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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the proceedings from the first Central and Eastern European Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) meeting in Budapest, Hungary, October 24-28, 1999, convened to begin the development of an ECCD network in the region to address the similar needs and concerns of children in these countries. Following an introductory chapter describing the organization of the meeting, discussions concerning the objectives for the network, a possible working structure, and country representatives' responsibilities, the following papers reporting on the situation of children and available services are presented: (1) "Situation of Children in Albania" (Altin Hazizaj); (2) "Conditions of Education and Development of Children in Armenia" (Gurgen Vardanyan); (3) "Early Childhood Care and Development in Azerbaijan" (Iskander Iskanderov); (4) "Childhood in Romania"; (5) "Pre-school Education in Romania" (Anca Butuca); (6) "Family Education Programme in Romania"; (7) "Situation of Preschool Aged Children in the Slovak Republic" (Zita Badurikova); (8) "Early Childhood Care and Development in Ukraine" (Lydia Derkach); (9) "All-Ukrainian NGO 'Our Children'" (Vadim Georgienko); and (10) "Transforming Early Childhood Practices in Yugoslavia" (Mirjana Pesic). A list of conference participants is appended. (KB)

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Early Childhood in Central and Eastern Europe: Issues and Challenges

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UNESCO Education Sector
Monograph No 13 / 2000



Early Childhood in Central and Eastern Europe:

Issues and Challenges

Report
of the First Central and Eastern European Early Childhood Care and
Development Meeting

24 - 28 October 1999
Budapest, Hungary

*Marta Korintus, Pro Excellentia Foundation &
National Institute for Family and Social Policy (Hungary)*

U N E S C O

Action Research in Family and Early Childhood

August 2000

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UNESCO Activities in Early Childhood

Principle for action

Learning begins at birth. (*Article 5 - 1990 Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All*)

*All children are born with the capacity to learn,
the most solid base on which any society can build.*

Early Childhood Care and Education is an integral part of basic education and represents the first and essential step in achieving the goals of Education-for-All. Recent world conferences testify to a growing appreciation of the crucial importance of the child's earliest years, and of the need to support families and communities in their role as the child's most influential educator. The learning capacity and value orientations of children are largely determined by the time the child reaches the age of formal schooling. For this reason, any sustained effort in Education for All must set targets and programmes for early childhood and attempt to raise the life-skills level of families.

Improving children's health and nutrition is necessary, but increasingly, in a situation where fourteen out of fifteen of the world's children survive until the age of one, governments and civil society are turning their attention to the psycho-social and cognitive development of children. Well conceived quality early childhood programmes help meet the diverse needs of young children during the crucial early years of life, enhance their readiness for schooling, have a positive and permanent influence on later schooling achievement. In addition, countries that succeed in mobilizing local government, municipalities, communities and voluntary organizations in the care and education of young children have been able to decentralise and innovate in their educational systems and, at the same time, make an important contribution toward population information and family education.

To safeguard and promote the development of children at an age crucial for their physical, mental and emotional development, for their learning abilities and their integration into the social and education system - such is the aim of UNESCO's actions in favour of early childhood and family education.

Of the more than 800 millions 0 to 6 year old children in the world, less than a third benefit from early childhood education programmes. The challenge is thus enormous because of the demographic pressures and increased poverty that most countries experience. Yet, efficient and low-cost options for early childhood exist, and are adapted to the needs of children, the life conditions of families, the culture and resources of countries. Their implementation depends more on creating adequate political and social will than on any other factor. UNESCO focuses its advocacy and efforts on early childhood care and education, parent education and early childhood staff training, the mobilization of both modern and traditional resources, reflection, information exchange and partnership.

Goals and objectives

Within this context, UNESCO intervenes at various levels:

- at the interagency level, by participating in United Nations or other international initiatives in favour of children and families;

- at the intergovernmental level, by encouraging governments to integrate early childhood and family education programmes in their long-term social and economic planning;
- through technical assistance in the design, development and implementation of integrated early childhood programmes; as well as contributing to the improvement of the child development skills of parents and caregivers by encouraging child care information and education services, and community-based family support programmes;
- by acting as a networking centre and clearing-house on information about early childhood care and education systems, organizations, policies, programmes and activities.

UNESCO's Early Childhood and Family Education Unit

The *Early Childhood and Family Education Unit* co-ordinates research, activities and initiatives undertaken by UNESCO in early childhood care and education, parent and family education, and early childhood research.

It seeks to:

- improve access to early childhood care and education by making such programmes more widely available and accessible, and improving school-readiness;
- support family education and policy formulation by encouraging the participation and promoting the role of families and communities in basic education programmes;
- improve the content of early childhood programmes, in particular their design and quality.
- redirect and strengthen early childhood training programmes;
- strengthen the information base on early childhood by improving the availability and quality of information, research and data on young children and their families;
- promote legislation on behalf of children and families, in particular the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, through awareness raising and advocacy;
- collaborate in artistic, intellectual and cultural events promoting reflection on childhood and family issues.

Early Childhood Interventions

With the help of its specialized services, its roster of consultants, its partnership with sister agencies of the United Nations - in particular UNICEF and WHO - and the co-operation of major institutes and NGOs, UNESCO provides various services to its Member States, UN Agencies, foundations, organizations and individuals working in favour of children and families. Some of its activities include:

- supporting early childhood development/family education programmes in the Middle East, the Pacific, Latin America and South East Asia;
- publishing information and research results on early childhood topics, such as:
 - *Enhancing the Skills of Early Childhood Trainers*, a training pack for the training of trainers produced with the Bernard van Leer Foundation, already published in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese and English.

- *Toward a Fair Start for Children: Programming for Early Childhood Care and Development in the Developing World* by Dr Robert Myers, already published in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese.
- sponsoring sub-regional training workshops for administrators in policy and organization of informal early childhood development systems in the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East;
- strengthening or establishing regional Early Childhood Co-operating Centres in Europe and Francophone Africa.

Family Education and Early Childhood Development

Systemic early child development programmes are an excellent investment for States, in that they raise significantly the health and educational levels of young children and allow women to enter the labour market. Children, however, always need the security and orientation which the home provides, nor should it be forgotten that societies are founded on the quality of the homes and families of which they are composed. Family education

- provides parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to raise their children successfully;
- builds up self-reliance, networking and social consciousness among parents.

Member States have much to gain from promoting family education. In situations where it is impossible to set up early childhood, centre-based programmes funded by the State, excellent child care and education can be provided through educating parents and supporting their initiatives at community level. UNESCO recommends State support for family education not only as a fruitful investment in children but also as a means of raising the educational level of a country as a whole. In a context dominated by rapid social change and by the expansion of scientific and technological knowledge, parent education is a first step toward supporting community development and education.

Early Childhood Research

UNESCO seeks to encourage the development and promotion of early childhood research by :

- promoting the development of dialogue and partnerships between researchers, early childhood professionals and decision makers.
- ensuring identification and dissemination of best practices in early childhood and family education programming.
- undertaking surveys of on-going research projects concerning early childhood issues.
- assisting those responsible for early childhood programmes in planning appropriate early childhood interventions and in improving the quality of early learning environments.
- providing advice and training on methods for collection, analysis and dissemination of early childhood information.

Early Childhood Information/Documentation Activities

To create opportunities for institutions and individuals to learn about each other's needs and actions, enhance information exchange on early childhood, and build up active relationships to benefit young children and their families, UNESCO:

- serves as a networking centre and clearing house for information on early childhood issues, policies, programmes and organizations, and as the lead agency for the *Inter-Agency Early Childhood Communication Strategy*.
- collects, compiles and disseminates basic information on early childhood care and education systems, organizations and curricula.
- maintains a data bank of early childhood care and education information.
- produces practical directories, publications, briefs and reports on early childhood care and education systems, organizations, curricula or policies.
- participates in interactive early childhood and children's rights activities on Internet, as a member of the *Children's House in Cyberspace* initiative (at <http://childhouse.uio.no>).
- provides input into, and support for, selected professional journals and reviews, such as the Interagency Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development's *Coordinator's Notebook*.

Further enquiries

Information on UNESCO's early childhood actions can also be consulted on Internet in UNESCO's site at <http://www.education.unesco.org/ecf/index.htm>.

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Summary of proceedings

The first Central and Eastern European Early Childhood Care and Development meeting took place in Budapest, Hungary, between 24 - 28 October 1999. The Pro Excellentia Foundation organized the workshop, as part of the Cooperative Programme for Early Childhood and Family Education in Central/Eastern Europe and of the Consultative Group's Regional Capacity Building Initiative to develop an ECCD network in the region.

Countries of Central and Eastern Europe are usually considered as having mostly similar problems, facing similar difficulties in the course of transition to market economy. There have been some broad, general attempts to map the situation of children in these countries but these are not specific or systematic enough to reveal the essential similarities and differences in the practice of delivering services and thus, to provide a base for a joint effort in the interest of children. Only a few comprehensive reports covering children's issues in this region were published, mainly by international agencies, and there is not much widely available information about or contacts with people who are active in the early childhood field in these countries.

The initiative received a positive response. It was commonly felt that once the network begins to function, it will be an important vehicle to make children's issues more visible, to address problems and to carry on effective advocacy work. Its role would especially be significant since NGOs are not strong enough to sustain longer term- and widespread work on their own. An ECCD network in Central and Eastern Europe would meet just these needs and would facilitate the coordination of work in the interest of children.

Prior to the meeting, a preliminary, rough assessment of the current situation in some of the countries was made. Information about the plan for a regional network and 10 questions were sent to 16 countries, to about 30-35 people who were asked to respond briefly. 14 responses from 11 countries had arrived. This exercise provided the basis for identifying common issues:

Existing networks. No active ECCD networks are reported to exist within individual countries.

Visibility of children. Advocacy, lobbying for children and ECCD issues are needed.

Children's rights. All countries in the region ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and most submitted their first report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. However, a coherent legislative framework is not in place in most cases. The content of the Convention is not widely known, its practical implications are not worked out. Something like a practical guideline would be useful.

Non-formal, non-institutional care. This is an issue important in relation to working with refugee children. Providing children with more or less normal conditions for leisure and education could help them "to restore normalcy to their lives, creating security, routine and enable them to express themselves".

Diversification of existing services. Although, these countries had extensive early child care systems when they were socialist states, the provisions were quite uniform within each country. Many of the services were discontinued after the political changes and the remaining ones need to be developed, to be changed to meet the needs of families better. The philosophy needs to be articulated, different/new types of services need to be implemented, and different models can be worked out.

Quality. The meaning of quality should be defined in given contexts. The concept also needs to be interpreted in terms of policy, integration of services, and parent/client participation. Systems for inspection and development should be looked at.

Service delivery. Funding, multiple financing and resource management are key issues here. In the former socialist system, all services were provided by the state and were financed from the central budget. In the new market economies and in situation of transition, it is necessary to learn how to maintain services with good resource management. Finding creative ways for financing, mastering how to run a business need to be learned in these countries.

Good models for partnerships (local government and NGOs, parents and professionals, etc.) have to be looked for and promoted. Local government and NGO cooperation, contracting in particular, should be studied closely since this is going to be the new way of providing services in many areas.

