

Montenegro

Country programme document 2012-2016

The draft country programme document for Montenegro (E/ICEF/2011/P/L.3) was presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comments at its 2011 annual session (20-23 June 2011).

The document was subsequently revised, and this final version was approved at the 2011 second regular session of the Executive Board on 15 September 2011.

Basic data[†]

(2009 unless otherwise stated)

Child population (millions, under 18 years)	0.1
U5MR (per 1,000 live births)	9
Underweight (% , moderate and severe, 2003)	2
(% , urban/rural, poorest/richest, 2007)	2/1, 4/1
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, 2007)	13 ^a
Primary school attendance (% net, male/female, 2005)	98/97 ^b
Survival rate to last primary grade (% , 2005)	97 ^c
Use of improved drinking water sources (% , 2008)	98
Use of improved sanitation facilities (% , 2008)	92
Adult HIV prevalence rate (%)	
Child labour (% , children 5-14 years old, 2005)	10
Birth registration (% , under 5 year, 2005-2006)	98
(% , male/female, urban/rural, poorest/richest)	97/99, 98/99, 94/99
GNI per capita (US\$)	6 550
One-year-olds immunized against DPT3 (%)	92
One-year-olds immunized against measles (%)	86

[†] More comprehensive country data on children and women can be found at www.childinfo.org.

^a 15 deaths per 100,000 live births is the 2008 estimate developed by the Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank, together with independent technical experts), adjusted for underreporting and misclassification of maternal deaths. For more information, see www.childinfo.org/maternal_mortality.html.

^b Survey data.

^c Survey data.

Summary of the situation of children and women

1. Less than five years after regaining independence, Montenegro became a candidate for membership of the European Union (EU) on 17 December 2010. Montenegro has made measurable progress in harmonizing its legal framework with international standards, and multiple layers of reform are underway. Despite the impact of the global financial crisis it remains an upper-middle-income country and is on track to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals. As a successful multi-ethnic, geopolitically stable country, with a national agenda that emphasizes children's rights, Montenegro is in a strong position to facilitate equitable outcomes for all children.

2. The Committee on the Rights of the Child delivered its first Concluding Observations for Montenegro in October 2010. In November 2010, the EU delivered its positive "Opinion" on the country's application for membership. Both landmark documents have important implications for the situation of women and children, illustrating that, despite progress, disparities represent an impediment to the fulfilment of child rights.

3. The impact of the global economic crisis and consequent economic decline of -5.7 per cent resulted in increased poverty and inequalities in 2009. The overall poverty rate in 2009 rose from 4.9 to 6.8 per cent, while the Gini coefficient reached 1.4 — two thirds higher than in 2008.¹ Regional disparities have been further exacerbated by the crisis: 62 per cent of the poor live in the northern part of the country. Families with two or more children have a poverty risk of twice the national average.² While the economy is expected to recover during the next few years, macro-economic challenges will remain.

4. Refugees and unregistered Roma remain among the most vulnerable people in Montenegro. Almost 40 per cent of Roma, of whom two thirds are children, are without either birth or citizenship documentation.³ Their illiteracy rate is 42 per cent, reaching up to 55 per cent for women.⁴ A little over one third of primary-school-aged Roma children access a full cycle of primary education, and fewer than 14 per cent have access to preschool.⁵ The country's first early learning and preschool strategy, adopted in September 2010, paves the way for breaking the cycle of exclusion for all vulnerable girls and boys.

5. According to official statistics from Montenegro, the national under-five mortality rate was reduced by half over the past five years, reaching 6 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2009.⁶ UNICEF research has indicated that the under-five mortality rate is approximately three times higher for Roma.⁷ The current HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 0.01 per cent (Institute for Public Health, Annual Report on HIV/AIDS in Montenegro, 2009). However, research funded by Irish Aid conducted among Roma most-at-risk-adolescents, revealed low levels of knowledge on HIV/AIDS; evidence of high-risk behaviour among males; and low levels of formal education, especially among girls.

