for every child, hope
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With the great pleasure Diplomacy & Commerce magazine presents a special publication InFocus UNICEF. We are proud to be a partner and we are proud to have an opportunity to summarise in 40 pages, through the interviews, stories, history and overview of what has been done by UNICEF in the last 70 years in Serbia. Children are among the most vulnerable, naive and precious creatures in this world, and they are our future, something we live for and the ones we leave our world to. Therefore we are very proud to issue the special appendix to our magazine, dedicated to UNICEF, which marks its 70th anniversary. UNICEF dedicated its work to the children all over the globe and it is one of the most important organisations in the world. We firmly believe that every child deserves hope for a better future, a safe home, clan water, proper childhood, schools, a fair chance for the future and, of course, every child deserves laughter, and we are proud to be a part of the UNICEF team.
UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories, and some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the children who are most at risk and most in need. To save their lives. To defend their rights. To keep them safe from harm. To give them a childhood in which they’re protected, healthy and educated. To give them a fair chance to fulfil their potential — so that someday, they can help build a better world.

“We cooperate with government organisations, as well as with civil society organisations, independent human rights institutions, the private sector and the media. At the same time, our task is also to be the voice of children – to point out the gaps, breaches and violations of child rights.

SEVENTY YEARS ON, UNICEF IS STILL BRINGING HOPE TO CHILDREN WHOSE LIVES ARE SHAKEN BY CONFLICT AND CRISIS, BUT ITS ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT HAS EVOLVED TO BECOME MUCH BROADER

“UNICEF in Serbia, as elsewhere in the world, focuses on supporting the government’s efforts to create a better and safer environment for every child in the country. We focus in particular on the realisation of the rights of the most vulnerable groups of children, so they can have the same opportunities as other children and reach their full potential,” says Michel Saint-Lot, UNICEF Representative in Serbia.

To what extent do the challenges faced by children around the world today differ from those that led to the founding of UNICEF in 1946?

— UNICEF was founded to meet the desperate needs of children whose lives had been torn apart by World War II. Seventy years on, UNICEF is still bringing hope to children whose lives are shaken by conflict and crisis, but its role in international development has evolved to become much broader. We advocate for children’s rights and, wherever needed, work to provide integrated services to children living in extreme poverty, affected by the growing effects of climate change, or discriminated against and excluded.

UNICEF has also been present in Serbia since its creation. How would you assess cooperation between UNICEF and our country in this historical context?

— We have always been a part of the history of this country. Interestingly, in Au-
gust 1947, the former Yugoslavia was the first country in the world to receive UNICEF’s emergency shipments for children. Since then, and until the present day, UNICEF has helped in different ways. Up to the year 2000, we were focused on humanitarian aid for children. Since then, UNICEF has been providing systemic support to the government, working as partners towards the same goals: working to reach every child. We provide examples of how some things can change: we develop solutions and advocate for their implementation. It is then up to the authorities to introduce them into the system.

What do you consider as UNICEF’s greatest achievements in supporting the realisation of children’s rights in the 70 years of its existence?
— The number of children dying before they reach their fifth birthday has more than halved in the past 25 years alone. Millions of children have been lifted out of poverty. Millions more have gained the opportunity to get an education and develop their potential. We continue to work for every child - whoever he or she is, and wherever they live. These are, in my opinion, the types of achievements that UNICEF and its partners for over seven decades can be proud of, and I would like to highlight that such achievements would not have been possible without the generous contributions of our donors - bilateral, private sector, foundations, and individuals.

What are the most important objectives that UNICEF is striving to attain today, in cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Serbia?
— UNICEF entered a new five-year programme of cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Serbia in 2016. That programme sets out specific areas of work: access to quality and inclusive health services and education, child protection against violence, abuse and neglect, justice for children, monitoring of child rights and public advocacy, communication and social mobilisation for child rights. We are placing particular emphasis on early childhood development, the social inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalised children, and the prevention of violence against and amongst children. It is important to note that UNICEF does not work in isolation, rather as a member of the United Nations Country Team in Serbia. Its country programme of cooperation contributes to the agreed objectives set forth in the Government of Serbia and the United Nations Joint Development Partnership Framework 2016-2020.

How does UNICEF’s work in Serbia fit into the country’s European integration process and its path towards achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals?
— The UNICEF and the United Nations programmes of cooperation with the Government are fully aligned with the European Union accession priorities and with the agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals and related targets. It is in this context that UNICEF and the European Union are partnering to support the work of national authorities in promoting children’s rights, as part of the continuing reform process to harmonise national laws and policies with European Union standards and to localise the 2030 Agenda.

How much and in what way are the private and public sectors, and the citizens of Serbia generally, willing to help UNICEF achieve goals with their own donations and personal engagement?
— We are very proud of the way UNICEF in Serbia cooperates with the private and public sectors, and with the citizens of Serbia. Twenty per cent of our budget comes from donations given by companies and citizens of Serbia. We aim to emulate Croatia, where UNICEF’s programmes are nearly all funded from local donations from citizens and companies from the private and public sectors. Given the prevailing culture in Serbia of reaching out to those less fortunate, I am confident that we can achieve this in the near future!

How important are UNICEF National Ambassadors to the work being done in Serbia?
— UNICEF established the institution of the Goodwill Ambassador in 1953. Ambassadors use their talents and fame to raise funds and advocate for children and support UNICEF’s mission of ensuring every child’s right to health, education, equality and protection. Ana Ivanović and Aleksandar Saša Đorđević, our National Ambassadors, are excellent advocates for the rights of children, and they selflessly support UNICEF’s work in the country. Novak Đoković has become a global Ambassador for UNICEF and now promotes the rights of children around the world, with particular emphasis on Early Childhood Development, whilst also continuing to support UNICEF in Serbia.
UNICEF’s objective is clear: to ensure that children reach their full potential. Not just one child, but every child. Not just today, but every day.

UNICEF WORLDWIDE

UNICEF was established in 1946 to meet the desperate needs of children whose lives had been torn apart by World War II. We have a long tradition in Serbia, dating back to 1947 when the first humanitarian aid packages were sent to the former Yugoslavia.

UNICEF brought these children life-saving humanitarian support and long-term assistance. And in doing so, it also brought hope to children who had endured the horrors of war and deprivation. Hope for a more normal childhood. Hope for a better future.

UNICEF IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AND SERBIA

In August 1947, UNICEF delivered its first emergency shipment – the largest delivery of milk in post-war Europe, clothing, shoes, soap and other emergency supplies to Yugoslavia.
In 1948, Yugoslavia was the first European country and the second country in the world to establish a National Committee for UNICEF. In 1965, its name was changed to the Yugoslav Commission for Cooperation with UNICEF.

In 1991, UNICEF established its office in Belgrade in response to the escalating crisis in the region with the aim of providing assistance to children affected by the armed conflicts.

The role and mandate of UNICEF has changed over time.

In 1995, UNICEF promoted “First Call for Children” and provided 40,000 refugee children and mothers with emergency health kits, hygiene items, blankets, weaning food, children’s clothing, diapers, and other needed supplies. UNICEF also offered assistance in renewing and maintaining national capacities for providing basic services so necessary for the survival and development of children.

In response to the crisis in Kosovo (under the UN Security Council Resolution 1244) in 1999, UNICEF extended its humanitarian mission in order to provide assistance to the wave of Internally Displaced Persons.

From the year 2000 onwards, UNICEF has focused its work on supporting social sector reform in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has become an important partner of the Government of the Republic of Serbia in supporting the process of harmonisation of the national legislation with European and international standards, and in ensuring that the most marginalised and excluded children have their chance to be included in society, to grow up healthy and in a family environment, to complete their education, and reach their full potential. This has never been more relevant, nor more urgent.

UNICEF continues to stand as a symbol of help and hope for all children. Wherever they are. Whoever they are. Whenever they need us. And now, more than ever.
The framework of the development partnership with UNICEF is a roadmap for further advancement of good governance and the rule of law, economic development, growth and employment, environmental protection, and integrating culture in the overall process of sustainable development.