Community development. Developing and implementing community based services is a must. No state can maintain as many and as diverse services as families need. This is especially true in small towns and villages, where usually many of the provisions simply cannot be maintained due to lack of funds. Community development work is a good "vehicle" to raise people's awareness and to initiate community based services. It is true that community activities of that kind are something new for most countries of the region, especially for ex-Soviet republics, despite of the declared "commun"-ism. Thus, introducing such experience to people and teaching them the "know-how" of community organizing are necessary in many countries of the region.

Special needs children. There is a need for advocacy on behalf of special needs children. Attitudes towards them have changed a lot over the past few years. However, in many places these children are still in separate institutions and do not have the support they need. It is furthermore noticed that these children are treated more as "medical clients" than as "normal" individuals with limited abilities, which should be further developed and used to their fullest available measure. Hence, alternative models of service provision (integration, inclusion, service delivery teams, etc.) need to be explored and promoted.

Legislation. In most countries, there is not a comprehensive, integrated system of children's legislation. Those systems, which are already more or less in place should be looked at and studied for good examples.

The call for a regional ECCD meeting was very well received. Covering the costs of participation was a potential problem for many, but SCF and UNICEF offices in the region assisted by sending representatives and also by bringing "local" experts. SCF Norway and UK regional office in Budapest and UNICEF, Geneva, both actively supported the event. UNESCO representatives could not come to Budapest because the UNESCO General Conference was taking place at the same time, but many UNESCO publications were sent to be handed out. In all, about 60 participants came from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Lithuania, Macedonia (FYR of), Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, Ukraine, Canada, the United Kingdom and Hungary.

On the first day and the second morning, participants reported briefly about the situation of children and available provisions and services in their countries. The rest of the time was spent with group work and discussions about the role and the functioning of the new Central and Eastern European ECCD network.

It was generally accepted that for the purpose of this network, the region does not have to be rigidly defined. Whoever wants to participate can make a contribution and can join the network, regardless of the international definition of the region. Many countries of the Central Asia region (formerly parts of the Soviet Union) had similar systems to those in Eastern Europe. Besides, UNICEF already considers Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia as one region. The members of the meeting also agreed that any work the network embarks on have to build on existing local and regional resources.

The discussion started with an exercise to generate answers to the following questions: Why should be a network? What are some of the objectives for this network? The following responses illustrate the wealth of ideas that emerged:

- By sharing experience, more ideas are generated to be carried out
- Monitor and assess different programmes, resources
- Create ties for finding ideas, resources (quantity and quality of member over time)
- Raise governments' and donors' attention for more support for ECCD (policy development, funding, advocacy)
- Mobilize resources (financial, human, information, others)
- Database on resources, partnership / alliance building
- Views and information exchange
- Put pressure on and exchange ideas on issues related to children's rights – implementation
- Local and country level actions to improve, which then link to regional network
- Preserve good existing practices and try new ones
- Link researchers and practitioners, close the gap
- Organize task forces on important issues
- Clarify (uniform) concepts used in ECCD
- Manuals / materials on how to start ECCD programmes
- Promote diversity
- Network as the motivator / link for small local initiatives
- Resource library
- Referral system: experts, researchers
- Joint initiatives
- Look at links with other related groups/networks

Expectations verbalized concerning the network included:

- Exchange of ideas / experiences
- Networking
- Information about materials
- Share innovations / technology
- Collaboration for future programmes
- Share methods
- Sources of financing, grant opportunities
- Organize an NGO network
- Develop common goals
- Share responsibility
- Analyze the effects of transition on ECCD
- Interact with ECCD people
- Information about programmes in CEE/CIS
- Models of family education
- Identify expertise
- Joint activities

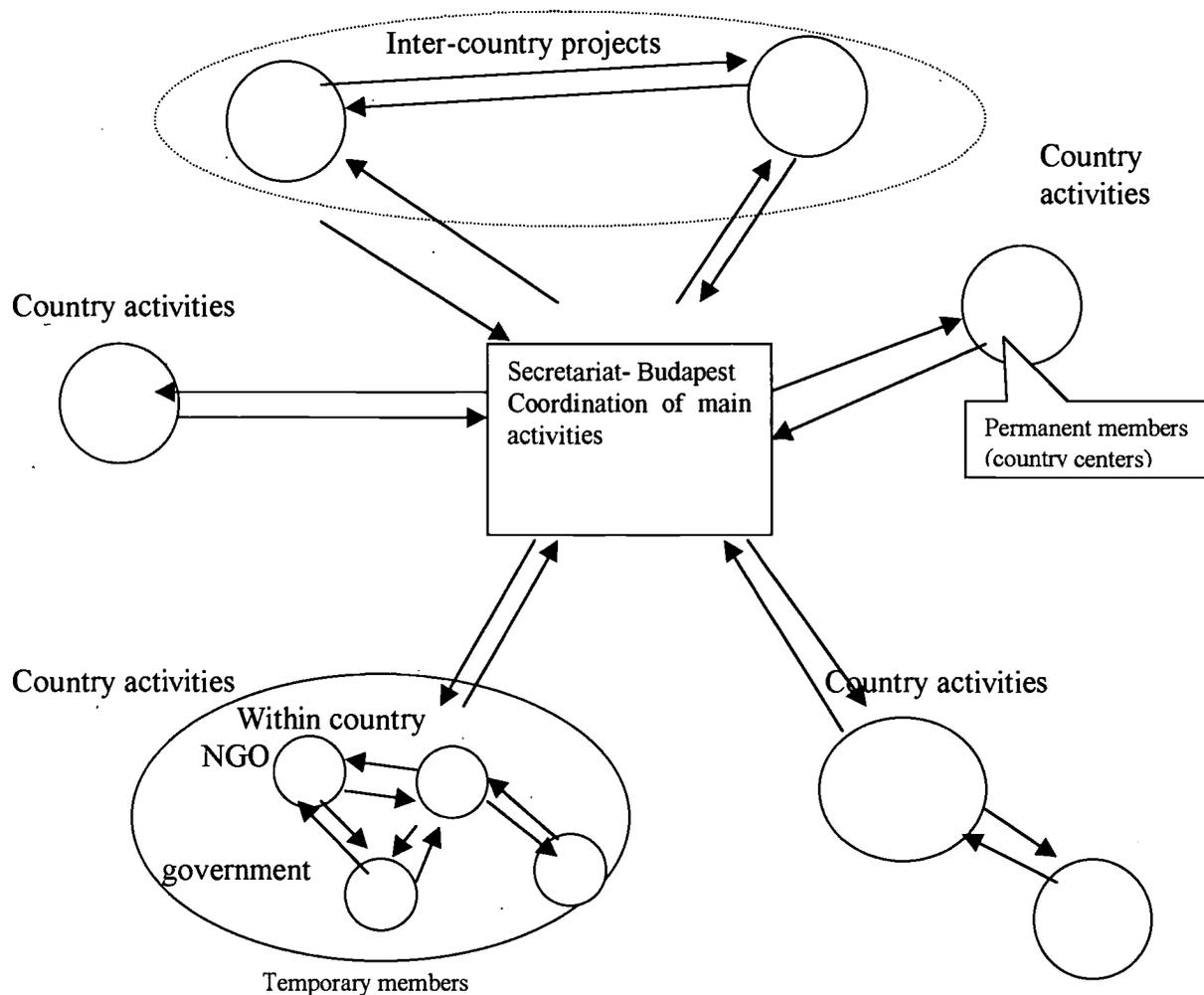
Some reservations about the network were also raised. It was uncertain how much time people could contribute in the long run. Financial support / resources were unclear. Mechanisms for functioning needed to be designed. What kind of structure can be fit? Is it to be an open one? Who can participate in the network? Local networks, NGOs,

individuals? How can the network include pediatricians, nutritionists, economists, lawyers, etc. who were not represented at the meeting?

There was an agreement among the participants that the following need to be defined in connection with the network:

- Structure and management
- Objectives
- Activities (information, expertise, instruments)
- Evaluation (criteria - participation
- improving quality of care and education of children)

The chart below summarizes the possible working structure of the network:



The center of the network will be in Budapest. The Pro Excellentia Foundation will provide office space and other technical support for a small secretariat. The Secretariat will

- coordinate networking and the work on regional and international level,
- ensure information flow between partners / countries / projects / the public
- lend support to country representatives and ECCD efforts
- engage in fundraising activities for the network
- link with international agencies and donors

Country representatives will meet once a year to discuss and outline programs / actions / projects, both on international and country level. In addition, their responsibility in their respective countries will be:

- to identify and link human and material resources
- to set up links with and between NGOs, governments, individuals and local projects involved in ECCD
- to assist interested organizations and individuals get organized into country networks
- to assist the (two-way) information flow between the Secretariat and the country projects
- to ensure translation of important / relevant materials into the language of the country
- to ensure translation / summary in English of important / relevant materials, documents about country initiatives
- to support regional ECCD efforts
- to act as advisors to the Secretariat
- to coordinate country-level / local initiatives

At the end, it was generally agreed that country / sub-region activities will have to have an independence of their own. The Secretariat will not act as a central regulating agent. Rather, the whole structure is going to be loose, based on local initiatives and will promote cooperation and information dissemination between country centers (permanent members of the Network). The proposed activities could be grouped roughly into three major categories:

1. Sharing – exchange of information
2. Advocacy
3. Working groups /special topics

The plan is to start the communication process among the members, to begin mapping ECCD organizations and activities in the countries with the use of the UNESCO questionnaire, to develop a framework for the network by formulating a “mission statement” or “constitution”, by identifying who will do what and how, and to set up specific projects and working groups dealing with issues affecting specific target groups.

The communication process includes sending around information of general interest (first, such as the list of participants of the meeting), launching an electronic newsletter bi-monthly, using the CG website to present the regional ECCD network’s activities, and to collect information for the UNESCO Directory of Early Childhood Care and Education Organizations.

Four target groups emerged from the discussions as focus points of interest:

- children and families who are minorities
- special needs children
- children in conflict / violence
- children/families going through transition

The aim is to make a holistic, all inclusive, non-threatening joint effort to work towards ensuring children's rights, and ensuring policies and programs, which support young children's development through developing and managing a regional network in Central and Eastern Europe. The idea of 3D was put forward by one of the groups dealing with issues of transition: Decentralization, De-institutionalization and Diversification are key concepts in achieving the aims and in developing flexible services, which meet the needs of children and families.

It was suggested that not only "permanent", or long-term Target Groups, but also temporary Working Groups should be formed within the Network. These will be created to solve current problems. Four such Working Groups were indicated as musts during the first stage of Network operation:

- *Constitution Group*, to work out the principles of membership, the duties and rights of the Secretariat and the members, etc.)
- *Communication Group*, to finalize the matters and availability of communication means, languages, translations support, publications, etc.
- *Group of the Network activities' Scope*, to formulate a limited scope, goals and "objects" of the Network's activities (which countries, which groups of children, strategic and tactical goals, etc.)
- *Fundraising Strategies Group*, to generalize the existing experience, classify the known strategies and to spread the information and recommendations to the members.

Some preliminary agreements were reached and suggestions made on different matters relevant to each of the above task categories. However, the need for special work on each of those directions was expressed on the last day of the meeting.

Some time was spent on debating strategies for communication. The language of communication with Budapest Center and that of international contacts is agreed to be English. However, it was agreed that one of the tasks of the network members is to spread the information among the agencies and individuals in their own countries in their own languages. Funding will be sought for synthesizing, summarizing and distributing information. On the whole, however, volunteers are needed to help translate selected publications.