6. Gender issues require further attention. There are currently 10 female parliamentarians out of 81, and few women hold senior leadership positions. Domestic violence and attitudes towards gender-based violence are worrying. Positive developments include the adoption of the Law on Protection from Family Violence in 2010, which includes measures to protect children from family violence and to prevent violence in families at risk. However, capacity-building and additional investments in systemic infrastructure are necessary.

7. Efforts are needed to engender respect for protection of minorities and vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities. This is a first step towards equitable socio-economic development to support the elimination of disparities. Adoption of the Law on Anti-Discrimination in 2010 represents an important achievement in strengthening the legal framework.

8. Attitudes towards children with disabilities are changing, and there have been positive steps in promoting social inclusion. Knowledge, attitudes and practices surveys conducted at the beginning and end of the first phase of the 2010 campaign

¹ Montenegro Statistical Agency (Monstat), 2010 (www.monstat.org).

² Monstat, "Poverty Analysis in Montenegro", 2009.

³ UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Civil Registration and the Prevention of Statelessness: A survey on RAE in Montenegro", 2009.

⁴ Monstat, Database on RAE Population in Montenegro", 2009.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Monstat, 2010, Statistical Yearbook, table 4-10, "Birth rates, death rates and marriages", p. 45.

⁷ UNICEF, "Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion: Roma children in South-East Europe", 2007.

“It’s About Ability” revealed positive trends in attitudes towards inclusion of children with disabilities in society. The percentage of people who believe that children with disabilities should only live in special institutions has dropped, and parents are more open than ever before to friendship and inclusive classes.⁸ While significant steps have been taken to advance policies that promote inclusive education, implementation is still a challenge, and addressing social norms takes time. Development of a comprehensive set of alternative services for children without parental care and children with disabilities continues to require special focus. As stated in the Strategy for Social and Child Welfare Development in Montenegro, some elements of the country’s social protection system do not comply with international commitments.

9. Round 3 of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and UNICEF research on early childhood development reveal the need for more attention to promotion of breastfeeding, involvement of fathers and alternatives to physical punishment of children. More than half of respondents — 55 per cent — admitted hitting their child at least once a week preceding the survey.⁹ A survey at a school found that around 48 per cent of children (51 per cent boys and 49 per cent girls) were victims of bullying.¹⁰

10. The Government of Montenegro has invested significant efforts in judicial reform. The first-ever Law on Juvenile Justice has been drafted, and there is recognition of the need for a separate juvenile justice system and a fully protective environment.

11. Continuous harmonization of legislation with international instruments is needed, as well as more effective implementation of domestic legislation and policies. Public administration needs strengthening. The infrastructure for child rights monitoring needs to be cultivated, particularly through the Ombudsman’s Office, Council on Child Rights, civil society and academia. Further development of statistical systems is needed to establish consolidated systems for comprehensive collection and analysis of data.

12. Decentralization, full democratization and accountability remain ongoing challenges. Practices at local level need to be harmonized with legislation. Greater participation and motivation of service providers, civil society, parents, children and young people are needed to encourage equitable human development.

Key results and lessons learned from previous cooperation, 2010-2011

Key results achieved

13. In a short period the country programme has contributed to results that are taking Montenegro closer to the goal of achieving an “ethos for children”. The programme has contributed to increased harmonization of the child-related legal framework with United Nations and EU standards. It has also helped in tackling social norms that require sustained focus to achieve lasting social change.

⁸ UNICEF, 2010.

⁹ UNICEF, 2009.

¹⁰ UNICEF, 2007.

14. Legal reforms in juvenile justice, protection from trafficking and preschool education have advanced the rights and protection of children in Montenegro. Within the EU-funded programme on reform of the juvenile justice system, the country's draft Juvenile Justice Law was developed with UNICEF support. Fully in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is paving the way for a separate juvenile justice system and implementation of alternative sanctions to incarceration. The Law on Protection from Family Violence, adopted in July 2010, was developed with support from the United Nations system and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy on Anti-Trafficking was adopted in January 2010. UNICEF contributed to development of the early learning and preschool education strategy. It is the first step towards achieving the inter-ministerial goal of adopting a national early childhood development policy. The EU Opinion on the country's application for membership made specific reference to adherence to UNICEF standards in reform of the child care system.