Yugoslavia was one of the first countries to sign a Basic Cooperation Agreement with UNICEF. How do you rate this cooperation over the past 70 years?

— Yugoslavia was one of the first countries to sign the Agreement with UNICEF back in 1947. In 1948, the then Yugoslavia was the first country in Europe and second in the world to establish cooperation with UNICEF on a national level.

In 1990, Yugoslavia signed and ratified the Convention on Rights of the Child. This was the time when our country was ravaged by conflicts which resulted in wave of refugees, including children, and UNICEF provided all the necessary help to the refugees.

After 2000, UNICEF supported the Serbian government in the process of harmonizing the country’s national laws, as well as in the activities on implementing the Millennium Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. When we look back at this 70-year-long-partnership, we can see that UNICEF played an important role in the most sensitive of times for our country, and Serbia really does respect and appreciate that.

What are the priorities in the cooperation between the UN and the Government of Serbia for the period 2016-2020, as well as regarding UN Agenda 2030?

— In May this year, the Serbian government concluded a five-year Development Partnership Framework Agreement that covers the period from 2016 to 2020. This agreement is completely compliant with the national development priorities, the procedures regarding accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals, and the pre-accession negotiations with the EU.

In 2015, the government adopted the Decree on Establishment of the Inter-agency Working Group for Implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda which comprises of the representatives of all relevant line ministries, offices and agencies for monitoring and coordination of the Agenda’s implementation. After the recent elections in Serbia we have started working seriously on the process of prioritizing the 17 goals and 169 sub-goals, and their adaptation to the situation in our country.

How much does Serbia, through the engagement of the government and government agencies, contribute to achieving UNICEF’s goals?

— The government adopted many strategies and initiatives with the goal of improving the position of children in our society, especially those from the most vulnerable groups. Serbia is also fully dedicated to protecting children’s rights, as well as protecting them from any sort of violence and discrimination. Furthermore, our country is especially committed to investing in children’s education, namely in creating opportunities so that every child in our country is provided with the same conditions in order to realize their full potential.

In which areas is UNICEF’s support most needed when it comes to children’s rights in Serbia?

— Serbia is focused on maintaining its fiscal stability and working on an even more dynamic economic growth, in addition to implementing comprehensive structural reforms which have yielded excellent results so far. We are aware of the fact that such growth and development have to be sustainable and that, first, we need to realize the goals stated in our five-year development partnership framework, which are in accordance with the sustainable development goals.
As the Secretary General of the Association of Republic and Provincial Communities for Social and Child Protection of Yugoslavia, and later, in the 1990s, as an advisor to the President of the SFRY for Humanitarian Affairs and Assistant Commissioner for Refugees in Serbia, I was in charge of cooperating with UNICEF. In April 1992, I was also appointed the Chairman of the Yugoslav Commission for Cooperation with UNICEF.

How significant was the cooperation with UNICEF for the then Yugoslavia, which began quite soon after the establishment of this UN agency?
— The former Yugoslavia was one of the first countries to receive UNICEF’s assistance after the World War II. In 1947, the humanitarian aid packages provided by UNICEF were a real salvation for the population of our country devastated by the war. UNICEF provides assistance in building up dilapidated societies and finding solutions towards improving children health while also having a direct impact on reducing child mortality. Regional healthcare centers have been established, training and equipment for medical schools have been provided, and nursing services have been organized. UNICEF has also helped our education system a lot, providing equipment for teacher’s colleges, and furniture and kitchen equipment for children in schools and nurseries.

How significant was the cooperation with this UN agency and the support UNICEF provided during this period?
— In 1990, Serbia signed and ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child which the ex-Yugoslavia had signed and ratified. Our country has been investing a lot of effort into implementing the Convention’s stipulations, and I can say that we are on the right path. In accordance with that, the government has also adopted various strategies and initiatives for advancing the position of children in Serbia while the non-governmental sector has provided important help with these efforts.

How does our country take part in UNICEF’s international actions or policies?
— Serbia has undertaken to fulfill all the obligations stemming from the Convention on the Rights of the Child which the ex-Yugoslavia had signed and ratified. Our country has been investing a lot of effort into implementing the Convention’s stipulations, and I can say that we are on the right path. In accordance with that, the government has also adopted various strategies and initiatives for advancing the position of children in Serbia while the non-governmental sector has provided important help with these efforts.

How important is the respect and realization of child rights for Serbia in terms of its position on the international scene?
— Having every child in Serbia exercise their rights is of great importance also because of the fact that the number of children in Serbia has been continuously declining. In the last 25 years, Serbia has made advancements in judicial and public sector reforms, and has been working on complying with international standards in education, social services, healthcare, justice and preventing discrimination so that every single child has the same opportunities for development and progress.

Children are our future and the foundation of Serbia’s development. Hence, we need to engage fully in providing for them.
PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILDREN

Funded entirely by voluntary contributions, UNICEF has a strong history of collaborative efforts with governments, foundations, corporate partners, business associations, the private sector, and the media - along with individual donors and prominent advocates - National Ambassadors. The results achieved over the last 70 years in Serbia were made possible by a diverse range of partners who, like UNICEF, seek a fair chance in life for every child. The generosity and commitment of all our partners have played an indispensable part in reaching Serbia’s most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
The Swiss support to UNICEF as one of the implementers amounts to 3.9 mln Euro. We have a very good and close cooperation with UNICEF and its dedicated team which is based on shared goals.

Switzerland is dedicated to the education of children, especially children from vulnerable groups. How do you cooperate with UNICEF in this area?
— Switzerland entered into a close cooperation with UNICEF in Serbia in 2009 in the frame of the “Joint Programme for Roma and Marginalised Groups inclusion”. This programme is a joint initiative of the Government of Serbia, represented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development MoESTD, UNICEF, the Red Cross Serbia and the Swiss Cooperation Office in Serbia. The programme aims to improve social inclusion of vulnerable groups through the provision of early childhood education and care and support for older vulnerable children to remain in the education system.

Next year, this programme will come to an end. How satisfied are you with the results achieved thus far?
— We are very satisfied with the results. One of the main achievements has been the establishment of a Group for Social inclusion within the MoESTD. This department proved to be essential in bringing in concrete lessons learnt that foster inclusive education in the policy process for the new primary and secondary legislation. This practical approach led to ownership by all stakeholders and now constitutes the basis for successfully phasing out our support.

Furthermore, the development of community approaches to support the inclusion of children has led to improved enrolment rates in primary schools and higher completion rates. The dropout rate decreased more than half in pilot schools with an improved quality of teaching. I was impressed when I listened to involved teachers and how they care about their pupils. They changed their behaviour and know how to handle critical issues. This innovative and cost-effective model for combating dropouts for an inclusive education is ready to be replicated all over Serbia.

Our support is in line with the priorities of the EU accession agenda and required social reforms.

Switzerland invests a lot of attention in inclusion in its cooperation with Serbia. Why do you consider this so important?
— The delayed economic recovery after the 2008 financial crisis and the devastating floods in 2014 did not allow for a substantial improvement of living conditions. Unemployed persons, those with a low education attainment and those living outside rural areas are most at risk. It needs to be assured that no one is left behind in Serbia’s transition. In our new Cooperation strategy with Serbia 2018-2021 we will put an even stronger emphasis on inclusive processes and growth, they are vital for social peace and poverty reduction.

What are the upcoming priorities in your cooperation with UNICEF?
— UNICEF is Switzerland’s most important partner worldwide when it comes to the protection of children. Switzerland annually contributes with 19 Mio. Euro to the overall budget of UNICEF which is complemented with 17 mln Euro for specific projects. Despite this project is coming to an end, we remain a committed partner for UNICEF. Quality education is a top priority in Serbia and I am glad that the programme contributed to raising awareness for this topic. Lastly, I sincerely hope that further support in this area, like the envisaged World Bank loan for the development of preschool education, will take into account the existing experiences.
EU and UNICEF rely on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as the main guiding framework at advancing child rights. EU and UNICEF work on strengthening the cooperation among various sectors dealing with children – in healthcare, education and social protection, but also in the areas of justice and law enforcement to prevent violence against children.

