fully consistent with the framework. The country programme contributes to two out of the three UNDAF outcomes, namely, social inclusion (led by UNICEF), and local governance and decentralization.

23. Evidence for programme design was provided by the Situation Analysis of children and women, the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Government's report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In late 2008, the Government and UNICEF reached agreement on the adjustments that needed to be made in the current programme. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinated consultation with the line Ministries, and consolidated recommendations and feedback.

### **Goals, key results and strategies**

24. The 2010-2015 country programme will address three main development challenges facing children: child poverty, disparities and social exclusion. It will help to address the key bottleneck of limited capacity at both local and national levels in developing and implementing evidence-based policies, programmes and budgets for children, and will promote multi-ethnic cohesion through the education system.

25. The programme will contribute to the following strategic results: (a) government resource allocation to basic social services, including for excluded and marginalized children, increased by 10 per cent; (b) primary education attendance rate among excluded children improved by 20 per cent; (c) regional disparities in key child health indicators reduced, and peri-natal and infant mortality decreased by 20 per cent; (d) the ratio of children in institutional care to children in alternative family- or community-based care reduced from 2.6/1 to 1/1, and the number of children in residential care reduced by 30 per cent; and (e) the number of juvenile offenders who are diverted to non-punitive and prevention services increased by 50 per cent.

26. The programme will meet the recommendations of the Situation Analysis through support to system strengthening, capacity-building and good governance in the areas of maternal and child health, early childhood learning, education and child protection. It will achieve results through two programme components, System Strengthening for Child Rights, and Child Rights Monitoring and Social Policy. The programme will employ a mix of strategies, including: institutional capacity development at national and local level; specific focus on socially excluded and vulnerable children; innovative and evidence-based models to support public administration reforms in health, education and social protection; partnership building with civil society organizations, media and private sector.

### **Relationship to national priorities and the UNDAF**

27. The programme has been designed to support the country's social inclusion agenda for children to move forward. It will support the key development priorities outlined in the National Development Plan 2008-2013, which include building human capital through formal and non-formal education, improvement of health and nutritional status, the reduction of disparities and support for better public administration at both national and municipal level. The programme is also in line with the National Plan for Action for Children 2006-2015 and sector specific national strategies.

28. UNICEF has been designated the lead agency in achieving UNDAF Outcome One which aims to increase access to quality basic services for the socially excluded and marginalized population by 2015. The programme will complement the work of four United Nations agencies to achieve UNDAF Outcome Two for strengthening the local and regional governance capacity to promote equitable development and inter-ethnic cohesion.

### **Relationship to international priorities**

29. The country programme will contribute to the realization of the Millennium Development Goal commitments to lowering poverty levels, promoting universal

education and gender equality, and reducing disparities in health and child protection. By supporting access to quality education, promoting healthy lives, and protecting children against violence, exploitation and abuse, the programme is also fully aligned with the goals of *A World Fit for Children*. The programme is also informed by the Copenhagen criteria, including those pertaining to the respect for and protection of minorities, and the need to address social exclusion and to ensure social protection systems consistent with principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international standards.

30. To this end, the programme will support the Government's efforts to analyse and address the scope and causes of the barriers to children's full enjoyment of their rights, an approach consistent with the EU "Communication Towards a European Strategy on the Rights of the Child".

## **Programme components**

### **System strengthening for child rights**

31. While State funding for the social sector has grown, the increase has not been accompanied by the development of capacities for evidence-based planning and efficient monitoring of equitable use of the funding, both at national and local levels. In the health sector, there is still insufficient emphasis on preventative and primary care, and systems for continuous medical education of health professionals are limited. More than half of the population utilizes ambulance/emergency care as the first contact with the health care system. ECD policies and standards are in place, but provision of these services remains limited. State funding for ECD favours those municipalities that have existing infrastructure. The education system needs to address the relatively poor performance of students based on international assessments. Investment in the areas that directly contribute to improved teaching and learning, such as pre-service and in-service training, has been insufficient. Schools also lack mechanisms to prevent ethnic segregation and violence in schools. Protection of at-risk and vulnerable children needs strengthening at normative level (legislation, policies, standards, protocols) and at the service-delivery level. A standardized national data collection system for child protection needs to be further developed, as does the system to monitor quality of social services delivered to children. The administration of juvenile justice in the country is hampered by the lack of skilled and trained professionals and the shortage of materials and financial resources. While the Government has adopted a strategy for de-institutionalization, its scope is limited and does not take a holistic view of child care system reform.