E-mail, regular postal mail and fax transmission are the ways of sending and receiving news, reports and messages, depending on the availability of necessary equipment. In addition, both regional and country- or sub-regional yearly meetings were thought to be extremely important.

Questions of evaluating the work of the network and of suitable indicators were raised. How can we maintain the cost and preserve the service / quality? How do we deal with cost-effectiveness? How can we make governments / ministries of finance understand and agree? How can researchers more effectively communicate and collaborate with practitioners? How are children protected in order to develop? How do we go ahead in synchronizing the different ministries and sectors? Can all these be translated into meaningful indicators of effectiveness?

Unfortunately, there was no time to deal directly with these important problems. Some answers could be discovered in the general flow of the discussion, more will have to be worked out. This task will probably be the first big project the members of the network have to embark on. Solving it, at least partially, will demonstrate the problem solving capacity and the creative and innovative potential of the Central and Eastern European ECCD Network.

Situation of children in Albania

Altin Hazizaj

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by Presidential Decree on 27 February 1992 and came into force on 28 March 1992. According to article 44 of the Convention, within 2 years from ratification, the State Parties should submit a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child that indicates the progress made towards its implementation. Further reporting is required every half decade. At the end of 1997, the Albanian Government nominated a committee to draft the first official report for the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Infant Mortality Rate

The Infant Mortality Rate (which is the number of deaths to infants under one year of age per 1.000 live births) was 20,35 in urban areas and 23,67 in rural areas in 1997. The total number being 1387. The causes for these deaths were: respiratory diseases (33 per cent), neonatal deaths (24 per cent), congenial diseases (10 per cent), other diseases and diarrhoea (9 per cent each) and the remaining 15 per cent caused by infections, sudden deaths and undiagnosed diseases.

A rapid nutrition assessment conducted in 1997 in 8 high risk areas in central and northern Albania showed that out of total of 1135 children, 0 - 3 years of age 17,5 per cent were underweight and 22,7 per cent were stunted, although 90 per cent of them were breast-fed.

The fact that 62 per cent of all diarrhoea cases are estimated to be water-borne, that a cholera epidemic occurred a few years ago with more than 600 confirmed cases and 25 deaths, and that the hepatitis A seropositive rate is 90 per cent, indicates the existence of serious deficiencies in the water supply and sanitation in Albania. The provision of safe water supplies has been declared a national priority by the government.

Health Services

The transition period had a negative impact on the health services as well. The destruction and looting of health facilities both in 1992 and 1997 coupled with the lack of funding has caused a severe disruption and setback in the health care delivery system. Availability of health services has decreased, particularly in the rural areas and the number of hospitals, health centres and health posts has significantly declined. Between 1992 and 1996 the number of rural health centres declined from 916 to 637 and hospital beds have been reduced from 13,000 to 9,600. In 1996 a World Bank study in suburban areas revealed that 54 per cent of the urban poor do not seek medical treatment because it is too expensive.

Child Abuse

Child abuse in its three forms - physical, emotional and sexual - is becoming a very sensitive issue. Even though data is not very accurate it is believed that child abuse is widely spread in the Albanian family and public. Just the last month there were two or three cases of paedophilia reported in the public press. The offenders were arrested and two of them imprisoned. Four children of age 6-8 had been abused sexually.

The main form of child abuse is the physical ill-treatment of children. In Albanian mentality the use of physical violence is accepted as being "in the best interest of the child". This is one explanation why the Albanian society in general is violent. The term of emotional ill-treatment is not known or accepted.

The most problematic issue is sexual child abuse. During 1998 from the statistics of the Ministry of Public Order it appears that almost 300 children all over Albania were reported to be sexually abused.

Currently in Albania there does not exist any kind of institution or centre to offer counselling to the abused children. Either in police stations or other state institutions there are no specialised persons who should know how to behave with abused children. That is the reason why the Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania has decided to establish the first counselling centre for abused children in Albania.

Pre-primary education

It is presumed that the most affected institutions during the transition have been those of the pre-primary education system. Data from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Albania show that there were 3426 nursery schools until 1999, while in 1999 there were only 2330 all over Albania. The general number of children in nursery school is 75371. In cities, approximately 33018 children are going to nursery schools, while in villages the number is 42353. However only in the cities it is possible for 8836 children to eat in nursery schools while none can do so in the villages.

The main factors of such reduction in the provision of pre-schools are found to be the destruction of many nursery schools in cities and villages, and also to the high level of female unemployment in Albania.

Furthermore, families have to pay an amount of money for the registration of children in nursery schools. This sum is higher in the nursery schools where the children can eat their lunch. Because of the small number of these institutions there has been no chance to publicise their benefits to the Albanian families. Especially in the villages such institutions present a main challenge because most of the women do not have enough time to care both for children and also to work.

Education

Albania entered the transition with a satisfactory level of education for its per capita income level, reflecting the priority given to the sector by the communist regime. However, the education system was inadequate to cope with the demands of a market economy. Consequently, during the transition school enrolment has been falling and public investment in the sector has been insufficient to effectively address the right of children to education.

Primary education is compulsory and free, while pre-school (nursery school only) and secondary school are free but not compulsory. Pre-school attendance fell conspicuously from 58 per cent in 1990 to 35 per cent in 1997. The terrible physical conditions and the lack of materials and teacher training discourage pre-school attendance. Many mothers lost their jobs with the transition and prefer to keep their children at home.

In 1990, 100 per cent of all children between six and fourteen attended school. By 1997, primary school enrolment had fallen to 94 per cent (though the exact number of children in the age group is not known since reliable and up to date data is not available). To what extent the decline in enrolment is a result of recent internal and international migration or an increased dropout rate it is still to be determined. But indications are that migration cause children to stop attending school; the Institute of Pedagogical Studies estimates that only 7 per cent of those who migrate within the country enrol in school in the new residence.

Primary school completion rate was only 66.3 per cent in the school year 1993-94. In 1996-97, the number of children who completed the eight-grade compulsory cycle represented 71.2 per cent of those enrolled for the first time in 1st grade eight years before.

In the period 1990-92, 5,330 school buildings were destroyed or damaged. Though a thorough analysis of how many school buildings are entirely operational and functioning has not yet been made, it is estimated that most of the buildings are only partly functional, especially during winter.

The Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania has studied the child truancy phenomena during 1998 in partnership with the Ministry of Education. A study - report was published called "The Victims of Truancy". Schools in eleven cities and villages were visited by CRCA representatives and a questionnaire was filled in by pupils of age 8-15. Teachers also filled in a questionnaire on the reasons why the children were dropping out the school. The children themselves explained that in 17% of cases they play truant because they work. The teachers said that mainly economical, social and cultural factors oblige children to play truant.

Child Migration

In 1997-8, an increasing number of children as young as 10 years of age have illegally crossed the border towards Greece and Italy in search of jobs. They either end up doing odd jobs or beg. Either parents agree to let them go and in some cases pay for the travel or the children run away from home (for a variety of reasons). Since March 1997, kidnapping has also increased disturbingly. Girls are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked for sexual exploitation though kidnapping children for ransom also occurs. Independent reports put the general number of girls age 13-18 involved in prostitution at 1500 - 2000. No exact data is available.

References:

Children's Situation in Albania - Save the Children - Albania

Victims of Truancy - Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania

Conditions of education and development of children in Armenia

Dr Gurgen Vardanyan (Vilnius, Lithuania / Yerevan, Armenia)

General information

The Republic of Armenia is one of the three Transcaucasian republics of the former USSR. It is surrounded by Georgia on the North, Azerbaijan on the East and North-East, Iran on the South, and Turkey on the South and West.

Some data on Armenia

Territory	29,800 sq. km
Capital	Yerevan
Population	3,6 mln; 96% Armenians
	3,0 mln - according to USAID Report of 1999
Population by Age Groups: 0-14,	30%, 15-24, 17%, 25-64 48%, >65, 5%
Population Growth Rate	0.8% (1979-1989). Presumably, negative to date.
Religion	Armenian Apostolic Church
Language	Predominately Armenian, secondarily Russian
Life Expectancy	-69.0 yrs., -74.7 yrs. (1989)

Economical Statistics

GDP (1997)	\$1,600 mln
Growth Rate '98	5.5% (est.)
Investment as percent GDP (1997)	10%
Private Sector Share of GDP	60%
Labor force	1,380,000
Private Sector Share of Employment	56%
Per Capita GDP at PPP (1997)	\$2,280
Exports (1997)	\$233 mln (CIS 41%, EU 29%, Iran 18%)
Imports (1997)	\$892 mln
External Debt (1997)	\$786 mln
Inflation (1998)	8.7%
Employed (1997)	42.5%

Data related to children

Children of Age Group 0-14	30%
Population under 18	1.2 mln (33%)
Infant Mortality Rate	25/1000 in 1997
Under 5 mortality	30/1000
Children in Pre-primary education	93,000 in 1993/94
Children in Primary education	194,000 in 1993/94
Secondary	360,000 in 1996/97
Primary Gross Enrolment	82% (86% M, 90% F) (UNICEF, 1998)
Secondary Gross Enrolment	79% (85% M, 91% F) (UNICEF, 1998)

Negative factors in the development of children

Three major factors that negatively affected and continue to worsen the condition of children in Armenia are: the conflict with the neighboring Republic of Azerbaijan; the earthquake of 1988; and the general economical crisis that followed the decay of the USSR and was specially deepened in Armenia by the first two factors listed.

1. The War

Armenia was engaged into a continuing conflict with Azerbaijan over the ethnic Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabagh located inside Azerbaijan. The conflict, on its first stages in 1987-88 resulted in the immigration of about 400,000 refugees from all regions of Azerbaijan (about 120,000 Azeris are believed to leave Armenia) who formed the first big army of homeless in Armenia, and in nearly complete blockage of the communications by Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Although a cease-fire is held since 1994, Armenia continues to face a trade embargo and closed borders, in effect since 1989. The conflicts in Georgia (Abkhazia) and Russian Northern Caucasus cause additional difficulties for Armenia to easier and cheaper trade relations with Russia and Europe.

2. The Earthquake

The Spitak earthquake of December 1988 resulted in the deaths of over 25,000 people and rendered 500,000 homeless. Due to specific family relations in Armenia, the numerous orphans were practically all adopted by relatives. The second and third biggest cities - Leninakan (Gyumri) and Kirovakan (Vanadzor) suffered substantially, and the town Spitak was destroyed completely. The quake destroyed workshops and factories whose production provided 40% of GNP. Hundreds of nurseries and schools were either destroyed or became dangerous, leaving the pupils outside or in abnormal conditions for education. Over a decade after the disaster, more than 30,000 families still live in temporary shelters in the earthquake zone.

3. Economic crisis

In a referendum in September 1991, Armenians voted for independence from the Soviet Union. In addition to an escalation of its geopolitical problems (support of Nagorno-Karabagh in its struggle for independence), the declaration of Independence of Armenia coincided with the break-up of the Soviet Union. This put an end to the commercial ties and protected markets, which had helped to make Armenia among the most prosperous of the former Soviet republics. With the end of low Soviet prices for energy, transport, raw materials and guaranteed markets for its products, in addition to the damage caused by the earthquake, the Armenian industrial sector collapsed.