How do UNICEF and the European Union partner in supporting the work of state authorities in Serbia in realizing children’s rights?

— EU and UNICEF are long term partners worldwide to ensure that all children enjoy their right to education, nutrition, safe water, sanitation and health. It is also essential that children are protected from discrimination, exploitation, violence and abuse.

Together with UNICED, the EU is engaged to support Serbia’s efforts in promoting and protecting the rights of children and ensuring they can enjoy equal opportunities to develop their full potential. Our programmes are aimed at supporting excluded and vulnerable children from the beginning of their life, and throughout their childhood and adolescence.

Which principles do you promote through this cooperation, and how do they fit into Serbia’s European integration process?

— The EU commitment to safeguarding and advancing child rights is articulated through a number of strategic documents and Council’s Conclusions. In April this year the EU adopted a set of conclusions on a comprehensive promotion and protection of the rights of the child, which also become an integral part of EU’s external human rights policy. The conclusions focus on promoting gender equality, ensuring the empowerment of girls, mainstreaming the rights of the child in all sectors and in all programming, and encouraging partner Countries to adopt a national strategy on the rights of the child.

Child protection has an important place in Chapter 23 negotiations, as well as Chapter 19 concerning social policy and social inclusion.

— Should violence occur an adequate response needs to be implemented through a cross-sectoral cooperation in a timely and efficient manner. In Serbia we are helping to strengthen the capacity of centres for social work, health care institutions and schools to improve their work on preventing and reporting cases of violence, and their ability to adequately respond to it.

However, a new national strategy for the prevention of and protection of children from violence still need to be developed. The capacities of the Council for Child Rights should be further strengthened and new National Plan of Action for Children should be adopted.

How do these principles and objectives fit into the context of achieving Sustainable Development Goals as defined in the UN 2030 Agenda, which also indirectly or directly relate to children?

— Children and youth are key components of the 2030 Agenda to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. UNICEF and the EU support the work of national authorities in promoting children’s rights as part of their reform process to align national laws and policies to EU standards and the 2030 Agenda.

STRENGTHENING THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

Ensuring more effective coordination of the child protection system should be prioritised and further efforts made to ensure uniform implementation of policy.

Since 2011, UNICEF and the EU have been working together with countries that are in the process of joining the EU to protect children from violence. How satisfied are you with the results achieved in Serbia so far?
SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION IN ADDRESSING KEY POLICY CHALLENGES

Masayoshi Yamato
First Secretary of the Embassy of Japan to the Republic of Serbia

Main areas of Japan’s assistance are development of private sector, environmental protection, as well as health care and education.

UNICEF is an important partner of Japan and it is necessary to continue successful cooperation in addressing key policy challenges. Since 1999 Japan has been providing economic and technical assistance to Serbia in order to secure a stable society and sustainable development, and to promote Serbia’s efforts in its accession to the EU by using Japan’s advanced technology and experience.

The Government of Japan and UNICEF in Serbia have a long-standing partnership. Why is this cooperation important?
— The global challenges of recent years that transcend national borders and that cannot be dealt with by a single country alone, such as poverty, climate change, disaster risk reduction, and health, require the unified effort of the international community as a whole. In this regard, collaborating with international organizations that have expertise, broad networks, and universality is critically important.

Therefore, the Government of Japan has a long-standing partnership with UNICEF. In regard to global challenges through its support for children, UNICEF is also an important partner of Japan and it is necessary to continue successful cooperation in addressing key policy challenges.

What particular joint activities or areas of cooperation between the Government of Japan and UNICEF in Serbia would you single out?
— Related to migrant crisis, the Government of Serbia, local authorities and the citizens of Serbia have acted in a responsible manner and provided assistance to the refugees in transit. The Government of Japan has recognized this humane behavior and has provided support to Serbia, through international organizations such as UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, IOM and IFRC.

Grant assistance of USD 750,000 was utilized through UNICEF in order to provide winterization items; to secure safe places for refugee and migrant children to rest, play and receive psychosocial support by qualified professionals; as well as for women to breastfeed in privacy and prepare and provide age-appropriate food to their children.

What are the key goals of this partnership today?
— Japan is aware that in order to realize sustainable development in the world, it is essential to realize children’s rights, to satisfy basic human needs and to support them to fully use their abilities. Therefore, Japan is willing to continue collaboration with UNICEF, which has a good knowledge and rich history of working in the fields, to support the improvement of basic children’s rights in the world.

In addition to what you have already mentioned, how does the Government of Japan further support the Republic of Serbia?
— In order to realize economic development in Serbia, it is an imperative that the private sector is soundly developed through investments from foreign countries, including Japan. Japan assists Serbia through Japanese technical assistance, utilizing Japanese expertise and know-how, in the area of SME, production management for raising productivity and promoting tourism.

Japan is willing to assist Serbia with its measures in the field of environmental protection, such as reducing air pollution and energy conservation, by using the financial assistance scheme, such as ODA loans and grant aid, as well as technical cooperation.

From the viewpoint of human security, Japan continues to assist Serbia in its efforts to reduce wide disparities between developed and underdeveloped areas of the country, in particular in the field of health care and education, and to directly support the socially vulnerable people.
The fact that Sweden is one of the biggest net contributors to UNICEF globally, confirms that this country is giving the highest priority to children’s rights.

**Is child protection high on SIDA’s agenda and what are your key global priorities?**
— Protection and promotion of human rights for all, women and men, boys and girls is the highest priority of Sweden’s development cooperation globally but also in the Western Balkans and Serbia. Strengthened democracy and respect for human rights are some of the strategic priorities in our Strategy for reform cooperation in this region. All projects and programmes we had implemented with UNICEF within Sweden’s development cooperation for Serbia were assessed as successful.

**In which areas does SIDA provide support to UNICEF in Serbia?**
— SIDA provides support to a broad programme dealing with violence against women and girls in Serbia. Strengthened democracy and respect for human rights are some of the strategic priorities in our Strategy for reform cooperation in this region. Our programme deals with the human rights issues of all age and gender groups. The fact that this country is one of the biggest net contributors to UNICEF globally, confirms that Sweden is giving highest its priority to children’s rights.

**How satisfied are you with the cooperation with UNICEF, and other partners in Serbia?**
— All projects and programmes we had implemented with UNICEF within Sweden’s development cooperation for Serbia were assessed as successful. Our most recent projects, where UNICEF was involved as partner, were implemented as joint UN initiatives – several UN agencies bringing their experience and expertise and working together on one complex and broad programme. Experiences from this model are positive and in our view, it can be applied in situations where joint response to a certain problem is needed.

**How will you continue to support the work UNICEF is doing in Serbia?**
— Sweden’s reform strategy for Western Balkans and Serbia is valid until December 2020. Within the remaining period there will be no big changes in the way we work in Serbia and this refers to both selection of partners and programmes to be supported. We are looking forward to continuous cooperation in the areas we are collaborating now and hope for great results of the ongoing programme.
You can buy equipment, you can invest money in the business, but if you do not have empowered people who are members of sustainable communities, the business can not make any progress.

Nordeus supports initiatives that promote a positive social change in Serbia. We have long supported the ‘Battle for the Babies & for Maternity Wards’ campaigns, which ensure basic prenatal care for newborn babies throughout Serbia. We are also part of UNICEF’s network for early childhood development.

Why is it important for companies to be engaged in local communities in which they operate?
— Short answer would be, if people and companies who are capable of helping with their know-how and resources don’t do it, who will? For us, this choice is pretty clear.

As people, we’re not alone. We have families, friends and children. Reaching a sense of fulfillment is not possible when people around us don’t have equal opportunities to reach their potential and happiness.

As businesses, companies cannot progress without healthy, well-educated communities that are comprised of individuals who are able to reach their full potential. Companies like Nordeus, which was founded and built on people’s creativity and expertise, are acting on this belief better than others. People are at the core of our success.

