



unicef   
for every child

**Country  
Programme**  
2018–2022

## The United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF

has the mandate to safeguard the rights of all children. That mandate is rooted in the Convention of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General assembly on 20 November 1989.

Across 190 countries and territories, including Bulgaria, we work for every child, everywhere, every day, to build a better world for everyone.

# Country Programme

## 2018–2022

UNICEF and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria have started a new Cooperation Programme for the period 2018-2022 to enable all children and adolescents in the country, including the most disadvantaged, to enjoy their rights and develop to their full potential in an inclusive and protective society.

This impact will be achieved through four programme components:

- (1) Early Childhood Development and Child Care,
- (2) Inclusive Education and Early Learning,
- (3) Prevention of Violence against Children, Protection of Victims and Access to Justice, and
- (4) Partnerships for monitoring, communication and promotion of child rights in Bulgaria and globally.

# SITUATION WE WANT TO CHANGE

Although Bulgaria has made significant progress in adapting its legal and policy framework to the Convention of the Rights of the Child, still there are many challenges ahead:

## Health and development

- Infant mortality rate (6.5 per 1,000 live births in 2016) is twice higher than the European Union average;
- 9.5 per cent of live births are from adolescent girls and young women aged below 20;
- 13% of all births annually are to women without health insurance and limited access to health care;
- Many children do not receive nurturing care during the first years of life due to poverty, lack of responsive caregiving and insufficient opportunities for early learning from birth.

## Education

- Fewer than 80 per cent of children aged 3 to 4 attend kindergartens;
- Each year, about 1,000 school-age children do not enroll in school;
- 45 per cent of Roma children do not attend preschool and 15 per cent do not attend school;
- It is estimated that about 14,000 children with disabilities are out of school and kindergarten.

## Family Separation:

- Around 2,000 children are separated from their families each year;
- More than 1,000 children continue to live in institutions;
- Over 11 000 children live separated from their families.

## Violence against children:

- On average, over 3,500 reports of violence against children are received each year and around 1,000 actual cases are opened after investigation;
- 68% of parents accept the use of “reasonable violence” as a means of discipline;
- Over 4 200 incidents of violence against children happen every year in schools.

## Children participants in legal proceedings:

- Annually, about 5,000 children are investigated for committing various crimes in Bulgaria;
- Around 200 children are placed in closed institutions where they are deprived of freedom;
- On average, around 3500 children become victims of various crimes each year and participate in criminal proceedings that are not adapted to their rights and needs;
- There is no reliable data on the number of children participants in civil and administrative proceedings, including in parental rights disputes and domestic violence cases.

## Children on the move:

- Almost 100 percent of unaccompanied children intercepted by the police are attached to unrelated adults or recorded as adults and detained, in breach of the best interest of the child principle and the legal ban on detention, introduced in December 2017.
- All accompanied children – a total of more than 250 in 2017 and the first three months of 2018, are detained, unless they apply for international protection.
- There are no services for appropriate temporary accommodation and no effectively functioning guardianship system for unaccompanied and separated children in Bulgaria.



# Programme Components

UNICEF will work together with the Government, State institutions, United Nations partners, media, private sector, academia, civil society organizations, parents, children and adolescents to achieve the following goals:

## Early Childhood Development

- Every woman, especially from vulnerable groups, has access to quality prenatal and health care;
- Every child receives nurturing care in the early years of life, including full nutrition and access to healthcare; protection from violence and harm; emotional support, stimulation and possibility for learning;
- Parents of young children, especially the vulnerable families, have access to support, consultations and guidance for providing nurturing care for their children;
- Developmental difficulties are identified early by the healthcare system; children with disabilities and their families receive complex support which ensures the development of the potential of every child.

## Child care and support for families

- Vulnerable families with children at risk of separation improve access to social support and services, parental programmes, child development programmes, health care, education, employment and housing services and provide children with nurturing care;
- Children without parental care grow up in a family or close to family environment and develop their full potential;
- Support to children and parents at local level is coordinated and integrated.