Armenia's economic prospects have been further damaged by last fall's financial breakdown in Russia. Over the past several years, many Armenian families have been able to survive at least in part on remittances sent by Armenians working abroad. According to some estimates, there are approximately 1.5 million ethnic Armenians residing in the other countries of the CIS, with the majority located in Russia. Unrecorded remittances from Russia alone are estimated to be in the range of \$150-200 million (8-10% of GDP) annually. However, since late August 1998, Armenia began to experience adverse impacts because of the sharp economic downturn in Russia. In addition to the reduction in private transfers, there has been cancellation of some Russian private investment and Armenian exports to Russia have also fallen sharply in recent months.

Still a considerable share of the budget of many Armenian families is formed by remittances from relatives in "farther" diaspora, which is estimated to consist of about 3 mln ethnic Armenians, mainly residing in the USA and France. However, such families form a very small percentage of all families that were dependent on money sent by their male members from outside Armenia before the Russian crisis of August 1998.

Therefore, many Armenian families are already beginning to see a drop in available income, which is likely to worsen significantly, depending on the situation in Russia, before it begins to improve.

According to data provided by USAID (Jan. 1999), unemployment and underemployment together may be estimated at approximately 50-70% of the workforce

(69% of them are women). Over half the population (54.7%) is below the poverty line and more than a quarter (27%) below the food line.

Minimum wages decreed by Government was 1000Dr (\$2) in 1997 and 5000Dr (\$10) in 1998, which is still 5 times less than necessary for an individual to survive.

In 1998, the average wage in the state sector was \$34 per month, barely 20% of the estimated minimum required for a family of four.

Education and health care of children

The Government does not have the economic means to provide fully for the welfare of children. Education is free, universal, and compulsory through age 16, but facilities are poor, corruption on the level of secondary school and up is widespread, while unofficial fees and compulsory donations from parents are present on all levels. Handbooks and all stationery are purchased by parents. No free meals are offered, except partially state supported food in nurseries.

Salaries of teachers and nurses are below the average. Teachers are forced to tutor pupils privately to survive.

The network of private kindergarten, nurseries and schools constantly grows enrolling the children from richer families.

Boys and girls receive equal educational opportunities, with majority of girls continuing the education in high schools and Universities.

Free children's healthcare is available, but of poor quality, with an increasing trend toward overt or concealed payment of fees for service. Self-diagnosing and home-care of children, as well as of adults, is commonplace.

Despite several social programs, the problem of street children and early child labor gains growing significance. As mentioned, the Gross Enrolment in primary schools dropped from 87% in 1993 to 82% in 1998, and the Gross Enrolment in secondary school dropped from 85% to 79% in the same period.

The Government prohibits forced or compulsory labor, and it does not occur. Children have the right to work from age of 14 with a permission of medical commission. Otherwise, the age of 16 is the minimal for employment. However, an uncontrolled, but considerable part of children barely graduating primary school are voluntarily and actively participating in building up of the family budget working in many different areas. There are no homeless children, but there are abandoned children, who are taken care in special schools and orphanages. However, the streets of the big cities, and Yerevan on the first hand, are full of adolescents who do not accept any responsibilities at home and have no interests in school. Teachers and school administrators would readily "roll" any pupil up the scale until graduation of secondary school at least, regardless of their academic achievements.

At least one generation of children - those who should have entered the primary school in early 1990's - is undereducated. During the worst years of economical crisis, when electricity supply and winter heating was cut, the preschool institutions were completely closed, many buildings were privatized. Children remained at their homes and there certainly was no lack of adults to care about them. This care, however, was mostly limited to feeding, for the lack of electricity left very few opportunities for home- or self-education.

The schools shortened the educational "season" to 2-2,5 months in autumn and the same duration in spring. During at least 3 years, the "long" vacations only lasted from mid-November until March, then from mid-June until September, though the school never began on September 1. Even last year, schools did not reach the timetable of the Soviet period, the winter vacations still being 4-5 times longer than the programs demand (from 20 December until 10 February, instead of 10-12 days). The growing outflow of teachers from the schools, lack of facilities and updated handbooks, extremely

low motivation both on teachers' and pupils' sides resulted in substantial decrease of quality of education on all levels.

The problem persists on higher educational levels, where newly founded numerous private high schools attract the youth by very low, if any, demands to their knowledge and mental development.

Better, elite schools and universities gradually become the places of high concentration of offspring from richer families. Even here though, there is no special control of the mental development, social attitudes and expectations of the youth.

An attempt at empirical research

In 1995-1997, we undertook a research of comparative effect of the political, economic and social perturbations on the mental development of children in Armenia and in Lithuania - one of the most rapidly developing former Soviet republics. The research was supported by an Open Society Foundation Grant.

Children of pre-school age - from 3 to 7 years old - served as subjects of research. Judgement on their mental development was based on the level of development of the role-play (known in West as pretend-play) - the "leading" (essential) activity of the children of that age, which is crucial for their further social and intellectual development. The level of the role-play was evaluated by use of the Role-Play Test (RPT), first created by us in 1990. The RPT allows obtaining quantitative expression of qualitative characteristics of the three main components of the role-play: contents (the plot), roles and play-actions.

We compared the levels of mental development of children

- in Armenia in 1990/1991 versus Armenia in 1995/1997;
- in Armenia in 1990/1991 versus Lithuania in 1995/1997;
- in Armenia in 1995/1997 versus Lithuania in 1995/1997.

Our research lacked very important data about the level of development of children in Lithuania on the first years of Independence (early 1990's). It was presumed that in many senses identical conditions of life and education in most former Soviet republics, with both Lithuania and Armenia being among republics with highest living standards by the end of the Communist rule, the "initial" level of mental development of pre-schoolers should not be significantly different.

The objects of comparison were the age norms of development of the role-play in children in different countries and on different stages. Three age-groups were compared separately: 3-4,5; 4,5-5,5 and 5,5-7 years of age.

Very roughly, the results are as follows:

1. A significant shift in age norms has taken place between two stages of research in Armenia. In 5-6 years, the norms have decreased for all three age groups. In every case, the decrease is about 2 points, which is rather much for the scales used in the RPT.

In other words, from 1990 until 1995/97 the mental development of preschool children in Armenia has decreased significantly.

2. The age norms obtained in Armenia in 1990/91 proved to be a little higher in absolute measures than those obtained in Lithuania in 1995/97. However, the differences are not significant. If our presumption about initial similarity of children's mental development level in two republics reflects the reality, then our results show that during the years of transition, the pre-schoolers in both countries lowered their initial level. No surprise: every region of former USSR suffered and suffers from transition, but apparently in different degrees.

The data obtained does not allow making more definite statements. All we can infer from these insignificant differences is that the Lithuanian pre-schoolers, for some reasons, remained on more or less the same mental level as they had before the crisis. However, we may hypothetically name the reasons: unlike Armenian children, the

Lithuanians did not face destruction of schools, mass lockouts of nurseries, catastrophic shortenings of the academic year, absence of television and everything that has to do with power supply for two complete years, etc.

3. Comparison of results in two republics in 1995/1997 revealed significant difference between national age norms of development of role-play. The differences in all age-groups are statistically significant and in favor of Lithuanian children. They are especially striking in the age group 5,5-7,0. This means that the preschoolers in Lithuania have better conditions for more effective development of role play. In other words, their mental development proceeds quicker and with better results.

In our opinion, these data directly reflect the differences in economic and social conditions of life in two countries.

Factors of positive perspectives

The worst period of transition may be considered now to be in great measure overcome. The factors of "brains outflow", well-founded cynicism of population and especially the youth towards education (versus quick money-making activities), the persisting dependence on the situation in Russia and indefinitely suspended resolution of the conflict with Azerbaijan, hence continuing trade embargo, still remain in force. However, a sensible progress in economical, political and social development of Armenia during last 2-3 years cannot be denied.

To give just a few figures,

- the national currency inflation reduced from almost 11,000 % annually, in 1993, to about 32% at the end of 1995, with 8,3% in 1998.
- substantial progress has been made since 1994, both in structural reforms and macroeconomic stabilization. Positive GDP growth is estimated 5,5% in 1998 (with peak in 1995 - almost 7%).
- foreign direct investment were \$140 million in 1998 compared to \$51 million in 1997 (International Monetary Fund Document No. EBS/98/213).

The focus of the Government's 1999 development program is on continued progress in the areas of privatization, financial sector reform and energy sector restructuring. Simultaneously, emphasis is being placed on the reform of the health and education sectors.

The educational system however, will continue to deteriorate in the short run because of it's "conservative" nature and also because it still remains in the farthest backyards of the Government's concerns. The disparities in educational attainment will likely widen during next 5-10 years. However, as employment, therefore incomes, begin to increase, Armenians will be better able to invest in their own family's education, given that there is already a high social value on education in Armenia.

The traditionally high social evaluation of education in Armenia along with strong family traditions and praising of the child as the most precious gift of life should be considered as the most important positive factor in view of the future of children in Armenia. Armenia was justifiably renowned in the Soviet Union for high educational and skill levels.

This inner social and psychological potential needs only some substantial outer stimulus and technical/financial support. Educational and training facilities are severely underfunded or relying on outmoded subject matter and teaching techniques or both. Full advantage should be taken, before it is too late, from the fact that children's knockout from the family and school has no cultural-ethical grounds. It is rather forced by factors, which are external to the national values in Armenia.

People have always been Armenia's most valuable resource of development, its only reliable capital. This capital is eroding both absolutely - in form of outflow of educated people, and relatively - in form of continuing undereducation and negative trends in changes of the social values of the raising generations.

Early Childhood Care and Development in Azerbaijan

Iskander Iskanderov

Azerbaijan is a country approximately 86,600 km², situated in the southeastern area of the Caucasus region where 8 million people live. Famous for its rich nature, underground and over-ground resources, especially for oil, Azerbaijan gained its state independence first in 1918, but this happiness lasted only 23 months. Since 1920 Azerbaijan had been part of the former Soviet Union for 70 years and regained its state independence in 1991 and our people are sure that the freedom gained at the expense of great sacrifices can never be lost again.

However, following the territorial claims and aggression of Armenia towards Azerbaijan since 1988, the loss of 20% of our territory, the inflow of about 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons from the occupied regions have caused great tension in the Republic, consequently turned into a negative factor in all spheres of general development, including education.

The Azerbaijani people are proud of maintaining their religious belief, customs and traditions, social conventions, national ethics, mother tongue, culture, despite the 70 years of existence under the imperial policy. It is especially significant for us that under the conditions of obstacles and shortcomings caused by the centralized administrative order in the Soviet Union, great work was accomplished in the direction of effective application of traditions of folk pedagogy and in the formation of the ideology of upbringing on the basis of national mentality in the processes of developing education in Azerbaijan, enlarging the network of educational institutions, educating children in their mother tongue, training national teaching personnel, creating national textbooks and manuals, establishing education system. There is no doubt that the success we achieved in the previous period has had a great role in systematic integration of the education system of Azerbaijan with those of advanced countries, in purposeful application of modern teaching experience into our education system all these 8 years since the time we gained our independence.