How does that look in practice for Nordeus?
— Nordeus is driven by a purpose that has always been beyond profit and business success. Our passion and dedication lies in making champions out of our employees, and out of our players and the same goes for the people in our community. That’s why we support and initiate endeavours that bring a positive social change in Serbia, especially when it comes to children and youth. Since Nordeus became profitable, we’ve been focusing on causes that give children a good start in life and promote equal opportunities. For example, we contribute to the empowerment of youth by providing them with access to modern learning and employment.

Co-founding the Digital Serbia Initiative — together with leading technological companies in the country — we have have been fully focusing on championing Serbian society’s push to become digitally relevant within the next ten years. This is done by investing in education, technological innovation and the startup ecosystem.

Why did you decide to cooperate with UNICEF on accomplishing your goals, and in what kind of UNICEF campaigns do you usually participate?
— We’ve been working very hard, not only to make a global success of Serbia, but to nurture our brand in a way that young people can see us as positive role models. We’re extremely careful how we choose the people we work with, as well as our partners. Hence, we only partner up with organizations that share similar values as we do and have integrity, purpose and grit.

UNICEF is the world’s leading organisation for children and it has a proven track record of bringing positive change to the children of Serbia. It works to ensure that children survive at birth and are able to thrive into adulthood. They cover all the areas that are essential for a child’s well being including health, education and protection. And that is exactly what we in Nordeus believe — every child, irrespective of gender, ability and ethnicity, should have equal rights to a healthy and educated life that will help them achieve their full potential.
The cooperation with UNICEF started back in the 1950s and it is continuing to this day. Imlek is a member of the Friends of UNICEF Club which raises funds for the implementation of UNICEF projects. We are aware of our responsibility towards helping our citizens, especially children, in the most difficult situations.

The cooperation between UNICEF and Imlek dates back to 1957 when UNICEF donated to Imlek a milk pasteurization and bottling line. How has this cooperation evolved over time?

— In the 1950s, UNICEF recognized that the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had good prerequisites for developing dairy industry, and, in order to find a sustainable solution for securing milk-based food for children, it donated to Imlek the special milk pasteurization and bottling line which had the capacity of 30,000 litres of milk a day. UNICEF also held training for the production staff and for the employees who cooperated with dairy farmers and milk collection facilities. In that period, when the population was still recovering from the effects of war and children were mostly hungry, UNICEF managed to secure something that had always been one of the basic and necessary foods – milk.

Imlek continued cooperating with UNICEF. In 2007, Imlek got involved in the Schools Without Violence programme which goal was to combat peer violence in schools across the country. In 2014, we gave urgent assistance to the people who were affected by the catastrophic floods.

Apropos 60th anniversary of UNICEF, a poster was created depicting a boy who was drinking Imlek’s milk. In which way did Imlek join in the celebration of the 70th anniversary of UNICEF?

— The poster of the boy drinking our milk has circled the globe and it is a perfect example of the cooperation between UNICEF and its partners toward one common goal which is helping children.

— The poster of the boy drinking our milk has circled the globe and it is a perfect example of the cooperation between UNICEF and its partners toward one common goal which is helping children.

As the market leader, we feel obligated to help with developing healthy and happy future generations.

Our company has supported numerous projects and programmes for children implemented by UNICEF which were of high value for our society.

In which way can companies contribute to children safety and their happy childhood through their operations?

— Last year, our company launched a socially responsible project called My Kravica – Grow Up Happy with the goal of enabling happier childhood. This campaign entails building modern children playgrounds across the country so that their childhood could be happier and healthier, and that they can spend more time outdoors while being physically active. We have expanded the project to include other countries too, and this year we have built the first My Kravica – Grow Up Happy playground in Banja Luka too.

Which of your company’s philanthropic activities for children would you like to single out?

— Imlek’s mission is to help all children, but primarily those who are the most vulnerable, just like UNICEF does. To corroborate this, I would like to mention that we have been donating to institutions that have been taking care of abandoned and sick children for years, and that we have been donating school books and Christmas presents to the children at the children home in Zvečanska Street.

Every year, on the World School Milk Day, we give a huge donation in products for the youngest, i.e. we donate chocolate milk to pupils across our country. I would also like to single out the project called The Milk Road Caravan which, last year, toured many towns in Serbia. There are many other activities that our company engages in to help the youngsters as evidenced by many social responsibility awards and acknowledgements that we have received.
SUPPORTING AND EDUCATING CHILDREN

Predrag Ćulibrk
CEO, Telekom Serbia AD

Our company and UNICEF have been nurturing partnership relations because we share the same values, and we have a strong bond in supporting children and young people. We started this cooperation back in 2006, and it is continuing to this day.

In which way does Telekom Serbia engage in protecting children’s rights in the course of its operations?
— As a company that cares about community and its employees, Telekom Serbia does not hire people under the age of 18 thus respecting the children's right to be protected from child labour. Since young people and education are at the core of our CSR activities, we have been implementing projects with the goal of improving working conditions in schools in terms of teaching and acquiring knowledge.

In the last three years, we bought computers for 70 schools in Serbia, and gave IT classrooms to 20 schools to mark the 20th anniversary of our company. Since 2011, we have been successfully organizing the mts app competition where high school students can create applications for mobile devices, all with the goal of developing youth entrepreneurship, with the student organizations, and with the Young Talents Foundation. For years, we have been supporting the National Child Line, which aims at protecting children from potential risks.

In which way does Telekom Serbia contribute to UNICEF’s campaigns?
— We had participated in the project called Schools Without Violence which was implemented in elementary schools in Pirot, Prokuplje and Bujanovac. We have also supported the creation of a website for this programme and „The Parents Manual”. Under the early children development programme, we donated didactic materials to community health centres in Subotica, Sremska Mitrovica and Kruševac. We also launched a charity SMS number 9656 so that people can donate money to support and help UNICEF’s projects in our country. Our staff have been traditionally participating in UNICEF’s Basketball Fair Play Tournament.

In which way does Telekom Serbia contribute to online safety of children?
— The lives of young people today cannot be imagined without the Internet, hence we pay a great deal of attention to safe use of the Internet and mobile devices, especially with younger population.

Under the umbrella of our mts TV service, we are now offering an opportunity for parents to exercise parental control in terms of limiting the availability of certain content, or setting the age or money limit for purchasing content. We also offer a package that contains MyKi – a smart watch for children and an application thanks to which parents can monitor the whereabouts of their child and communicate with them.

For high schools, we have developed two free WiFi services for content filtering. I would also like to single out the campaign „You Choose How You Communicate” which is aimed at raising awareness with users about safe use of mobile phones.

We have been implementing projects with the goal of improving working conditions in schools in terms of teaching and acquiring knowledge, and we are actively participating in child protection projects operating with the organizations that promote developing youth entrepreneurship, with the student organizations, and with the Young Talents Foundation. For years, we have been supporting the National Child Line, which aims at protecting children from potential risks.

What does your cooperation with the UNICEF mean in the said context?
— Although Telekom Serbia has been implementing numerous socially responsible campaigns by itself, sometimes you need to find a reliable and reputable partner whose expertise contributes to achieving better and faster results. If we are talking about children, protecting their rights and creating opportunities so that they can improve their skills and living and studying conditions, then the UNICEF, as a partner, is an amalgamation of all these aspects. We have been cooperating with them since 2006.

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DF and UNICEF are closely collaborating on strengthening the capacities and access to pre-school education for the children in Serbia. UNICEF has been an important partner to NDF.

What led you to decide to establish close cooperation with UNICEF? — The Novak Djokovic Foundation (NDF) was founded in 2007 with the mission to give children from disadvantaged communities an equal chance to grow up, learn and develop into productive citizens through early education.

At the beginning of his engagement with UNICEF, Novak visited a newly opened nursery in Smederevo, where he learned more about the benefits of an inclusive early childhood education programme, which influenced the work of the Novak Djokovic Foundation.

The Foundation has supported numerous constructions of nurseries and preschools in low-income communities in Serbia and has worked with UNICEF and other partners in the field to improve early childhood education curriculum and community outreach. UNICEF has been an important partner to NDF.