## Prevention and response to Violence against children

- Society is mobilised to prevent and respond to violence and discrimination against girls, boys, and adolescents, particularly the most vulnerable;
- Children improve their capacity to negotiate risks, prevent violence, contribute to the response and know where to go for help and denounce;
- Children victims of violence receive timely and suitable protection, support for restoration and redress through legal procedures adapted to their needs.

### Access to Justice for Children

- The Juvenile Justice System is reformed in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international standards, so that restorative justice and community-based alternatives to detention provide adolescents in conflict with the law with opportunities to understand the effect of their actions, repair the damage and achieve social integration;
- Children are heard in a way that is adapted to their age and individual development in all legal proceedings that concern their life and wellbeing;
- Children, especially from vulnerable groups, have access to free specialized legal aid ensuring that their rights are guaranteed in every proceeding in which they are involved;

### Education

- More boys and girls, especially children with specific needs, children with ethnic minority background, or refugee and migrant children, attend kindergartens and schools and receive quality education;
- New flexible forms of early learning are developed to suit the needs of vulnerable children and families;
- Cross-sectorial measures are developed to support enrolment of out of school children and prevention of school drop-out;
- Teachers` skills are strengthened to reflect diverse needs of children through improved pre-service and in-service teacher training;
- Schools are promoting child rights and child participation and preventing violence.

### Children on the move

- Ending detention of unaccompanied children and providing conditions for their development in accordance to the best interest of the child, including family tracing and reunification options;
- Fostering active cooperation between all relevant institutions and organizations to meet the needs of refugee and migrant children;
- Ensuring safe spaces for children and adolescents in the reception centers and the school attendance;
- Supporting the successful integration of refugee and migrant children in Bulgarian society, including through effective access to healthcare, psycho-emotional support, legal aid, and educational activities.



## Adolescents

- Society's perceptions are changed to identify adolescence as a positive stage of children's development which offers huge possibilities for the expansion of their potential;
- National interventions are supported to better equip adolescents with skills for learning, personal empowerment and employability;
- Adolescents' participation is promoted in the decision-making on topics that affect them through different platforms in schools, communities, clubs, etc.
- Adolescents are empowered as agents of social change.
- The number of girls married before the age of 18 is reduced.

## Communication and public advocacy

- UNICEF is identified as a strong voice of and for children to influence the development of normative frameworks, budgets, policies and programmes for child rights;
- Ethical reporting programme on child issues and promotion of child rights in top-tier media is created, nurtured and sustained;
- Social norms and harmful practices are addressed to tackle discrimination, prejudices and stigma against disadvantaged children;
- Public communication campaigns are implemented to mobilize the society in support of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children (children with disabilities, children victims of violence, children in detention, etc.);
- Partnerships with businesses, NGOs, media are harnessed to promote child rights, monitor the situation of children in the country and develop gender-sensitive practices.

### Resource mobilization (fundraising)

UNICEF is funded entirely by voluntary donations from donors including foundations, the private sector, Governments and individuals from around the world. 95,25% of every donation goes directly to assist vulnerable children. Only 4,75% of the funds collected are spent for administrative costs.

To improve the lives and wellbeing of every child in Bulgaria and reach the long-term programme goals of UNICEF we aim at:

- More than 50,000 individual donors (BLAGODETEL) supporting UNICEF in Bulgaria with monthly donations and advocating for child rights;
- Corporate partners strategically supporting UNICEF's program with financial and non-financial contributions like expertise, in-kind donations and business assets. Private sector partners are strongly engaged in communication and advocacy activities for promotion of child rights;

It is our long-term engagement to positively influence public attitudes towards individual giving and corporate social responsibility. For the purpose:

- We promote the giving culture in the country by developing stronger relations with our supporters and implementing innovations in the communication with them;
- We aim to develop and promote user-friendly and free of charge donation mechanisms with the support of banks, financial institutions, mobile operators and other corporate partners;
- We are persistent in improving the standards for transparency and communication with our donors and partners.

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The cooperation between UNICEF and the Government of Bulgaria is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well by the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the 2030 Agenda. The document is fully aligned with the national priorities and will contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

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