Today a large network of educational institutions, including early childhood development institutions exists in Azerbaijan. Out of approximately 7 thousand educational institutions, including general schools, colleges and universities, 1854 are early childhood development institutions where 116 thousand children between the babyhood and 7 years of age are enrolled and 17 thousand teaching personnel are employed. 195 of these institutions are operated by some ministries, offices and enterprises. In a part of early childhood development institutions are enrolled mentally and physically handicapped children, as well as those in need of special treatment for health reasons. Since different nations live in the Republic, education process is realized according to the desire of parents in the Russian, Georgian, Lezghin and some other languages, alongside with the Azerbaijani language. Children enrolled in these institutions attend preparatory classes when they reach the age of 5. However, this process involves only those 5 year old children who are enrolled in early childhood development institutions, but the children not enrolled in these institutions are left outside the process. Taking into consideration the situation and the importance of the issue, the new draft of the Education Law soon to be adopted, stipulates a separate article on the enrolment of all 5 year old children in the Republic into kindergartens so that all of them attend preparatory courses.

Early childhood development institutions in Azerbaijan are almost maintained completely by the state. As a result of care and attention towards the pre-school age children, hundreds of kindergartens have been constructed and equipped with modern facilities, educational, methodological, technical devices, staffed with pedagogical personnel, educational assistants, medical and economic employees; beside all this, to train qualified specialists for early childhood development institutions, faculties have been established in pedagogical universities and colleges all through these years.

We have always thought about children's material provision and health protection in early childhood development institutions, as well as the improvement of their education system. This has always been the focus of our attention. In the period of the former Soviet Union we had considerable difficulties in determining the content of education for pre-school age children on the basis of national peculiarities, it meant that the programs and other normative documents for these institutions were sent from the centre and we were obliged to operate on the basis of their requirements.

Since the state independence of Azerbaijan, wide prospects have opened before us to accomplish serious changes in content and quality in all sub-sectors of education, including early childhood development. As the basis of activities of early childhood development institutions, the first Education Law of our sovereign country which was adopted in 1992, has proposed the task of upbringing children in the spirits of national and universal values; guided by this conceptual provision, in 1994 the Azerbaijan government approved the Regulations which defines activity guidelines for early childhood development institutions. Also educational and learning programs with a new content have been developed for these institutions.

It is worth stating proudly that these constructive measures taken in a short period of time have been a serious turning point in the activities of early childhood development institutions. Today development and establishment of children's personality, protection of children's rights, their upbringing in the spirit of independence, national mentality and universal values have turned into the main task and activity guidelines for our kindergartens. Close cooperation with different international organizations, as well as with the representation of UNICEF in our Republic is worth attention as one of the factors having a positive impact on the activities of our early childhood development institutions.

Not long after its independence in 1992 our Republic joined the Convention of Children's Rights, in 1998 the Parliament of the Republic passed the Law on Children's Rights. All this is an obvious example of great attention and care directed to the education of pre-school age children in Azerbaijan, their health protection, material provision and preparation for an independent life in society. These issues have also found their wide reflection in the recently approved Education Sector Reform Program in the Republic of Azerbaijan, in the Conception of XXI century education of Azerbaijan.

Besides all this, since 1991 the social and political changes in the country, the tension due to the inflow of about 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons as a result of Armenian occupation of 20% our territory, financial difficulties in connection with transition to market relations in economy have created a number of problems in the sphere of education too, these problems have had a negative impact on the activities of early childhood development institutions, as a whole on the living standards of pre-school age children. You can imagine the scope of the problem if you consider that 242 kindergartens have been destroyed in the occupied territory, the children once enrolled in them have been scattered to different regions of the country.

As a result of all this, also the lack of effective measures directed to the consolidation of material-technical, educational basis of kindergartens and to the improvement of children's material provision due to the shortage of financial resources, the enrolment rates of children into the early childhood development institutions have somewhat decreased.

Despite the difficulties, the reality of our present life shows that there are no cases in our country when children are left without care and supervision, or exploited, and it will never happen. Although we have a lot of problems, our future is optimistic and hopeful. Therefore we consider that soon the day will come when the children of our Republic who are born today and have not attained the formal school entry age yet will become the citizens of the country progressing speedily.

Childhood in Romania

Child situation and services for children in Romania

1. Framework

The legislative dynamic, during the transition period, reflects the missing of an effective and coherent strategy in the field of social protection. This fact has generated a rapid and substantial degradation of the living standards, especially for families with more than one child.

The social policy in Romania, in the first phase of the transition, has had mainly a more reparative character, share of the benefits and of the associated costs: in order to establish a more toward some communist measures, considerate to be inequitable. Some of these measures, like improvement social policy for children with disabilities, institutionalized children, orphan children, have proved themselves as being not just necessary but also well sustained by the hole population. Other measures have generated frustrations due to the inequitable social order some of the social costs have been transferred to some large segments of the population.

"Mainly the delay of the reform in the field of social services, has determinate an increase of its further costs, because of the rapid degradation of the already existing system of services. Families with many children protection are extremely weak. Even at the beginning of 1997 there were some reviriments, the family with many children support policy has started to be again a secondary concern. The systematical deterioration of these benefits generates not just an accentuated social polarization but also more serious and visible problems – child abandonment, street's children – with long term effects, being known that children are one of the most affected social category during the transition." (Human Development National Report, 1998)

Romania was one of the first countries that signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and, yet, it is among those countries facing the most serious problems regarding childcare and protection in Europe. The former regime's legacy, as well as the new problems generated by the transition to a market economy hinders the reform process.

Up to 1990, it was stated, there were no social problems in Romania. A policy was followed by which only the State was in a position to provide the necessary solutions, through its numerous institutions, to the problems families faced with raising and educating their children. This policy favored the development of a mentality (still difficult to change), despite Romania's otherwise strong family tradition, according to which those families that are in difficulty should transfer their parental responsibilities to the State.

Thus, large numbers of children were and still are placed in institutions (98,872 children – census by DPC-EU/Phare, May 1997). Out of these, 1.3% are formally abandoned, while 29% have had no connection with their families for more than 6 months. A number of 1482 do not have identity papers at that moment. Increasing poverty, unemployment, and other social and economic problems caused by the transition, made it impossible to reduce the number of institutionalized children. For the reasons mentioned above, the main problem of the child care and protection system in Romania has been, up to recently, its focus on placing children in institutions (for up to 18 years for children entering as babies). These institutions, further, are still large and not suited to meet the needs of the child.

It has been a global and coherent reform of the Child Protection System which must eliminate through the system those bad influences coming from the communist social order, based on the determinant role of the state and on minimization of the individual role, family role and local community role in the society. It was necessary to repeal and to replace those laws emitted till 1989, which did discriminations and which

were amended only by punctual measures. They should be seen more as simple palliatives, unsuitable in order to guarantee the whole and harmonious children personality development and, through this, the future of the nation.

2. Main areas of child protection in Romania

The evolution of child protection reform in Romania

After 1989 the child has become a central value of the society, or in other words, the Romanian society has focused on the child. At the very beginning of 1990 Romania ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Going from this point a national structure of child and family protection have been considered to be more than necessary. There are 13 key element in this structure. Following them we can see what are the most important changes that should be done in the very near future. In some of the areas there have been done some steps in order to improve the child and family situation. But it is still a lot to be done for a good and functional system of child and family protection services.

1. Developing a coherent and efficient child support policy:

- a) elaborating a coherent political strategy;
- b) elaborating and promoting an unitary legislative child protection system;
- c) developing a unified and coherent child and family financial strategy (direct or indirect; goods or services);
- d) sharing the responsibilities both at the national and local level, by using very modern administrative methods;

2. An systematically focus of the school on the child:

- a) a faster reformative process in order to adequate the school to both child and society needs;
- b) preventing juvenile illiteracy and school abandon;
- c) a "fresh" school environment focused on the child, free of any violence and dogmatism.

3. Healthier children

- a) free and universal access to the medical and health services;
- b) accent on preventing;
- c) shorter period of time in hospitals and better medical home services;
- d) restructuring the medical services net;
- e) encouraging the presence of the mother in the hospital (when a child must be in).

4. Developing the fourth level of the social services: social assistance

- a) local social assistance, with a global profile;
- b) specialized social assistance services.

5. A better policy to prevent the child abandon

- a) financial, social and moral support for the families with risk in abandoning the child;
- b) special attention paid to the alone mothers;
- c) a better developed family planning program;

6. *Clarifying, simplifying and humanizing the situation when a child is declared abandoned*

- a) solving the procedure following the best interest of the child;
- b) developing an aggressive policy in the favor of national adoptions and when also international adoptions;
- c) easier procedure for giving an identity to the abandoned children

7. *Preventing the child institutionalization*

- a) complex support (juridical, material, social, etc.) for the families at risk of institutionalize their children;
- b) promoting family alternatives as adoption, foster families (on short, medium and long term)

8. *The reform of all the child protection institutions*

- a) redefining their objectives;
- b) better criteria for their function authorization;
- c) transforming these institutions in family type institution: cozy environment, well-trained personnel, good educational methods, etc. An emergency strategy to protect abused children;

9. *A national strategy in order to stop the "street children" phenomenon;*

10. *Assuring decent life condition for every child and family:*

- a) building in a very short time of social houses and giving them to the poorest families;
- b) special credits for poor families in order to provide them with houses.

11. *Preventing and stopping juvenile delinquency (the child as victim and as aggressor)*

- a) revising the penalties for children and for the adults who affect children situation;
- b) organizing a special court for judging children;
- c) revising the system of special institutions for children in conflict with law;

12. *The reform of all the children with disabilities protection system*

13. *Developing an operational partnership among governmental and non-governmental organizations.*

3. Child health situation

In the Romanian population, amounted to 22,503 thousand inhabitants on 1st of July 1998, the number of children (ages between 0 – 17) was amounted to 5,314 thousand (23.6%).

Beginning with 1990, there has been a gradual decrease in population due to both the negative natural growth and migration abroad, with different contributions of the two components each year.

Even if it is going down, with a yearly percentage of 0.75, the infant mortality rate in Romania is still one of the highest in Europe (21.9‰, on 1st of July 1997). The structure of infant mortality is similar to the one of the developing countries. The most common one is the post neonatal – 70% of the death at this age happens in the first 28 days of life. The main causes are: affection of the breath system, prenatal causes, missing

of important elements of the nutrition, the short breast feeding period and so one, bad medical services.

Number and structure of children population (0 – 17 years) by age groups - 1994-1998 (thousands, %)

Age groups	1994		1995		1996		1997		1998		Dynamic 1998/1994 (%)
	ths.	%	ths.	%	ths.	%	ths.	%	mii	%	
Total	5,986	100	5,803	100	5,635	100	5468	100	5314	100	-11.2
0-2 years	751	12.5	724	12.5	710	1.6	688	12.6	691	13.0	-8.0
3-6 years	1,296	21.5	1,195	20.5	1,092	19.4	993	18.1	717	13.5	-44.7
7-14 years	2,755	46.0	2,725	47.0	2,698	47.9	2694	49.3	2892	54.4	+5.0
15-17 years	1,184	20.0	1,159	20.0	1,135	20.1	1093	20.0	1014	19.1	-14.4

For the groups of age 1 – 4 and 5 – 14 the main problem is a very high mortality rate, mainly due to the acute disease of the respiratory system, accidents, traumatism and acute leukemia. Other causes are connected to the school environment conditions that generate growing disorders, psychic tiredness, seeing disorders. For the group of ages-15 – 18 the main factors are accidents, sexual disease and unhealthy living conditions.