Which programmes do you jointly implement? — NDF and UNICEF closely collaborate on strengthening the capacities and access to pre-school education for the children in Serbia. Unfortunately, Serbia has low enrolment rates in pre-school education and together with UNICEF and other non-profit organizations, we work to help the education system in Serbia and give children a better chance for the future.

The Foundation had the pleasure of also supporting UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Service in modelling an innovative family outreach service that reaches the most disadvantaged families with young children living in urban areas across Serbia. The service is now in the process of becoming part of the regular child protection system in Serbia.

Why is it important for the Foundation to implement programmes that support early childhood development? — NDF believes that every child should have equal access to a quality preschool education. Serbia has one of the lowest rates of participation in pre-school education in Europe. Participation of children from ethnic minorities, children living in poverty or children with special needs and disabilities is even lower. All children have the right to a good start in life. We know that children’s earliest experiences have a tremendous impact later in life. Access to education programmes is needed to lay a solid foundation for a child’s early development and for their strong performance in school and later in life.

What are the Foundation’s priorities in the coming period, especially regarding its cooperation with UNICEF? — Our upcoming priorities are focused on the improvement of the conditions in which children in Serbia live, develop, learn and grow. We also aim to collaborate with UNICEF globally in spreading the message to policymakers and the general public that early years matter. It is through collaboration that truly meaningful change can be achieved. We are delighted to count UNICEF as a key partner and to be working closely with others, such as the World Bank, Harvard University’s Center on the Developing Child and other foundations, corporations and individuals to improve the life-chances for children everywhere.
IKEA in Serbia will strongly support as many children as possible in realizing their rights guaranteed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

Today, IKEA Foundation is globally working with UNICEF, whereas across the many markets in the world, our stores are also a channel through which we reach our many customers to join our forces and create a better life for children in areas of early childhood development, education, health, child protection and adolescents.

IKEA strives to create shared value among your stakeholders. How is IKEA working to realise children’s rights and to create a better life for children?
— IKEA vision is to create a better everyday life for the many people. IKEA business idea is to offer a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them. Our vision also goes beyond home furnishing. We want to create a better everyday life for all people impacted by our business – our co-workers, customers, suppliers and the communities they live and work in. Thus, respect for human and labour rights is also incorporated into our internal Code of Conduct IWAY Standard according to which we are annually auditing our suppliers.

With more than 170,000 co-workers worldwide and the supply chain that includes more than 2 million people, IKEA carries a big responsibility, but we also see this as an opportunity to direct our energy on improvements in society in many aspects – from acting more responsibly towards the environment through a more sustainable resource consumption, enabling people to live more sustainably at their homes to providing opportunities to children to realize their basic children’s rights.

IKEA has a long tradition of collaboration with UNICEF in Serbia, as of 2010, when Kraljevo was hit by the earthquake. How is your collaboration with UNICEF involving until today?
— This year we are partnering with UNICEF to provide better early childhood development services in Belgrade. We provide our home furnishing expertise and children range together with the monetary donation to UNICEF as a support to improvement of the patronage, paediatric and family counselling services dealing with early childhood development in two health center units in Grocka and Voždovac municipalities, close to our store in Belgrade.

IKEA supports children through its well known global soft toys Good Cause Campaign. Will you kick-off this campaign in your new store in Serbia, together with UNICEF?
— Adding yet another layer to the partnership with UNICEF, IKEA uses its global reach to educate consumers about children’s issues through advocacy campaigns in our stores. Since 2003, the Good Cause Campaign has generated more than $35 million in support of UNICEF education programmes, thereby helping to provide a better future for children around the world.

So far, we’ve seen lots of inspiring ideas for engaging our co-workers and customers and so many creative ways of communicating the campaign and the cause. To build on what we accomplished last year, this year we will engage customers and co-workers even more for this year’s Let’s Play for Change campaign – we will engage people around the issue of children’s rights and particularly a child’s right to play.

What will be the priorities of the IKEA Foundation in Serbia in the upcoming period, especially in its cooperation with UNICEF?
— Our future focus will continue to be on children and their right to play. We will also ask our customers to make our cause their cause by joining our “play movement” to support the solutions for children’s right to play. And we are looking forward to November this year when we will launch the Let’s Play Campaign worldwide, and in Serbia too!
Telenor Group and UNICEF have been actively cooperating for seven years now. The most relevant example of this cooperation is the project called „Connecting“ thanks to which a system that evidents and monitors the health situation of the Roma children and their families has been established. In the following period, we are going to step up our cooperation with UNICEF on the project called „Family Safety Net“ with the focus on the children between ages 4 and 8. Close to 100,000 parents and 2,000 pre-school and school teachers will participate in the training.

The Telenor Group has made the Sustainable Development Goals and reducing inequalities its strategic focus. How does your collaboration with UNICEF in Serbia reflect this focus?

— Our collaboration with UNICEF has been actively developing for seven years now through different projects, and it represents a really good example of the joint work of non-governmental and corporate sectors that instigates social changes.

In what way is the Telenor, together with UNICEF, empowering societies through digital services?

— The most relevant example of this cooperation is the project called „Connecting“ thanks to which a system that evidents and monitors the health situation of the Roma children and their families has been established. The project mediators underwent training and we provided computers and mobile phones in order for the Roma community to be better connected to health services. Also, healthcare education was provided, as well as assistance in obtaining basic documents.

Ours collaboration with UNICEF represents a really good example of the joint work of non-governmental and corporate sectors that instigates social changes.

Thanks to the “Connecting” project, and for the first time ever in Serbia, we have a database about the Roma people which will be used by the state institutions. In only few years, healthcare mediators have contributed to improving the quality of life of the Roma families. Not only did their access to healthcare services drastically improve, but the mortality rate among the Roma children, who live in slums, was halved. The mediators’ work helped many Roma families to obtain many other rights which rightfully belong to them.

How does the Telenor Bank support the culture of giving?

— It gives us a great pleasure to have been able to contribute to the culture of giving in Serbia in partnership with UNICEF. Over 300,000 clients of our bank are given an opportunity to become a member of „The Friends of UNICEF Club“, and donate funds for the most vulnerable children.

Please tell us something about future steps in your cooperation with UNICEF.

— Bearing in mind that educating children about safe use of the Internet from the earliest age is one of our priorities, we have been involved in this issue since 2012. In the next two years, we are going to step up our cooperation with UNICEF on the project called „Family Safety Net“ with the focus on the children between ages 4 and 8. Close to 100,000 parents and 2,000 pre-school and school teachers will participate in the training.
MANY CHILDREN ARE SMILING THANKS TO UNICEF

My determination to focus on giving to children came naturally

When I see my fridge magnet with a caption “Smile is the Most Beautiful Thing You Can Receive and Give”, right next to a warning about my diet, it reminds me that there are other pleasures in life too, and one of the more beautiful ones is to put a smile on a child’s face and to receive one in return, thanks to UNICEF.

Giving is one of the deepest human needs. In this way, people connect to each other, and offer parts of themselves in order to help without thinking in advance whether that will be reciprocated, and to what extent.

My determination to focus on giving to children came naturally. Children are our living resource, our future, keepers of our heritage and our witnesses. It is sad to think that they are often the most vulnerable group, and that, because of different circumstances, they cannot exercise their basic rights – the right to live, to bear a name, to live in a family, to be healthy, to be educated, to be able to play, to be able to rest, and to be protected from economic exploitation and all forms of physical or mental abuse.

UNICEF is my choice, and it comes very naturally to me to pick only those partners that are successful and reliable. When I think back to the 70-year-long history of UNICEF and their visible results that benefitted children, it is my honour to be able to contribute to a better promotion of UNICEF, and offer support to their activities in our country.

It means a lot to me to be a part of an organization that fights on a daily basis for every child in Serbia to be able exercise their rights under equal conditions. This is the reason why I feel good about my monthly donation to UNICEF since it contributes to children getting better health treatments, being able to attend nursery, enjoy better education, and live in family environment that is encouraging to them and cares for their happiness in life.

Our famous writer, Duško Radović, expressed a great truth in one of his quotes which says: “Our little can be someone’s lot”. It is important never to forget this and to be able to recognize it.