15. The Government and UNICEF jointly supported a nationwide campaign in support of inclusion of children with disabilities. A multi-layered initiative, "It's About Ability", involved over 100 partners in a mass media campaign, combined with grass-roots communication for development and programmatic interventions in inclusive education and de-institutionalization. The effort emerged from evidence of widespread discrimination towards children with disabilities, including those in institutional care, that jeopardized achievement of programme objectives. An evaluation of the first phase of the campaign revealed promising findings: the percentage of people who think that children with disabilities should only live in special institutions dropped by 19 points, from 40 per cent to 21 per cent. The percentage of people who believe it is in the best interests of children with disabilities to live in institutions and not with their families dropped by 11 per cent.

16. The first Situation Analysis of Children in Montenegro was published in 2011, following extensive consultation with a broad range of government and non-governmental actors. It provided a solid body of evidence for rights-based policymaking. This led to important policy and public discussions on issues including parenting practices, disability, minority rights, inclusion and violence against children and women.

17. A key achievement has been an increase in participation by children and youth, through strengthened cooperation with civil society. This came in response to the findings of the external evaluation conducted as part of the juvenile justice system reform project; the findings of the situation analysis; and the aim to build an infrastructure for monitoring child rights. Ongoing work on most-at-risk adolescents led to quantifiable empowerment of Roma adolescents, who have formed their own non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Lessons learned

18. Implementation of the programme has confirmed that laws and strategies are a vital prerequisite for progress, but results will only be sustainable if implementation is guaranteed through strategic investments for children. This implies allocation of resources and further building of capacities at all levels, including in tertiary education.

19. Assisting Montenegro through its reforms requires facilitating access to high-quality technical expertise, convening diverse partners and modelling and localizing successful approaches from other contexts. It also calls for working closely with civil society and with children and young people themselves as agents of change. Strong communication strategies are crucial for influencing public attitudes and policymaking.

20. A 2010 external evaluation in juvenile justice revealed the importance of increasing the programme focus on prevention and strengthening linkages between education, social protection and justice. It also underscored the need to obtain complete data and to increase the focus of UNICEF on child participation. It highlighted key results achieved in a short period and the importance of continued investment to ensure sustainability and long-term impact.

21. Montenegro suffered the worst floods in its history in late 2010 and is prone to earthquakes. The Government and UNICEF have agreed that a stronger focus on disaster risk reduction is essential, focusing in particular on vulnerable children.

The country programme, 2012-2016

Summary budget table

<i>Programme</i>	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	
Child protection and social inclusion	1 500	4 800	6 300
Child rights, policies and planning	1 500	2 700	4 200
Cross-sectoral costs	750	500	1 250
Total	3 750	8 000	11 750

Preparation process

22. This programme is a full articulation of priority areas identified in the 2010-2011 country programme document, which had a medium-term vision, as agreed with the Government. The strategic focus emanates from discussions on the unique contribution that UNICEF can make in light of the country's national priorities and middle-income status and partnership in the context of the Delivering as One approach. The annual review/strategy meeting between the Government and UNICEF (15 December 2010) validated key results. Broad consultations took place with national and international partners. Together with the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF made a formal presentation to the international community and civil society on 14 February 2011. A consultation with children and young people took place via social media.

Goals, key results and strategies

23. The overall goal is to aid efforts by Montenegro to increase equity and ensure the inclusion of children and women who are in need of special protection, live in poverty or are socially marginalized.