In the social context, there are some relative spread disease like hepatitis (especially B hepatitis), tuberculosis that have as main determinants the poverty, a low level of hygiene, low educational level and bad preventive medical services.

Concerning the infection with HIV/AIDS, almost 90% of all cases (5,503) are children (4,849), and 50% of all pediatric cases in Europe are from Romania. 12% of all children are younger than 1 year old and the greatest number of infected children (52.08%) are age 1 to 4. The main transmission way of the infection is the infection into the hospital (41.4%) and the transmission from mother to child represents just 5.5%. On 30 of June 1999 from all the cases, 10,236 persons infected by HIV/AIDS, 85% was children.

Services

For children infected with HIV/AIDS there are services provided by the state or by the NGOs:

- day centers in hospitals;
- alternative care methods – family houses;
- information/education for children and families affected by HIV/AIDS;
- special programs for scholar and social integration;
- free medical services for those who has been refused the medical treatment in normal medical institutions;
- material support.

Salvati Copiii has a project named Roxana House, which is an alternative care method for the HIV+ children. Aims of this project are: to improve the quality of health, sanitary and feeding conditions for the HIV infected children; to integrate them in society and living a normal life; to increase the life hope of these children; to set up and keep up a family type house for small groups of children; to train the care staff to develop specific care methods for HIV infected children.

4. Children in difficult circumstances and services addressed to them

Abandoned children

The poverty and its implications, has become a main concern, both for the sociological and economical research and for the state authorities. The researches done by the Institute for Quality of Life Research, have shown that families with more than two children (and in the case of monoparental families even those with two children) occupy the main position among the poor population. And, as far as in these families the population age 0 to 15 is the predominant one we can say that children are very affected by poverty.

The OCDE (Observer of Child Development in Europe) initiated in the first 9 months of the last year a national study in 9 maternities from Brasov, Craiova, Iasi, Ploiesti, Oradea, Sibiu and Bucharest (3). The study followed the amplitude of child abandonment in maternities, the structure of the group of newborn with risk of being abandoned, and risk factors for abandonment of children. The number of children included in the research was 23.990, and the number of abandoned children was 387 newborn, that means that the abandonment rate was 1.61%. The minimum of the value was in Iasi (0,75%) and the maximum was in Bucharest – Giulesti (2.69%).

Both the civil statuses and the bad economical situation of the mother influence the high rate of the abandonment. More then this, the child legitimacy represents a factor of protection, so the number of being in risk of abandonment children born out of the family is 12 times more then those born into a family. These aspects can be seen in the following table:

Civil Status	No of abandoned children		Abandoned children from socio-economical reasons
Married	38%	75	33
Illegitimate Family	43%	166	110
Alone Mother	38%	146	52
Total	387		195

Services:

- information and support for those mothers being in risk of abandoning their children
- in maternity;
- special programs for family reintegration and child abandon prevention;
- traditional placement centers and orphanages;
- alternative methods: foster care, adoption (national and international), entrustment, residential centers organized as a family care model.

"The Open Windowed House", a program provided by Salvati Copiii, is a temporary, family alternative structure meant to offer the abandoned children without a legal identity a family like environment, similar to the one of an average family in Romania. It provides a secure way of living accessible to 8 – 10 children in the care of four professionals trained as parental substitutes ("mother", "father", "grandmother").

Institutionalized children

In 1997, the Department for Child Protection, UNICEF and National Commission for Statistics, run a census of all children being in special institution for child protection in Romania.

From the total number of persons existed in the care system, at the census date (May 1997), a number of 5,469 persons (means over 5.5%) were of age. Among this, 27.9% have been in Special Vocational Schools, almost 16% in children's homes without schools, 15.6% in Workshop Homes, 13.7% in Hospital Homes and 11.3% in Special schools centers. Almost 21.7% of the children being placed in nurseries were younger than 3 years old and over, and 319 children (3.4%) were older than six years old. From the total number of children age 3 – 5, being in the care system, 5.66% have been in special kindergartens, 25.6% in nurseries and almost 57.3% have been in Children's homes (with or without school).

Structure on ages of population being in the care system on 19th May 1997, by types of institutions

Type of institutions	Total no. of children	age						
		under 1	1 year old	2 years old	3-5 years old	6-11 years old	12-17 years old	18 years old and over
Total number of care institutions from which:	98,872	2,264	2,893	2,326	6,633	29,643	39,644	5,469
Nurseries	9,309	2,228	2,842	2,221	1,699	318	1	-
Centers for Minors	379	-	-	3	29	137	209	1
Hospital Homes	4,473	-	2	1	287	1,703	1,731	749
Children's homes without schools	23,132	16	16	57	2,902	9,692	9,576	873
Children's homes with schools	12,033	-	-	20	909	4,965	5,784	355
Special Kindergarten	1,042	-	-	1	376	660	5	-
Special schools (cl. I – VIII)	26,226	-	-	-	106	9,680	16,458	81
Special professional schools	8,855	-	-	-	-	5	7,324	1,526
Special Secondary Schools	393	-	-	-	2	137	241	13
Special scholar groups	1,320	-	-	-	11	276	963	70
Special scholar centers	4,452	-	-	-	8	279	3,545	620
Centers for re-education	1,130	-	-	-	-	-	1,072	58
School homes	2,750	-	-	-	4	889	1,686	171
Workshop homes	939	-	-	-	-	-	85	854
Other types of institutions	2,439	76	-	-	300	1,002	963	98

Note: All the numbers mentioned before are from May 1997 (when the census of children from institution for child protection was made) when the Children's houses were still under the Ministry of Education (according with Law no. 3/1970).

So, it could be mentioned it is possible that after the new regulation (Emergency Ordinance 26/June 1997) the numbers have been changed. It has not been done other census, after 1997.

Recently statistical data from Department of Child Protection after the new law comes into force are:

- from the total number of 44,679, new cases assisted under the new legislation framework, Commission for the Child Protection have made decisions for the institutionalization for 8,514 children and the others 36,165 children were protected in their own families or in substitute families;

- the distribution of the children protected in a familial environment is: 68% entrustment (14,413 children); 19% placement (4,080 children); 8% followed liberty in family (1,727 children); 5% entrustment for adoption (1,166 children)
- during the year 1998 has been made 3,354 adoptions, 1,092 – national adoptions and 2,262 – international adoptions;
- the number of children being in child care institutions (nurseries, children's houses and centers for minors) until 12th June 1998 was 38,158 lower than on 12th of June 1997 when it was 43,597;
- Until the end of September, have been undertaken 271 institutions, with a capacity between 20 and 575 number of places. From all of them just 20 were organized as family models.
- In 1998, 8,105 children left the institutions, 47% to the natural families and 19% to different families alternatives.

Placement centers (former Children houses) are institutions for child protection with accommodation, care, education, and sometimes therapeutically functions. There are private or own by the state. Placement centers can have many projects: family type centers, children shelters, children villages, accommodation in apartment administrated by the institutions for child protection, center for protection of sisters and brothers, services for educational and psychological support for children's families and so on.

Services:

- family reintegration programs;
- child participation in making decisions;
- vocational courses, foreign language courses;
- adoption

One of the solutions the reform of child protection system tries to implement is the adoption of the child by a family. We could not talk about a tradition in the field of adoption in Romania. One of the causes is the lack of the legislative system in declaring the legal abandonment of the child. Even the adoption procedure has been reglemented by a Governmental emergency ordinance, there are still many complains connected to the bureaucracy and the attitude of the office workers involved in the process of child adoption, fact that discourage many possible adoptive families.

No of adoption in Romania, between 1993 and 1998

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
National adoptions	3.200	2.792	2.389	1.005		1.092
International adoptions	891	2.038	1.789	1.315		2.262

Street children

Street children are those children abandoned by everybody and every institution that, legally, should take care of them. Living all the time in street, their only short time ideal is how to build strategies and system of surviving.

Marginalised, humiliated, neglected even by their families, disconcerted by the attitude of other children on the streets, living in groups, and guided by norms and values in conflict with the society's ones, stigmatized by the public opinion, without knowing how to build a strategy of life, street's children are victims who do not have time to victimize themselves, because now, they must survive.

At the moment, in Romania, there are about 2,000 children without a house. 61% of them are in Bucharest, the main "gathering" city, 17% in Constanta, and also in Timisoara and Iasi. From all 2,000 children, 1,500 are coming from families and 500 from institutions of child protection. Talking about age and gender distribution, one third of them are girl and two thirds are boys, 29% are age 12 to 14. In this number have been included some former street's children, now older then 18, who have lived more then 5 years on the street, and who are permanent "clients" for governmental and nongovernmental residential centers.

Services:

- the street social assistance programs;
- residential centers, day centers;
- street's children club;
- special programs providing food and clothes for children living in street;
- medical services;
- school and family reintegration (evening schools)

The main aim of Street Social Assistance Program provided by Salvati Copiii is to reduce the number of street children by means of their social reintegration (family/care institution) and prevent or limit their deviant behaviors (glue sniffing, offence committing and the infantile prostitution); to make sensitive the decision makers and the public opinion on the emergency and the necessity of the social reintegration of the children living in the streets.

Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities represent one of the most affected categories of children by the communist regime. Their situation have been sensible improve after 1990 due to at least two factors:

- promotion of some new legislative projects; even they have not been sufficient, they have considerable influenced the living conditions of persons with disabilities;
- the change of attitude toward the special educative needs of children with disabilities, by promoting the change of mentalities and practices, both in the educational system (see the tendency of promoting the integrated models in education) and outside of it, in the area of leisure time.

There are still many critical points, and among these, one of the most serious is the tendency of institutionalization of children with disabilities in residential care institutions that promote a very inappropriate environment to the special needs of the children.

The State Secretary for Handicapped Persons have made public the following statistics for the year 1998:

- the total number of persons with disabilities was about 411,988 and among them there were 59,386 children;
- the weight of children with disabilities in the total of children was 0.2%;
- the first three types of disabilities, among children, were: mental (28.8%), physical (22.7%) and neuropsychological (14.8%);
- on groups of ages, the group with the highest weight was age 11 – 15 (27.1%) followed by those age 7 – 11 (26.8%) and 15 –17 (16.0%).

Services:

- kindergartens for children with special needs;
- integration of children with special needs in the mainstream education;

- rehabilitation centers with therapeutically functions as well;
- double monthly allowance.

HELPER - Program for the rehabilitation of the children with psychic – motor deficiencies has been running since August 1996 in the Nursery in Targu Mures at the initiative of Salvati Copiii – Mures branch. The aim is to decrease the number of children directed to hospital – hostels and family reintegration of the children for providing them the best environment for their development.

Children in conflict with law

In Romania, after 1990, the juvenile delinquency phenomenon has had a high dynamic, influenced by the general social framework and by the social control measures (which, in some period of time, have determinate adverse reactions, followed by the increase of the number of offences, and in other periods of time have generated an decrease in the number of juvenile offenders).

The juvenile delinquency rate has been increasing since 1990, being the highest in 1995 (about 30% of the total number of criminal acts). This fact is due not just to the increase of the number of offences but also to other factors:

- the decrease in the age of those who committee offences, connected with the number of juvenile offender, age 10 to 14;
- the increase of the grade of social danger of the offences (especially those committed with violence, mainly hold-ups);
- attraction children in offences committed by adults, belonging to well organized nets;

In the same time it is semnificative the type of offences dynamic. Most of these are offences committed with violence (murder or tentative of murder, rape, robbery).