Mrs. Slobodanka Jovanović from Belgrade, who is a member of the Friends of UNICEF Club and a regular donor to UNICEF, had decided to give away her house in the village of Koračica near Mladenovac to UNICEF with the goal of fulfilling the needs of the local children.

“I have always been a great admirer of UNICEF. I joined the Club as soon as it was established. After reading about the project ‘Nurseries without Borders’, there was no hesitation in my mind that I wanted to donate my house to the children in the village who could use it to have a more carefree and happier childhood, just like I did”.

DONATIONS

Slobodanka Jovanović
UNICEF’s monthly donor

FOCUSING ON CHILDREN

Spomenka Stošić
UNICEF’s monthly donor

Although we live in the times of fast living and materialism, it is important for all of us to get involved in humanitarian campaigns and donate funds to people who really need them. In this particular case, my focus is solely on children because I believe that they are the most vulnerable population category today which is why I would sincerely like to congratulate UNICEF on its 70 years of operations in Serbia.
Mr. Aleksandar Sasa Djordjević became UNICEF’s National Ambassador in 2005. On 3 July 2005, UNICEF and its National Ambassador, one of the best European basketball players, held a big and extremely successful fundraising basketball match in Belgrade dedicated to children.

In your opinion, what are UNICEF’s most important values which impact children?
— As a UNICEF ambassador for over ten years, I am very familiar with what the UNICEF has done throughout its history, and what it is doing now for children. I am proud to be a part of this team. I really believe that if we manage to instill the values advocated by the UNICEF in a number of children and families, we are giving generations of today’s children a chance for happier childhood. The biggest value that the UNICEF provides is that the solutions it has been working on have resulted in creating equal opportunities for every child so that they can exercise their rights, develop properly and grow up to be contented and accomplished adults.

What, in your opinion, as a parent and a UNICEF National Ambassador, is the most important thing children in Serbia need?
— We, the adults, have a huge responsibility. We need to engage with our children more, understand them better and send them the right messages. It is very important that, through our personal example, we show children that we hear them, and that we want to talk to them, resolve problems and celebrate successes together. It is important that we come to a mutual agreement on the obligations that each and every one of us has to have, both in family and in public. This is the foundation of a healthy family and a good team. Adults need to be role models for children, teach them how to demonstrate solidarity and tolerance, and how to respect the principles of fair play and non-discrimination.

What role can sport and athletes have in preventing violence that is increasingly present in society, including in schools?
— With their behaviour every athlete needs to set a good example to children, to show them that violence is never an answer to a problem; rather that talking and team work are. Children have to learn this as soon as they start engaging in play or doing sports. This is why parents have such an important role, because they are the ones who first play with children, and it all starts with play when their children are very young. Later, when a child engages in sport in a more active manner, parents need to provide a positive motivation for them and cheer them in the right way. Coaches and teachers, who are also role models for children, are important figures too and they have to demonstrate the best values of sport and team work.

By playing sports children learn how to respect rules, cooperate, work towards success and deal with defeat. Sport is an important life skill. Once these values are instilled in them from the get go, children will promote them further when they become famous and successful.

What qualities should a person have in order to become and remain a National Ambassador for UNICEF?
— The UNICEF ambassadors are role models for children and young people. They are willing to defend children’s rights, and, together with the UNICEF, work towards creating a world that fits children. I try to support all UNICEF’s campaigns as much as I can, and I will continue to support them because I believe in the UNICEF values and mission. Together, we can make changes for each and every child.

If we deal with children in a quality way, and if we provide them with good education, we participate in creating a healthier society.
On September 14, 2007, Ana Ivanović was inaugurated a UNICEF National Ambassador for Serbia at an official ceremony in Belgrade-based primary school “Vladimir Rolaovic”. As UNICEF Ambassador, Ana Ivanovic uses her name and fame to advocate the full realisation of child rights in Serbia, especially in the areas of education and child protection.

What does being a UNICEF National Ambassador mean to you?
— It is a great honour to be a UNICEF National Ambassador. I love children, and I relish the opportunity to help them, together with UNICEF in Serbia. I strive to give my contribution to the important work of UNICEF in Serbia, but also to give hope to every child in Serbia. I want every child to know that we are working on his or her behalf to ensure that every child grows up able to realise his or her full potential.

What moments would you single out in the last ten years as a National Ambassador for UNICEF in Serbia?
— I really enjoyed meeting with children from different schools and speaking with them about violence prevention. One event was particularly interesting. It was in 2012, and I participated in team discussions with children. Together, we had prepared the main school rules that were later promoted by the children, and hopefully, contributed to more positive behaviour among children. These rules reinforced the values of friendship, solidarity, honesty and understanding. By talking with them, I realised how much they need us to hear them and help them to make positive changes in their environment.

When I talked to the children I wanted them to know that friendship is important, that we can find a solution for any problem if we work together, that we are all worthy, and that we don’t have to make fun of or bully someone to prove ourselves.

When you decided to end your professional career in tennis, you said that you would continue to be active in philanthropic work. How will you continue to cooperate with UNICEF in Serbia?
— I’m looking forward to continuing my support for UNICEF’s work. Even though I am not based in Serbia, I will try to visit UNICEF’s projects whenever possible, meet children and their families, support them, and speak on their behalf. I think we can all make a difference, and we can do that by joining forces and working together.

You’ve donated to UNICEF’s activities in Serbia. Can you tell us something about that?
— I am very happy to see that my donations to UNICEF have made positive changes in the lives of children. During the catastrophic floods in 2014, I saw firsthand the importance of uniting for children. UNICEF was immediately on the ground, and ensured that all children and their families got the help they needed. I was touched to see how many people showed their generosity and willingness to help.
Novak Djoković was appointed as a National Ambassador for UNICEF in Serbia in 2011, and in 2015 he became UNICEF’s global Goodwill Ambassador. He is focused on the issues of vulnerable children and their communities through his previous position as a UNICEF Serbia Ambassador and his own Novak Djokovic Foundation.

Why is being a UNICEF Ambassador important to you?
— I am honoured to be a Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF, and glad that I started as a National Ambassador for UNICEF in Serbia. Being a UNICEF Ambassador is a great privilege, but also an obligation towards children.

In my role as a Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF, I will continue to help defend and uphold children’s rights and support access to early childhood care and development for every girl and every boy. We should make sure that every child, particularly those coming from vulnerable families, get access to health, education and protection services, while living in a safe and loving family environment.

In which areas do you work together with UNICEF?
— During my engagement with UNICEF in Serbia, I visited kindergartens to see just how important it is to invest in learning at an early age. I have contributed to UNICEF’s work in Serbia aimed to improve the quality and access to preschool programmes. Early childhood education is the beginning for the lifelong learning which helps us acquire skills to be good doctors, excellent engineers, or world number one tennis players.

I’m also very proud that the Novak Djokovic Foundation funded UNICEF’s innovative family outreach service which reaches out and supports some of the most vulnerable families. With this service, we have reached more than 600 families with approximately 1,400 children. The service has proved so successful, that I hope it will become part of the country’s child protection system.

You’ve visited several programmes that UNICEF implements in Serbia, including the work UNICEF is doing with refugee and migrant children. What was the strongest impression from your visits?
— I visited a UNICEF-supported child-friendly space in Belgrade in September 2015. It’s the refugee and migrant children I met there that impacted me the most. Those children left their homes with their families and were on the move for months in search of a better life, exposed to heat, rain, and the cold. They were exhausted and traumatised. It was heart-breaking. But UNICEF was quick to respond to the refugee crisis and I was able to see first-hand the positive impact that child-friendly spaces had on those children. They were able to play and be children again. I saw hope in their eyes.