24. Ongoing reforms affecting children and young people will be harnessed to build on progress in ensuring that all girls and boys grow up healthy, educated, protected and able to develop and contribute to their full potential. To this end, the country programme will continue to prioritize partnerships, including emerging partnerships with the private sector; capacity- and system-strengthening; communication for development; and facilitating access to validated solutions that effectively support the Government and civil society in efforts to accelerate equity and inclusion for all boys and girls.

25. The programme will contribute to the following key results by the end of 2016: (a) Montenegro addresses disparities and gaps in access to quality social services for excluded and vulnerable boys, girls and families in line with United Nations standards; (b) the country's legal framework is harmonized with EU/United Nations standards, and policies relevant to child-focused governance and social inclusion of children are implemented and monitored; and (c) national and local authorities systematically apply the principles and standards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Copenhagen criteria (for membership in the EU) and facilitate independent monitoring.

26. The country programme comprises two mutually reinforcing components: child protection and social inclusion; and child rights, policies and planning. These reflect the need for continuity in supporting the Government and institutions to complete the child care system reform agenda and implement policies and strategies for children at central and local levels; securing investment in equitable inclusion and protection of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups; strengthening capacities in planning, child rights monitoring and budgeting; and implementing the framework for a sustainable legacy of child rights.

27. Communication for development will be a key strategy. The participation of children and young people will strengthen the programme's thrust in social inclusion, HIV prevention, environmental sustainability, educational quality, minority rights, gender equality and prevention of violence, abuse and neglect.

Relationship to national priorities and UNDAF

28. The priorities of the country programme correspond closely to the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the EU Opinion and Analytical Report. The programme is aligned with the National Programme of Integration to the European Union and with many national strategies, including the Judicial Reform Strategy (2007-2012), Strategy for Social and Child Welfare Development (2008-2012), Roma strategies and action plans, and the national strategy for inclusive education.

29. The second phase of the United Nations Integrated Programme/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012-2016 was developed in tandem with the Government, and key outcomes were validated in a strategic retreat with the Government in October 2010. The United Nations programme will contribute to joint priorities around three pillars: democratic governance, social inclusion and sustainable economic development, and environmental protection.

Relationship to international priorities

30. The Millennium Declaration, Millennium Development Goals and priorities of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan are integrated into the country programme. It has a strong focus on child protection, gender equality, equity and social inclusion.

31. The programme's focus areas — juvenile justice; child care system reform; social inclusion of children with disabilities and Roma; young people's health, development and participation; and human resource development and legal reform — are particularly relevant in supporting the Government to meet obligations outlined by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the European Union and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Programme components

Child protection and social inclusion

32. This component aims to accelerate implementation of the agenda on reform of the child care system and to secure greater investment and action in equity, inclusion and protection for the most vulnerable boys and girls. This includes children with disabilities, Roma, refugees, children living in poverty, children in conflict with the law, children without parental care, and victims of violence, abuse and neglect.

33. Child care system reform anticipates the following results: (a) an increase of at least 30 per cent in the proportion of children and families having access to preventive and inclusive programmes in the social welfare, health and education systems; and (b) an increase of at least 25 per cent in the proportion of children with access to family-based and community-based alternatives to institutionalization. The focus will be on transforming residential institutions; preventing family separation through enhanced support to the health and social welfare systems; monitoring internationally agreed standards in maternity wards; supporting vulnerable families; sustainable and effective implementation of inclusive education, building on results achieved to date; changing attitudes to and practices in de-institutionalization, fostering and adoption; and building local capacities for family support and family-substitute services.

34. The programme will strongly emphasize capacity development, through specialized assistance for development and implementation of standards, and it will facilitate international knowledge transfer and lessons learned. To ensure that the system can meet legal and policy obligations and respond to growing demand for inclusive education and family and family-substitute services, the programme will model new approaches based on validated best practice, prioritizing sustainability.

35. Building on achievements to date, juvenile justice programming will focus on implementation of the law developed in the previous programme cycle, further capacity development, expansion of free legal aid to juveniles, wider use of alternative sanctions and further strengthening of preventive measures and programmes, including protection of children from violence. The programme will continue to benefit from strong support from the EU in juvenile justice and child care system reform. Key results include an increase of at least 30 per cent in the availability of gender-sensitive community-based alternatives for children in conflict with the law.