32. In early childhood learning and quality and relevant education, there are three expected key results: (a) at least 30 percent of primary schools implement mechanisms and standards for inclusion of children regardless of ethnicity, gender, disability, and socio-economic background; (b) all primary school teachers use the updated teaching methodologies that improve learning outcomes for children; and (c) 40 per cent of young children (0-6 years) have early learning opportunities.

33. The programme component will support government efforts in the development and implementation of standards and mechanisms for inclusion of children in primary education system, revision of pre-school education curriculum and capacity development of ECD staff and primary school teachers. Support will be given to the integration of better parenting programmes for children 0-3 years old



in the health prevention programmes for implementation and monitoring of child outcomes based on ELDS.

34. UNICEF will collaborate with the World Bank and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), both of which have active programmes in the education sector. Main partners will be: Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau for Education Development (BED), Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Local Self-Government, municipalities and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). UNICEF will also participate in a joint United Nations programme with UNDP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to build inter-ethnic cohesion and tolerance.

35. In the area of health system strengthening, the programme component aims to achieve the following: (a) all national Maternal and Child Health (MCH) programmes have plans to address regional and local disparities in terms of child health outcomes; (b) a total of 33 municipalities (40 per cent of all) that have the lowest performance in child health outcomes have developed local action plans and have allocated resources to improve their MCH outcomes by 20 per cent; and (c) at least 50 per cent of government professionals working in MCH apply the updated MCH guidelines.

36. The programme component will provide technical support for the development of integrated MCH policies, (especially in the areas of immunization, nutrition, peri-natal care, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and paediatric AIDS), reform of mother and child health, strengthening the capacity of public health professionals in evidence-based planning, implementation and monitoring of MCH-related policies and programmes at the national and local levels. The key partners include Ministry of Health, National Institute of Health Protection, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

37. In child protection, the component will aim for the following expected results: (a) a functional juvenile justice system that is able to provide alternative measures for children in conflict with the law; (b) at least 70 per cent of Centers for Social Work (CSW) staff apply the child protection normative framework to prevent and protect children at risk or victims of abuse and violence; (c) at least 30 per cent of children at risk are provided with prevention programmes; (d) data on children in need of special protection are collected by all CSWs based on a standardized system and are used for planning and budgeting child protection services at the national and local levels.

38. The programme component will support strengthening the child protection system through development of a national strategy for child protection; provide standards for basic social services in line with international standards; and promote models for alternatives to imprisonment, prevention of juvenile delinquency, and alternatives to residential care. It will offer technical assistance for the development of a data collection system on child protection and building the capacity of CSW staff in applying the normative framework, case management, and preventive and protective service delivery.

39. UNICEF will partner with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Institute for Social Activities, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, the local NGOs. It

will also join the United Nations programme to address domestic violence, together with UNDP, the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNFPA and WHO.

40. Regular resources will be used to build management and technical capacities, develop policies, standards and protocols, support innovations and modelling, and support key partnerships. Other resources will be mobilized to expand coverage and increase the scope of capacity development.

### **Social policy and child rights monitoring**

41. Evidence shows that relative child poverty is growing, and the economic growth has not necessarily benefited children. Pro-poor policies and planning are hampered by lack of disaggregated data, including for boys and girls, and there are weak linkages among accountabilities, planning and expenditures at national and local levels. Decentralized governance systems are at their infancy and require support to enable them to take on the devolved responsibilities. Child rights monitoring mechanisms, including the national child rights commission, media and civil society organizations are weak, and the participation of young people, including young girls, needs to be expanded and actively promoted.

42. The programme component will have three key results: (a) disaggregated data analysis — including on gender — results in child poverty being addressed and budgeted in the national social inclusion strategy; (b) at least 30 per cent of municipalities have developed gender-sensitive local plans for children, have allocated budgets for them, and report on status of both girls and boys every year; and (c) child rights monitoring institutions produce accurate and timely reports on child rights.