Among the offences committed with violence, the robbery, usually in-groups with the adult's participation, have the highest weight (50%). They are committed in the urban area (80%), by persons without an occupation (60%) or pupils (40%).

A kind of offence committed with violence is rape. Almost 50% of those are committed under the influence of alcohol and especially in bigger cities.

Services:

- reeducation centers;
- art therapy;
- counseling and therapy for social reintegration.

Abused children

The abuse of the child, as a global approach, is still a very new issue in Romania. This is partly due to the fact that, at this moment, we cannot talk about a coherent system for the protection of the abused child (juridical definition, juridical procedurē for intervention, professional standards and competencies). In a society focused on adults, the family is seen as a closed space and all its dysfunction are under silence.

Among the child abuse causes we can count: the promiscuity of the family environment, the abusive parental models, lack of education and information about abuse, poverty, consumption of alcohol, some mental decease.

Statistics are extremely rare. The state has not yet adopted a coherent strategy and the intervention possibilities are limited by the lack of an appropriate legislative framework. As far as some types of abuse are not yet socially recognized, the real number of child abuses is unknown and uncontrolled.

The sexual abuse of the child is not for a long time, one of the main concerns in the field of abuses of children. This fact is determinate on the one hand by the gravity of its effects on the child, and on the other hand by the mass-media interest.

Types of child sexual abuse offences by the age of the victim- child 1998

Offences	total	Age (years)	
		0 - 14	15 - 18
Rape	354	156	198
Sexual intercourse with a female child	79	44	35
Sexual intercourse between persons of the same sex	49	27	22
Sexual perversions	99	31	68
Sexual corruption	135	62	73
Incest	16	10	6
Total	732	330	442

Services:

- counseling centers for children and families;
- abused and neglected child – early intervention.

Counseling Centers for Child and Family, a program running by Salvati Copiii in Bucharest, Iasi and Timisoara, has the following aims: psychic – medical and social rehabilitation of the children who have suffered a type of abuse or neglect in order to avoid development of aberrant behaviors; to decrease the number of cases of abused and neglected children and preventing the intergeneration transmission of abusive behavior; to set up a network for tracing out, assistance and intervention in cases of abuse and neglect at children.

Child labor

Salvati Copiii run in 1996 an inquiry based on questionnaire, applied to three populations: children in families, children in special institutions for child protection, street's children from Bucharest.

Even they are from families, institutions or coming from the street, children resort to a variate scale of working activities, and they do these:

- daily (34.1% children from families, 19.4% children from foster-care centers, 35.4% street's children);
- some times a week (7.5% children from families, 12.5% children from foster-care centers, 14.6% street's children);
- occasionally (25.0% children from families, 43.0% children from foster-care centers, 29.2% street's children).

Main reasons that children work are:

- to help their parents (37%);
- because they like (28.4% children from families, 44% children from foster-care center);
- for food (22.7% children from families, 80.9% street children);
- obliged by others (10.6% street's children).

The phenomenon of child work, at this moment of transition, is estimated to increase. In the framework of an accentuated pauperization of the whole population, both in urban and rural areas, children will try to get jobs that are not always in

concordance with their needs and with the law. It is also expected, as a consequence, a higher dropout school rate and a higher juvenile delinquency rate, as well.

Services:

- juridical counseling for children and employers

Roma children

Roma children are very vulnerable, at this moment. They are not just coming for a very poor category of population but they have to "carry" the stigma of very strong bad prejudices about Roma population.

The study "Roma Children in Romania", run by Salvati Copiii, in 1998, has shown the fact that, roma children living conditions are determinate by the material situation of their parents and, for them, the main financial sources are: the monthly child allowance, the supplementary financial support for families with many children (if they still can get it). So, Roma from the studied communities, daily confront with some grave problems generated by bad living conditions (in 2 or 3 rooms are living in average 10 persons) by the nutritional deficiencies, by the impossibility of having appropriate clothes all the year (especially in winter).

The school enrolment of Roma children is sensible lower then the national average rate. For the age 7 – 9 years old it is appreciated that 29.9% did not go to school at all, and for age group 10 – 16 years the percentage is 17.2%. As a prediction the study announces that 48.3% from children who was age 7 to 9 at the moment the research was done will drop out the school before the end of the 4th class.

Being situated under the sign of bad nutritional conditions, a low quality of water, inappropriate living and hygienically conditions, the Roma children health situation in the studied communities are characterized by: avitaminosis, malnutrition, anemia, rickets, food poisoning, catching diseases and so on. The child vaccination is very low and the same is the access to medical services.

Services:

- cultural and educational programs;
- material support for roma families.

General social services for children and families:

- monthly allowance (at the moment = 4 USD/ per child)

Since 1990 it is universal. Even it is guarantee for every child there are at least two situations children could not get benefits of it: those who do not have identity papers (roma children, street children) and those who drop out the school.
- supplementary allowance for families that have more then two children. In 1999 it has increased (by law) with 25%:
 - for families having 2 children = 3 USD;
 - for families having 3 children = 6 USD;
 - for families having 4 and more = 8 USD.
- birth benefit;
- paid leave for employed mothers or fathers until the child is two years old. Since 1997 it was extended to the age of 2 (before it was the age of 1) and it was provided also for fathers.
- paid leave for taking care of the sick child;
- social financial support for families with a very low income;

- nurseries;
They could be state or private initiative. The Ministry of Health runs the state ones. They could be daily or weekly. The parents have to pay a monthly allowance according to the level of their salaries and the number of children they have in that nursery.
- kindergartens
They could be state or private initiative. The Ministry of National Education runs the state ones. They could be daily or weekly. Kindergartens with a four hours program per day are free of charge. There have been implemented after 1990 some models as Montessori and Waldorf.
- medical assistance (including the universal vaccination, free medication).

Pre-school education in Romania

Anca Butuca

Structure and enrolments:

- It is designed for three to seven year old children and it is intended to provide both day care and nursery experiences at the early ages and an increasing emphasis on preparation for formal schooling at the higher ages; it is organized in children's places of residence;
- It is provided in both public and private institutions; there are also alternative education systems: Waldorf, Montessori, Jena Plan;
- Access to pre-school education is universal; classes in nursery schools are mixed by gender and organized by age; average class size is 15 (within a range of 10 to 20);
- For 1998/1999, the total enrollment in pre-school education is 621641 in 12795 institutions;
- The non-compulsory nature of pre-school education, negative population growth rates and shrinking revenues of certain classes of employees along with the large number of unemployed women since 1989 are behind the drop in the number of enrolments in kindergartens:
 - While in 1989/1990, 63% of three to six year olds were enrolled in kindergartens, in 1993/1994, enrolments had dropped to 53% and the occupancy rate had shrunk to 94%. In 1994/1995 demand was picking up: the 715.5 thousand enrolments increased the participation in pre-school education to 55.2%.
 - Girls have maintained a slight advantage in education participation among three to six year olds over time; for 1996/1997, the female participation rate for this age group was 66.2% and the male rate 64.8%.

Evolution of the number of pupils in pre-school education

Levels	1989/ 1990	1990/ 1991	1991/ 1992	1992/ 1993	1993/ 1994	1994/ 1995	1995/ 1996	1996 1997	1997/ 1998
Total	5410.2	4873.2	4590.2	4429.2	4319.2	4339.0	4365.4	4317.2	4643.0
Pre-school	835.9	752.1	742.2	752.2	712.1	715.5	697.9	659.2	623.6

Curriculum

The pre-school education curriculum intends to:

- Encourage autonomy;
- Learn and use language correctly;
- Acquire knowledge regarding the natural and social environment;
- Acquire the ability to work with numbers;
- Develop creativity, flexibility, imagination;
- Develop abilities in sports and arts.

Official textbooks do not exist for this level of education and local authorities and individual schools have greater freedom in selection of instructional materials than in the case for compulsory education.

Organization and structure

The normal program for a pre-school is four to five hours classes in the morning (regular attendance); long program (prolonged attendance - eight to nine hours) and weekly programs (five days per week) exist with the provision that only 50% of the costs of meals and maintenance is paid by the state;

The structure of school year parallels that of compulsory education; there are three individual terms and a summer holiday; winter and spring vacations are also organised to coincide with Christmas and Easter, respectively.

Final considerations

Taking again into consideration the fact:

- that the school destiny of a child is largely determined by the first years of schooling,
- that pre-school education is particularly important for developing motivation to learn and a positive attitude towards schooling and citizenship,

the Ministry of National Education took the decision to focus again the attention of specialists, researchers, teachers on this level of education. That is why, a Programme on "Pre-primary Education in Romania" has been recently launched. It intends to refine pre-school education in Romania, involving in this on going process all the interested actors such as local authorities, different institutions (e.g., UNICEF), non governmental organizations, etc.

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Family education programme in Romania

The Family Education programme includes two projects:

- Project 1; Early Childhood Care and Development
- Project 2: Community Development for Strengthening of the Family

The Early Childhood care and Development Project is composed of three subprojects:

1. Pre-school education
2. Parent education
3. Child participation

The Community Development for the Strengthening of the Family Project is composed of subprojects:

1. Capacity Building for "agents of change"
2. Roma Community Education and Development

The Family Education Programme has three final objectives:

1. To strengthen the capacity and confidence of families to provide the best environment for raising children in accordance with their needs and rights.
2. To build-up local human resources to support parents and to improve community based care, education and protection services for children and families.
3. To encourage communication, cooperation and networking at community level in order to define local problems and priorities, to mobilize and develop local resources and to strengthen community based services for children and families.

Each of these objectives will be realized through a series of operational objectives corresponding to the subprojects that build-up the Programme.

Operational Objectives

Early Childhood Care and Development Project

Preschool education subproject

- To maintain / improve the access of the preschool children in rural areas to kindergarten education;
- To initiate and develop day care services for children from 0 to 3 years of age in rural areas and Roma communities;
- To promote child centered methodologies in preschool education;
- To introduce into preschool education content new subjects such as: peace, tolerance, participation,
- To promote local production of educational manuals for preschool education based on the utilization of local resources;
- To support local in-service training programmes for kindergarten teachers based on children rights, early stimulation and individualization of preschool education;
- To support production and dissemination of professional literature for kindergarten teachers and Pedagogy College teachers,
- To support initiation of an information communication network between kindergarten teachers from various counties (judete);

- To support access of rural kindergarten teachers to updated psychopedagogical information and early childhood education methodologies through initiation of Regional Methodological Centers for Preschool Education in 5 pilot counties;
- To involve local authorities and NGOs in supporting rural kindergartens and daycare centers,
- To increase the access of Roma preschool age children to day care centers and kindergartens.

Parent Education sub-project

- To empower parents in rural areas and Roma communities to participate actively in their children's education and care ;
- To support the creation of Parent Associations and rural parent groups as partners of kindergartens and protection services for children in applying the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Initiation and development of Resource Centers for Parents in rural areas and Roma communities;
- Production and dissemination of printed and video education materials for parents.

Child Participation in Family Life sub-project

- To initiate cooperation of local "agents of change" in promoting child participation in family, school and community life,
- To strengthen capacity of local libraries and Culture Centers to organize activities for the promotion of child participation in family life.