36. Additional programmes will be made available to address violence against women and children; gender-appropriate standards for multi-sectoral responses to child abuse, neglect and exploitation will be activated; and programmes aimed at preventing sexual exploitation and trafficking will be strengthened. To contribute to changing attitudes about violence, the programme will work in partnership with other United Nations agencies and NGOs to gather evidence, raise awareness and improve behaviour. The programme will engage in work to prevent sex tourism, in close cooperation with the Government Office for the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings, line ministries and civil society.

37. To encourage social inclusion, special attention will be given to supporting early development and inclusive education for children with disabilities and Roma; encouraging social norms that support equity, inclusion and birth registration for Roma and refugee children; social inclusion of Roma, including support to children who live or work on the street so that they may realize their rights; measuring and reducing child poverty; and preventing vulnerability as a result of natural disasters. The programme will contribute to the United Nations integrated programme pillar on social inclusion, which covers many areas, including health care, education, social protection, employment and civic engagement.

38. The programme will contribute to changes in attitudes and social norms to facilitate inclusive practices towards vulnerable and excluded children; implementation of policies, practices, programmes and budgets that prevent and redress exclusion of children; and strengthening of initiatives to address the needs and rights of the most at-risk, vulnerable and disadvantaged adolescents. The programme will also ensure that all school-aged children have access to knowledge on disaster risk reduction.

39. The best possible start to life will be fostered through implementation of a comprehensive early childhood development policy. Technical support will be facilitated for implementation of policies on social inclusion. Investments for children and young people at risk or socially excluded will be increased through strengthening monitoring and statistical systems at national and local levels, second-chance programmes and research on child poverty, and budget analysis and tracking. The programme will work to encourage participation of young people, particularly Roma and children with disabilities, as agents of change, including through policy development in youth and sport. Disaster risk reduction strategies for children will be implemented through selected schools and municipalities.

40. Major counterparts in the programme will be the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs; Justice; Interior; Education and Sport; Health; Finance; Foreign Affairs and European Integration; and Minority and Human Rights; Bureau of Educational Services; Institute of Public Health; municipal authorities; preschool institutions; social welfare centres; local media; civil society organizations; NGOs; and local associations. International and local partners include other United Nations agencies, the EU, OSCE, Council of Europe and embassies.

41. Regular resources will be used mainly to make core local and international expertise available to the Government and other partners. Other resources will be mobilized to support modelling and innovation, communication for development and system reform.

Child rights, policies and planning

42. This programme aims to support ongoing efforts to create a robust infrastructure for children's rights in Montenegro. It incorporates a strong legal framework; effective implementation of laws and policies at national and local levels; reliable data on children; strong professional and administrative capacities; strengthened governance and accountability mechanisms for children; and independent monitoring of child rights.

43. Support to effective implementation and monitoring of the legislative framework is a key priority in the country's development agenda. Institutional capacity for child rights monitoring requires further sustained support, as does leadership and coordination on children's issues at the national and municipal levels. Adequate statistics and analysis in general, and on children in particular, will have a profound impact on planning, decision-making and reform. Strategic investment in human capital is needed.

44. The following are expected results: (a) relevant legislation is harmonized with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, supports European standards, and is followed up with implementation; and (b) the Government, Ombudsman's Office and Child Rights Observatory collect, analyse and use disaggregated data and monitor the realization of children and women's rights in support of evidence-based policy development. The programme will also provide technical support to ensure that children's rights are systematically included and taught at tertiary and professional institutions.

45. The programme component will use the norms and standards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the EU Opinion to support evidence-based policymaking and practice to sustain the place of children at the heart of the national and local development and EU accession agendas. The programme will continue to broaden the base of evidence on children through empirical child-centred research and other forms of knowledge transfer, including access to good practices. These will be shared through a variety of channels, including mass media and social media.

