

**UNICEF input into the Secretary-General's Report on
"Economic assistance to the Eastern European States affected by the
developments in the Balkans"**

UNICEF has continued to provide assistance to the South-Eastern European countries. This support includes social development programmes in the context of the Medium Term Strategic Plan with a particular focus on promoting healthy lives for all children, providing quality education, protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS. A range of UNICEF projects alleviate the economic decline in the region by supporting enhanced access to quality services for all children. Investment in education contributes to poverty reduction through (1) strengthening the cognitive, psychosocial and nutritional aspects of early childhood care and development; (2) promoting universal access to and completion of quality basic education; (3) focusing on improving access to quality services for vulnerable groups; (4) promoting community participation and parents' involvement in education of their children. Improvements in health care are essential to enhance the quality of life, to raise productivity and income. This can be achieved through: (1) specific mechanisms that ensure the poor are not excluded from access to services; (2) a reduction in health care costs through innovative financing strategies; (3) a focus on high-risk groups and hard-to-reach populations; (4) empowerment of families and communities to make informed health and nutrition decisions; (5) an increased presence and strengthened technical capacities of community health services.

In Albania, UNICEF is supporting establishing of an integrated programme within the context of the National Strategy for Social and Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy that highlighted the social development of disadvantaged youth. The initiative on 'social businesses' of Youth Albania Professional Services aimed at local employment creation among young people, expanded employment options for Roma, orphan and minority youth. In promotion of healthy lives, UNICEF produced a training package on integrated management of childhood illnesses and trained 150 health professionals in antenatal care, safe delivery and essential neonatal care. Local communities were educated on early childhood development (ECD) practices through Gardens of Mothers and Children and 300 personnel were trained on community-based ECD. UNICEF provided co-ordinating efforts to prevent an HIV/AIDS epidemic. A new curriculum on Life Skills was adopted and over 300 teachers were trained to promote healthy behaviours among young people.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF supported the development of a *State Plan of Action for Children 2002-2010* and establishment of a Council for Children to monitor its implementation. Within the context of the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), UNICEF jointly with the government and Save the Children UK organised a Roundtable on Children and Poverty in July 2002 and chaired the PRSP donor consultation on Health and Social Welfare. In the area of promotion of healthy lives, UNICEF assisted training of over 1200 health professionals to increase their knowledge and skills on prevention and management of leading childhood diseases. Thirty-two "Schools for Future Parents" were established within the existing health centres with a purpose to educate future parents. The supported programme on eradication of poliomyelitis was successfully accomplished nation-wide. UNICEF is also focusing on modernisation of Pre-, Primary, and Secondary Education. 150 primary schools were assisted through training of teachers

and provision of supplies. The assisted Mine Risk Education programme was successfully continued.

In Bulgaria and Croatia, UNICEF continued its activities within the Multi-Country Programme targeting four components: early childhood care and development, child protection, young people's health and development, and social mobilisation for child rights. The programme on early childhood care and development focused on integration of breastfeeding in national health reform process and elimination of Iodine Deficiency Disorders through the Universal Salt Iodization. In addition, support was provided to Bulgaria for the supply of polio vaccines and training of government officials in vaccine procurement. In the area of elimination of Iodine Deficiency Disorders, Bulgaria reported that all salt for household consumption and the food industry is iodized. A National Strategy on juvenile justice was prepared in Bulgaria and is under review in Croatia. The programme on young people's health and development is targeting on development of local capacities to support life skills and peer education.

In Romania, UNICEF supported the overall health reform process, enhanced the breastfeeding practices and improved perinatal care. Over 280 health professionals were trained and 60,000 babies benefited from the assistance. In the area of elimination of Iodine Deficiency Disorders, the communication campaign on Universal Salt Iodization was launched to advocate the access of entire population to iodized salt and salt iodination devices were supplied to sustain Universal Salt Iodization strategy. The assisted HIV/AIDS prevention efforts are targeting young people and vulnerable groups. The other area focused on mainstreaming in education through enhancing curriculum reform and promoting girls' education particularly from rural and Roma communities. A national strategy for the stimulation of Roma children education was developed. 200 Roma teachers were trained and the curriculum for Roma children is under review. 1,019 kindergartens and 107 schools were supported in 17 counties. In the field of Child Protection, UNICEF assisted the reform in social welfare and strengthened the capacity of providers at various levels. Over 630 professionals working with children with disabilities and institutionalized children were trained.

In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNICEF supported primary health care in rural communities through the rehabilitation of the outreach nursing system and training of 218 nurses and doctors from 24 clinics across the country. The Lifestart project, established in 320 rural and suburban locations, has provided 16,200 children access to affordable community-based pre-primary school programmes. UNICEF education programmes have continued to improve the quality of primary education for all children, and to promote whole school development through interactive learning and teacher training in 275 schools. Following the crisis in 2001, eleven schools were rehabilitated and 142 schools were furnished.

In Serbia and Montenegro, UNICEF focused on marginalised groups of populations who do not have access to basic services. Through the outreach activities, over 17,000 non-vaccinated children, mainly Roma and IDPs, were identified. They were registered, immunised, included in health and education system and connected to the social welfare services. The assisted home visiting nurses' service covered 750 most vulnerable families with 2,800 family members. The Project for the Integrated

Management of Childhood Illnesses was also launched. A total of 1,195 doctors and 1,900 nurses working in primary health care of children and women were trained. Educational materials for parents on health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS and child development were prepared and distributed to over 100,000 parents. The integration of MCH policies with standardised training packages has led to improvement in service delivery to families and has been a key factor in decrease of the leading causes of childhood mortality over the past few years. In promoting universal access to and completion of quality basic education, UNICEF supported the project on the optimisation of the school network in Serbia. In order to improve the quality of basic education, UNICEF assisted training of over 6,000 teachers in application of active learning methodology. Over 1,650 schoolteachers were trained on civic education. The support to education of Roma children including establishment of preparatory and catch-up classes was provided in 18 municipalities. As a part of humanitarian assistance, 5 schools were rehabilitated and school furniture was provided for 220 classrooms in Southern Serbia.

In Kosovo, UNICEF focused on social policy advice, capacity building and technical assistance for the new government as well as working at the local level to improve the quality of basic service provision and ensure equitable access for all ethnic communities. UNICEF provided 95 per cent of all the vaccines and cold chain equipment needed to maintain immunisation benefiting 400,000 children. The Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses programme implemented in partnership with WHO is on going. Almost 300 primary health workers have received IMCI training. Technical expertise was provided in education on developing subject curricula within the new curriculum framework – a unified curriculum for all communities- and implementation of a child-friendly school project in all municipalities in partnership with international NGOs. Life Skills education project was initiated and women's literacy was addressed through 130 community-based literacy centres. Substantive contribution to the improvement of physical conditions in school buildings was made through construction of six school buildings and rehabilitation in one school. Programmes for promotion and protection of children's rights are on going with provision of training to police, prison officers and social workers.

UNICEF continues to monitor key socio-economic indicators in the Balkans to ensure timely and comprehensive response.