43. This second programme expands the scope of the cooperation by supporting social and economic policy analysis, focusing specifically on child poverty, on analysis of disparities, including gender-based inequalities, and the impact of budgetary allocations on children's lives. It will support Government and civil society partners by strengthening child rights monitoring systems at all levels. The component will closely link with the first one, but will focus on child rights governance systems and capacities at national and local levels. It will support the social sector ministries in results-based budgeting, generate knowledge and data on socially excluded children, and build the capacity of municipalities in child- and gender-friendly governance. Support to decentralization will also include the development of funding mechanisms for the equitable provision of social services based on minimum standards. The programme component will support capacity development of the national child rights commission and civil society in child rights monitoring and reporting, and support the inclusion of a child rights syllabus in the training of journalists.

44. Under this component, UNICEF will work with, among others, the Ministry of Finance on public finance management, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on social inclusion, the State Statistics Office on data collection, and the Ministry of Local Self-Government and relevant municipalities on issues related to decentralization, and with the EU and the United Nations system, as part of collective efforts to support social inclusion.

45. Regular resources will be used for child rights monitoring, policy and budget analysis, decentralized planning, and support of partnerships for children. Other

resources will be mobilized to expand coverage and increase the scope of capacity development.

46. The **cross-sectoral costs** will cover the basic office operational costs, including rent, utilities, transportation, security, telecommunications, and salaries of some cross-sectoral staff.

### **Major partnerships**

47. Activities at the community and municipal levels will be coordinated through municipal governments, the Ministry of Local Self-Government, the Association of Local Self-Government Units, relevant sectors in line ministries and local NGOs. Partnerships will continue with major international development partners, including with the EU in promotion of children's human rights in general and the rights of minorities and excluded children in particular, the World Bank in social protection reform and education system strengthening, and the sector-wide approach in human capital (education, social policy, and health), a new initiative that involves all the key actors and donors, including the EU, World Bank, and USAID. UNICEF will also continue its partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, USAID, and the Governments of Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway, in order to coordinate technical inputs and leverage funds.

48. The programme will collaborate with Parliamentary groups on issues related to child rights monitoring and budgetary allocations for children, and local and international research institutions to support knowledge generation. UNICEF will partner with two tertiary institutions and a professional media body to implement a child rights syllabus for the media, as well as with the media and private sector for raising awareness and leveraging funds for issues related to child rights, child poverty and social inclusion.

49. UNICEF has been an active member of all United Nations inter-agency committees established to oversee the implementation of the UNDAF, and will participate in two joint programmes: Improving inter-ethnic dialogue and cohesion in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (with UNDP and UNESCO); and Prevention of domestic violence (with UNDP, UNFPA, WHO and UNIFEM).

### **Monitoring, evaluation and programme management**

50. Monitoring and evaluation activities will be systematized and managed through the integrated monitoring and evaluation plan and coordinated with other United Nations agencies through the UNDAF integrated monitoring and evaluation framework. In order to promote a harmonized approach to data collection, research, monitoring and evaluation, UNICEF will continue to work with the United Nations working group on statistics.

51. Key indicators disaggregated by location, ethnicity and gender will cover the following: pre-school attendance; inclusiveness and quality in primary education; mother and child health promotion; adoption and implementation of normative frameworks in the areas of social protection and juvenile justice; and capacities and conditions for evidence-based planning, policy development and budgeting.

52. Progress against the indicators will be measured using data disaggregated by sex, location, and socio-economic conditions. For indicators relating to law, strategy, action plan or standards, sources of information will include the official

Government gazette and documents issued by the institution, particularly when it documents specific actions that have been approved. For quantitative indicators, periodic or annual publications by the State Statistics office, Ministries, and other institutions responsible for collecting specific data will be used. For indicators where no systematic data collection exists, the programme will use primary data collection. Research activities, studies and evaluations will be used for generating knowledge on the situation of children, providing evidence and support for policymaking.

53. The programme will support the establishment of a State-led child-related monitoring system. Through partnering with other players in the field (United Nations agencies, the World Bank, European Commission, USAID), relevant information, knowledge and experience regarding children will be identified. The State Statistics Office will be supported in expanding its work on collecting, disaggregating, systematizing and publishing relevant gender-sensitive child-related data. Simultaneously, the policy makers at national and local levels will be supported in developing capacities for applying a results-based approach to policy development and budgeting. This will create demand for information which, along with support to the National Commission for Child Rights to monitor implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the national plan of action for children, will lead to sustainability in children rights monitoring.

54. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will coordinate the country programme, the Annual Review meetings and the midterm review of the country programme in 2013. The various components will be managed in cooperation with the relevant line ministries.

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