46. Through continued investment in human resource development, the programme component will create a framework for a sustainable legacy of child rights-based planning and for the realization of child rights at national and local levels. It will strengthen the Ombudsman's Office through implementation of the capacity development strategy prepared in the previous programme. The programme will create a Child Rights Observatory composed of respected figures in Montenegro who will support independent monitoring of the promotion and protection of children's rights. It will also strengthen relations with the Parliament of Montenegro.

47. It is anticipated that negotiations around the relevant chapters of the *acquis communautaire* (EU body of law) will give appropriate weight to children's rights. This will be made possible by assisting Montenegro in accessing regional and international expertise for developing, revising and implementing laws and policies, including a new National Plan of Action for Children. The programme will support decentralization through development, revision and implementation of local plans of

action for children, and facilitation of in-country knowledge exchange. It will also support greater participation of girls, boys and young people in matters affecting them.

48. Significant attention will be given to ensuring that professional capacities to fulfil obligations to children meet appropriate standards. Skills in research, policy development, planning and service delivery for children will be further developed at central and local levels through international networking. Specific attention will be paid to supporting ethical and rights-based journalism through the roll-out of the child rights syllabus for journalism students and strengthened capacities of public administration officials. A master's degree in child rights, conceptualized in the previous cycle, will become operational.

49. Major counterparts will be the Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare; Justice; Interior; Health; Education and Sport; and Foreign Affairs and European Integration; the Statistical Office of Montenegro; Ombudsman's Office; Human Resource Management Agency; Parliament and universities. Municipal authorities, local media, civil society organizations, NGOs and youth groups will be key partners. International partners include other United Nations agencies, the EU, OSCE, Council of Europe, Open Society Institute and the World Bank.

50. Regular resources will be devoted to policy development and implementation, participatory monitoring and social mobilization, capacity-building and local, national and international expertise. Other resources will be mobilized for specific programme interventions.

51. Cross-sectoral costs cover salaries of cross-cutting staff; travel, training and equipment, as necessary; and additional operational support to country office management and administration.

Major partnerships

52. The programme will work with the Government, parliamentarians, professional associations, academic institutions, the media, local municipal authorities and services, and civil society. International partners will include other United Nations agencies; the EU; Council of Europe; World Bank; OSCE; embassies and governments with diplomatic accreditation to Montenegro; National Committees for UNICEF; and the private sector. The programme will pay specific attention to fostering partnerships with the private sector to leverage resources and corporate social responsibility.

53. As the programme is designed to contribute to a sustainable legacy for children, partnerships are essential to leverage both short-term and long-term results.

Monitoring, evaluation and programme management

54. The programme will make use of key indicators that monitor fulfilment of recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and EU Opinion; the ratio of children in institutional versus family or community-based care; and the number and quality of situation and thematic analyses on the realization of the rights of children and women, based on a human rights and gender analysis framework. Data will be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and location.

55. Studies planned include an updated situation analysis of children and women (2015) and studies on children who live or work on the street, and sexual exploitation; knowledge, attitudes and practices surveys; and public expenditure tracking surveys in education and health. Special efforts will be made to support line ministries and local partners to collect and analyse data on children, including through TransMONEE. External evaluations will be undertaken of the child care system reform project, and implementation of inclusive education and juvenile justice system reform. Support will be given to analytical research concerning social inclusion of children with disabilities and Roma.

56. Programme activities are coordinated with an integrated monitoring and evaluation plan, supplemented by regular field monitoring in line with the modality of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers. Joint monitoring and field visits by UNICEF and government counterparts will take place regularly, with the participation of other United Nations agencies and donors, where relevant.

57. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration is the coordinating government partner. It serves with UNICEF as co-chair of the Country Programme Action Team, an inter-sectoral body at deputy minister level. A midterm review will take place in 2014.

58. The UNICEF Montenegro office will move to the United Nations “Eco Premises” in Podgorica in 2012.