TRUE CHAMPION FOR CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD

UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

You’re a father of a young son, and you and your wife are expecting a second child. What do you think we can all do to ensure that every child has the best start in life?
— I am committed to helping UNICEF provide quality early care and development to children, especially those who are most vulnerable, to help them build a brighter future for themselves, their families, and their communities. The early years of life are crucial. When well nurtured and cared for in their earliest years, children are more likely to survive, to grow in a healthy way, to have fewer illnesses, to develop thinking, language, emotional and social skills and become happy and successful citizens of society.
UNICEF’S FOCUS 2016-2020
The cooperation between the Office of the Commissioner for Equality and myself personally, on one side, and UNICEF, on the other, has been a long-standing one, and together we have implemented many interesting projects. We have established the Youth Panel comprised of a group of children between 13 and 18 years of age, guided by the idea to have them as young advisors to the Commissioner for Equality on issues concerning discrimination of children and youth. We have also engaged in professional work with a goal of helping everybody working with children, from pre-schoolers to high-schoolers. To that end, we have launched many publications.

For several decades now, we have had an exceptionally successful cooperation with UNICEF. This cooperation was implemented on joint projects and surveys, as well as on socially engaged activities including the monitoring of human rights. In 2004, the Statistical Office started working on UNICEF’s database ChildInfo, which, in the meantime, was upgraded to the DevInfo database, and as such, were both accepted by the Serbian government as key tools for data collection, processing and presentation. It is exceptionally important to mention that the Statistical Office, in cooperation with UNICEF, is also carrying out the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) about the position of women and children in Serbia.

The acknowledgment that children have their rights is a great accomplishment that should be validated every single day. As much as it seems that child care is a priority, we constantly have to remind people of that, and fight for children to be really treated as a priority. There are many difficulties and problems associated with this, and resources are limited. This is a lesson that we have learned a long time ago. We need to cooperate, connect and network. This is one of the reasons why we exist, i.e. to jointly contribute to making the life of every child important and to care for each child. Thanks to the cooperation with the UNICEF, we believe that we are closer to achieving this goal.
Owing to our close cooperation with UNICEF, we have managed to bring to public attention the issues like the situation in Serbian maternity hospitals and baby friendly programme, making birthing practices more humane, and tackling the problem of low breastfeeding rate. Thanks to UNICEF’s support, we have also shed light to the latter issue and started education and public discussion about breastfeeding, on top of organizing public gatherings in support of breastfeeding and marking the World Breastfeeding Week. In our most important programme – supporting early child development, through its two-year-funding programme - UNICEF has greatly helped us with launching such programme in Serbia for the first time ever.

After World War II there were multiple health problems: from different illnesses, infectious and parasitic diseases, tuberculosis was also widespread at the time, to the fact that the success of vaccination was poor. The doctors could not combat the high infant mortality rates without assistance. UNICEF did a lot to reduce the infant mortality rate in the country. In places where the programme was being actively implemented with UNICEF’s help, after 18 years the infant mortality rate went down to ~18 deaths per one thousand births.

UNICEF helps strengthen the health and other systems’ ability to provide quality early childhood development services, particularly to vulnerable children and their families – those living in poverty, Roma children and children with disabilities.

We are advocating strong infant and young child feeding policies and the scale-up of proven interventions from pregnancy through to the first two years of life. These include maternal nutrition, early and exclusive breastfeeding, as well as improvement in the nutritional status of the most vulnerable children in Serbia.

**HEALTH**

**NUTRITION**

**IMPORTANT PARTNER FOR OUR PROJECTS**

**IMPROVING THE EXISTING PRACTICES**

**IMPROVING THE WORK OF PEDIATRIC SERVICES**

**FOR EVERY CHILD, HOPE**

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After World War II there were multiple health problems: from different illnesses, infectious and parasitic diseases, tuberculosis was also widespread at the time, to the fact that the success of vaccination was poor. The doctors could not combat the high infant mortality rates without assistance. UNICEF did a lot to reduce the infant mortality rate in the country. In places where the programme was being actively implemented with UNICEF’s help, after 18 years the infant mortality rate went down to ~18 deaths per one thousand births.

**HEALTH**

UNICEF helps strengthen the health and other systems’ ability to provide quality early childhood development services, particularly to vulnerable children and their families – those living in poverty, Roma children and children with disabilities.

**NUTRITION**

We are advocating strong infant and young child feeding policies and the scale-up of proven interventions from pregnancy through to the first two years of life. These include maternal nutrition, early and exclusive breastfeeding, as well as improvement in the nutritional status of the most vulnerable children in Serbia.

**IMPORTANT PARTNER FOR OUR PROJECTS**

**IMPROVING THE EXISTING PRACTICES**

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The projects, in cooperation with UNICEF, are based on two important principles: connecting the education policy stakeholders, research institutions, NGOs and practitioners, and focusing on including children, especially those coming from the most vulnerable social groups, into quality pre-school and school education programmes. The longstanding projects "Nurseries Without Borders", "Kaleidoscope" and "Take Off Years" are good examples of innovative approach to this subject. They are based on contemporary scientific developments and focused on supporting the well-being of each and every child, as well as the catalysts to development of quality pre-school and school education in Serbia.

We see securing the well-being for every child as UNICEF’s main mission, whether we are talking about children that live in families with a low socio-economic status, or those in war-torn areas, or those who are suffering from peer abuse, etc. In partnership with UNICEF we have implemented a project during which we have tested the measures that will keep at school those children who are in risk of leaving school. The accomplished results speak volumes about how schools can reduce the risk from the most vulnerable groups of children abandoning education, and the study that we have written was declared one of the best UNICEF’s surveys in the world in 2017.

The cooperation with UNICEF started in 2014 with the implementation of the project titled Kindergartens Without Borders II - Quality Inclusive Preschool Education in Serbia. Our institution has changed its long-standing understanding of preschool activities in towns and pointed out that there were other preschool programmes, apart from the all-day one, which also offer development support to children. The cooperation with UNICEF has continued in 2017 too with the implementation of the project Piloting the Draft - The basis of the programme of preschool education - Years of Takeoff.

Thanks to UNICEF’s committed and continuous engagement, inclusive education has changed for better the lives of thousands and thousands of developmentally challenged and disabled children in our country which, until only recently, have been banished from regular education. Today, they sit together with their peers in schools, they are acquiring knowledge and skills together, and, from a very early age, they are learning how to live happily in an atmosphere of tolerance and respecting differences. A lot of challenges still lie ahead of us and I do hope that UNICEF will continue to be the driving force behind innovative ideas in education.

UNICEF supports improving the quality of the preschool education system and the provision of access to early learning, regardless of the socio-economic background and the geographic area the children live in.

UNICEF’s Great Contribution to Education Reform

Inclusive Education is an Important Programme

Changing of Preschool Activities

Securing Well-Being for Every Child

Educa tion

Early Childhood Education

Quality Inclusive Education
The experience we have gained through cooperating with UNICEF for a number of years is very significant, especially when we bear in mind the fact that the staff at UNICEF’s Belgrade office had been actively lobbying towards launching the first ever family accommodation centre in Vojvodina, and supported its establishment and work. Through various projects and partnerships, UNICEF has been holding educational programmes, initiating innovative community services for children, protecting children’s rights, and securing well-being for each child for which we, who have been working in the system, are eternally grateful for.

It gives me a great pleasure to join our efforts with the efforts of UNICEF Serbia, and to devise, navigate and systemically introduce new protection services focusing on children’s need to live in a family and community. People usually perceive social protection offices as grim places full of sadness, and social protection system as a rigid administrative machine. In the last few years and in collaboration with social services, UNICEF has rejuvenated this creative approach and enabled the professionals in the social protection system to see their role in a more positive light in terms of fulfilling children’s needs and their future in community and family.

UNICEF works towards ensuring that every child is afforded full protection of his or her rights, with special attention paid to the most vulnerable and at-risk children and families. We focus on the strengthening of the social welfare system to provide support to the most deprived children and their families in a timely fashion: and also support the justice system to assure the protection of the most marginalised children.

**SECURING WELL-BEING FOR EVERY CHILD**

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**ADVANCING CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN SERBIA**

What I consider the most important is an opportunity to participate in creating policies for advancement and protection of children’s rights. During all these years, and in partnership with UNICEF, countless times we have been in a position of advocates, creators and immediate developers of programmes and projects that should contribute to the well-being of children and protection of their rights. Still, there is a lot of work ahead of us, and the partnership that we have been building all these years will be very important in guaranteeing survival and development of every child in Serbia, as well as their right to participate, and ensuring non-discrimination, dignity and protection of their best interests.

**REFORMS IN SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES**

We highly value everything that UNICEF has been doing for our children for decades. We are especially grateful for the contribution to reforms in the social protection system, both in terms of improving the knowledge and skills of our experts, and in terms of initiating and piloting new services for children and families. It was a real pleasure working with UNICEF on developing new services in the social protection segment in the last few years. I am confident that a lot of joint effort is going to be invested in development of new services and that this effort will be crowned with systemic changes that will enable their sustainability and further development. We are also committed to our mutual work towards benefiting children in the future.

**NEW SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES**

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**President of the Centre for Child Rights, Director of the Institute for Criminological and Sociological Research**

Dr Ivana Stevanović

**President of the Centre for Child Rights, Director of the Institute for Criminological and Sociological Research**

Momir Borić

**Director of the Regional Fostering Centre in Novi Sad**

Ivana Koprivica

**Director of the Social Welfare Centre in Kragujevac**

Ivana Koprivica

**Director of the Infant, Children and Youth Protection Centre**

Zoran Milačić

**Director of the Infant, Children and Youth Protection Centre**

**Zoran Milačić**

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CARE FOR CHILD’S EARLY DEVELOPMENT

As the most influential media outlet in the region, RTS has been supporting UNICEF’s mission ever since they opened their office in Belgrade. RTS is looking forward to the upcoming campaign – “Every Moment Matters” – too, and we want to use this campaign to show just how important is proper care for child’s early development. Through our RTS network, we are going to step up our reporting about the relevant topics, while underlining good practices exercised by parents and foster parents alike, as well as cover the advice from health and other professionals. In this way, we are going to contribute to all UNICEF’s campaigns in Serbia, and become a part of the programmes they implement here.

IMPROVING MEDIA LITERACY

Our partnership began in 2012. Since then, we have jointly worked on the analysis of media reporting about children, and have assisted journalists in solving certain dilemmas regarding the protection of children rights in the media. We have also jointly embarked on a demanding task of helping to regulate the protection of children from inappropriate TV content, which resulted in the adoption and application of the new TV content rating system and better knowledge of the audience.

INVESTING IN THE YOUNGEST POPULATION AS THE NATION’S FUTURE

Since early education of children between the ages of three and five is the weakest link in our country’s education system, and since this is the most important age in a child’s life, the long-term goal of the partnership between the Nedeljnik and UNICEF was to raise awareness about the importance of investing into children’s early development. Investing in the youngest children means investing in the future of a nation and in a society’s progress. Our cooperation has been developing with several other goals too, and we are on a mission to help and create a better world for every child because we owe it to our children to live in the better world.

MEDIA REPORTING AND CHILD PROTECTION

Together we have embarked on a very demanding endeavour, i.e. to protect children from inappropriate TV content through legislation and by raising awareness. After a detailed analysis of the programmes broadcast by the national TV stations, and broadcasters’ obligations stemming from laws and bylaws, we have suggested the criteria for rating media content to indicate the age of viewers who can watch that content. As a result, the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM), adopted a bylaw in 2015 that regulates this field.
Wherever there is a crisis, UNICEF strives to reach children and families in the hardest hit places with lifesaving resources. We are on the ground before, during and after humanitarian emergencies. UNICEF focuses on life-saving intervention to reach children and their families with safe water and sanitation, nutrition, child protection services and education.

**COOPERATING WITH UNICEF ON VARIOUS BASES**

The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia is cooperating with UNICEF on various bases, both today, on the current migration crisis, as well as decades ago when Serbia was a haven for more than 600,000 refugees, including many children.

Back then, UNICEF visited the collective refugee centres (there were over 700 of them in Serbia), providing assistance in clothes, school supplies, baby products and everything and anything that children needed at that time. Later on, by providing assistance through various programmes, UNICEF continued to be an active partner of our institution.

Today, UNICEF and the Commissariat are closely cooperating in providing help to migrant children, and one of the venues of this assistance is securing informal education in the migrant reception centres and asylum centres set up by the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration. UNICEF implements many of its programmes in our centres like mother & baby corner, mother & child corner and similar.

In terms of formal education of migrant children, we have partnered with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF and Education Policy Centre in providing the required information about the number of children stationed in our centres.

We will continue to cooperate, with the goal of creating conditions for the most vulnerable population category that the Commissariat is taking care of at the moment, i.e. the migrant children. UNICEF’s help is important and always welcome.

**CENTURY AND A HALF OF COOPERATION ON HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMES**

In today’s world, children are often victims of abuse through modern technologies, and because they are still innocent, they believe that all people have good intentions.

Also, children are victims of indiscriminate terrorists. Wars are forcing a huge number of children and their parents to leave their homes. They are also at peril because of natural disasters which are a result of human negligence and climate change.

Children are not and cannot be blamed for the world created by adults. Adults cannot renounce their responsibility in creating a world where every child will have the right to develop freely, to enjoy the highest level of healthcare, to be able to attend school, and to prepare for life in which they will be able to recognize and adopt real, humane values and pass them onto their children.

For 70 and 150 years respectively, UNICEF and Red Cross have been cooperating on humanitarian programmes which goal is to create a better and more humane world for every child. Also, children are the biggest group in the youth segment that have been volunteering for Red Cross Serbia which makes us very proud.

**Vladimir Cucić**
Commissioner for Refugees and Migration

**Professor Dragan Radovanović**
President of the Red Cross of Serbia
VOICES OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

THE BEST START IN LIFE

Marko is a two and a half year old boy. He is cheerful, but quiet and unobtrusive. Marko doesn’t speak. When he started attending the nursery, the difference between him and the other children became even more visible.

“By the time he was 18 months old, his speech was delayed, and he was no longer repeating the things he’d already learned and done. We thought maybe he was a different type of child, maybe he was simply like that, and maybe he was... You always find an excuse,” explains Zdenka, Marko’s mother.

Marko’s nursery teacher and speech therapist suggested that Marko and his mother visit the Developmental Counseling Unit, part of the Primary Health Centre in Leskovac. They had regular visits and the first results were visible after the first month. Marko said his first, meaningful, YES.

Marko’s mother has no dilemma that he will soon be able to say everything he wants, thinks and feels. “I am positive that he will start talking, and this can be realistically expected in a year, maybe even 6 months.”

EDUCATION FOR ALL

Atila Komaromi was born with severely damaged limbs. He was assessed as having profound intellectual disability and was placed in a residential care institution where he spent the next six years of his life.

He had only one dream: “to go to school also and do everything they [the other children] do.”

In September 2010 Atila started attending primary school in Subotica. He was 11 years old at the time. Simultaneously, he was placed in a foster family and was assigned a personal assistant. Today, Atila is 18 years old and has finished 7th grade. Inclusive education allows every child with development disabilities to realise his or her full potential, but also helps everyone involved to become better people - pupils and teachers alike.

CHILDMEND AND FAMILIES

That’s why families in need require specific help connecting to medical and social services. The Jovanovic family has benefitted from the services of an outreach worker, Bojana, who has assisted with a range of issues – from parenting advice to limited financial help.

“She guides us through institutions and knows where to refer us”, says Zoran, David’s father. And thanks to Bojana’s visits, the family is able to get better access to the resources they need to stay together.

REACHING OUT TO FAMILIES IN NEED

Shabnam Arab, a thirteen-year-old girl from Afghanistan, is one of the many refugee and migrant children living in reception centres in Serbia. She has been able to realise her right to education - a right that every child is entitled to.

“Through learning I can fulfil my dreams. We came to Serbia for education in the first place and when I heard I would start going to school I was very excited,” says Shabnam.

Shabnam feels that she needs to repay the country that has welcomed her. “You ... have to do something for the society you currently live in, you cannot just come with empty hands and leave with empty hands. You should definitely learn something and give something back to the society and just like the society is providing me with knowledge, when I grow up, I want to give something back to the society,” says Shabnam.
for every child, a childhood
for every child, a smile