Community Development for Family Strengthening Project

- To build-up community capacity to assess situation of children and families, to find local solutions, monitor and evaluate the progress;
- To build community capacity to fundraise and attract local donors for projects in favor of children and families;
- To strengthen municipalities' capacity to solve local problems of children and families,
- To develop a communication network between Social Work Departments in Universities, mayors and social workers working in rural areas;
- To strengthen social work practicum in rural and Roma communities,
- To strengthen community nursing in rural areas and Roma communities;
- To improve knowledge, attitudes and practices of Roma families related to child care, health and education.

Capacity building for "agents of change" sub-project

- To contribute to the development of local in-service training of "agents of change";
- To strengthen local capacity for production of information materials needed for training and in-service training of teachers, nurses, social workers.

Training for HIV/AIDS prevention in rural areas

- To build a communication network between urban and rural teams of trainers for HIV/AIDS prevention;
- To train children trainers for HIV/AIDS prevention in rural areas and Roma communities;
- To elaborate a KAP study on adolescents and young couples regarding HIV/AIDS prevention.

Roma Community Education and development sub-project

- To assess the situation of children and families in Roma communities.
- To develop a model of cooperation between local authorities, kindergartens and primary schools, dispensaries, NGOs, church, and the private sector for improving pre-school and primary school education for children in Roma communities;
- To improve adult and youth education in Roma communities;
- To strengthen Roma community capacity for self-help and education.

The development of communication networks and skills is necessary in order to:

- support the local elaboration of information and education materials on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, child health and social development for children and parents;
- elaborate printed and video information and education materials on child protection services in the community, how to access health, education and protection services for children and how to mobilize private sector for supporting community development;
- improve communication skills of the community's "agents of change",
- develop local mass-media programmes for the promotion of children's rights, education for health, promotion of Facts for Life, HIV/AIDS prevention;
- support the development of local NGOs aiming to contribute to the empowerment of families and the promotion of cooperation between local governmental and non-governmental agencies;

UNICEF will provide technical assistance and material support to governmental and non-governmental agencies towards the strengthening the family and community for the prevention of the institutionalization of children. UNICEF will coordinate with other UN agencies in order to build models of excellence addressing the education as well as the infrastructure needed for ensuring the sustainability of the proposed solutions. Cooperation with the World Bank is essential. The flexibility of the programme will ensure the possibility to include new local initiatives and to benefit from the creativity of the local teams.

An intersectoral approach will be adopted in order to elaborate a global strategy and gain local experience that can be offered to the policy and decision making bodies for consideration in the elaboration of the national programmes for family support and prevention of the institutionalization of children.

Problems being addressed

They can be divided in the following categories for each subproject:

Pre-school education

- Awareness of parents and teachers that early childhood care and development is the basis for the entire development of the child and influences fundamentally the future life of the adult;
- Education and care services in rural areas for children between 0 and 3 years;
- Number of kindergartens and number of children attending preschool education in rural areas;
- Access to early childhood care and education of children from Roma communities, low income families, hospitalized children for long periods of time and HIV/AIDS infected children;
- Number of trained kindergarten teachers working in rural areas,

- Training and in-service training programmes for educational and medical professionals to work with 0-3 years old children;
- Educational materials for kindergartens influence negatively the quality of the education as well as the motivation of teachers;
- Sustainability of the proposed solutions is influenced among others, by the initiation of local production of educational materials for preschool education.

Parent Education

- Access and quality of early childhood care and development is negatively influenced by the absence of knowledge of parents and lack of pertinent information addressed to them concerning this period of child life;
- Interest of mass-media in disseminating information about children's rights, preventable diseases, nutrition, early stimulation, participation, etc is one of the factors that contributes to the low level of parents' knowledge about child raising and implicitly to the maintaining of their attitude in favor of child institutionalization.

Child Participation in Family Life

- Authoritarian way of educating children in school and in the family makes child participation a new concept that is usually superficially understood and practiced.
- Child participation as a partner, whenever is possible, in the decision making process related to his/her life is really practiced due to the lack of deeper understanding of the psychopedagogical and social aspects of it and, also, to the lack of experience and skills of teachers and parents necessary to put it in practice.

Community Development for Family Strengthening

- Community as an entity that is aware of its identity and power to address and solve problems of a general interest for its members is still non-existent. A group of people is necessary to start at local level projects that will involve gradually the most relevant members of the community and will recognize the good achievements of the community efforts. The sustainability of any solutions depends upon the capacity of the community to support morally and financially the changes in family and community life.
- Communication between community members needs to be supported and periodical events benefiting children and families will result in strengthening the cohesiveness and preoccupation for improving the quality of life of children and families.
- Municipality, school and church are important factors of change that need to communicate and cooperate better in initiating common projects.
- Capacity of the community to assess the problems, share the information about community needs and resources participate in activities of common interest and evaluate the progress needs to be built.
- Involvement of the private sector is important for ensuring the sustainability of solutions, especially in rural areas.

Roma Community Development

- Number of Roma children attending kindergarten and school.
- Poverty, unemployment, low level of education and hygiene. This is why a large number of children in institutions are coming from Roma families that consider that the institution offers better conditions for children's development than their own families.

- Lack of early childhood education of children in Roma communities, lack of clothes, shoes, food and reduced level of understanding and speaking Romanian reduces their access to kindergartens and schools.
- Living conditions in some Roma communities (lack of running water, sanitation, proper housing and hygiene) contribute to a high level of morbidity. The most frequent diseases are tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, parasitosis and diarrhea.

Activities for 2000 - 2004 for Early Childhood Care and Development

- Providing technical assistance for Early Childhood Care and Development;
- Training of trainers for preschool education in rural pilot centers in all districts of the country;
- In-service training of kindergarten teachers in pilot centers;
- Elaborating and printing of a Preschool Teacher's Guide;
- Translation and printing of relevant publications on child development;
- Provide training for mayors, nurses, social workers and NGO representatives on child care and development and children's rights;
- Elaborate and print materials on children rights, child health, care and development;
- Provide necessary supplies for pilot kindergartens.
- Organize experience exchange visits between pilot sites
- Initiate Resource Centers for Parents in pilot kindergartens.
- Initiate Regional Methodological Centers for preschool education in-service training,
- Organize regional meetings for kindergarten teachers.
- Develop curriculum for preschool education;
- Print a handbook for in-service training of kindergarten teachers;
- Design a monitoring system for pilot centers;
- Yearly evaluation of the progress in pilot centers;
- Provide training and support for the production of educational materials for kindergartens
- Offer to the Ministry of Education and to local School Inspectorates a strategy and materials for improving the access and quality of preschool education in rural areas.

Lessons learnt in 1999

The most important lessons learnt in 1999, having direct connection with the development of a sustainable strategy in 2000-2004 are related to human, financial and informational resources at national and local level.

Human resources in the governmental educational agencies need updated training courses on methodology, content and research data about child development, health and protection. In rural areas the lack of professional literature and poor communication between rural and urban areas make difficult the improvement of quality of preschool education unless externally financed programmes are initiated.

Training courses for kindergarten teachers are very well received and evaluations at the end of every series of courses showed that besides improvement of knowledge the kindergarten teachers' motivation started to change.

The initiation of resource centers for dissemination of information and models of excellence was very much recommended by kindergarten teachers and preschool inspectors.

Training courses for mayors in rural areas on children's rights, education and protection, project design and management, accessing funding agencies and developing partnerships with local NGOs were considered very useful.

Building interdisciplinary teams at local level contributes to the development of communication and cooperation between agents of change and to finding and developing local resources for children and families' education.

Involvement of nurses and social workers in projects aiming at the improvement of kindergarten children open communication channels between education, health and protection services and families, especially in small urban and rural areas. This facilitates an intersectoral approach of children and families in the context of decentralization of budget and decisions.

Financial resources at local level are very low and the development of fundraising and income generation projects especially in rural areas and Roma communities is necessary. Lack of minimum communication equipment in small towns and rural areas make difficult the implementation and development of projects. Consequently, the first step is to provide the minimum of equipment necessary for starting the projects in rural areas and to disseminate information in Romanian. Development of local Radio and TV programs helps a lot the mobilization of local resources for the benefit of children and families. Whenever a meal can be offered to children from poor and Roma families in kindergarten and primary school the attendance raises considerably and parents cooperate with teachers for the benefit of the kindergarten or school.

Informational resources at national and local level need to be strengthened. Information does not reach professionals, parents and children in small towns and villages due to the lack of printed and audio-visual materials in Romanian, accessible from the point of view of language, structure, quantity of information, relationship between verbal and non-verbal messages. The cooperation of national and local Radio and Television is essential, but is limited by the costs.

Situation of preschool aged children in the Slovak Republic

Zita Baduríková

I. Changes in the situation of children and families

Changes in the situation of children and families during last 10 years were often very dramatic and can be characterized above all through:

1. economical changes, which brought an increasing of the unemployment (above all women unemployment), decreasing of family income under 70 % comparing with the year 1989, concentration most of the family about lower financial groups. The number of children is one of the factors decreasing the living level of the family,
2. one of the results of the high unemployment is that many children stay without one of the parent for a longer time, usually fathers use to find the work far from home or abroad,
3. parents spend less time with their children,
4. the birth rate is dropping,
5. the number of children in kindergartens is about 20 % lower than 10 years ago - as a result of the years 1991-1993, when almost 30 % of all kindergartens were closed,
6. kindergartens are not free of charge, parents pay fees for children under 5 years of age,
7. the government, as before, offers some financial support for families with children through children benefits according to the family income, or parent contribution when mother stays at home and takes care of the child until the age of 3.

II. Biggest problems

As biggest problems in the situation of the children can be seen the quality of care:

- insufficient social work with the families in crisis, (until now local offices are not obligated to devote to this families), and low status of the social workers,
- the number of problem families with preschool aged children increases, people were not ready to deal with the situation of unemployment and often even if parents do not work, they do not take care of the children,
- public opinion concerning preschool education does not respond to the importance of this age for the future personal development and the life of the person,
- verbal declaration of the importance of preschool education of the politicians does not continue in concrete steps (we can say that perhaps we are not noisy enough and politicians react to noise, not to the arguments),
- preschool education of Roma children.

III. Concerns in connection with ECCD

- Protection of preschool aged children. For older children there are functioning several types of help, like phone lines, but preschoolers are not able to use these tools and cannot protect themselves,
- Children from poorest families and from families with very low sociocultural level usually do not attend kindergarten and are not ready for school attendance. At school they are disadvantaged comparing with the others and fail more often than children well prepared to enroll in school,
- there is a need of an act on social-legal defense of children,

- there is a lack of places in kindergartens for all children,
- we did not succeed in getting Roma children to the kindergartens. Often they start to attend primary school without basic social, cultural and hygienic skills, even their knowledge of the language is not sufficient,
- lack of systematic work with mothers who are taking care of their children at home,
- many qualified teachers are leaving kindergartens and look for better paid jobs.

IV. Achievements

- diversification of the kindergartens. There are public kindergartens (3307), private kindergartens (14) and kindergartens affiliated to the churches (5). Religious and public kindergartens are financed by the state budget,
- stabilization of the network of kindergartens during last 5 years, during last years few new kindergartens have been opened,
- kindergartens with minorities languages as languages of instruction. We have 2912 kindergartens with Slovak language, 275 with Hungarian, 14 with Ukrainian, 1 German, 102 bilingual Slovak and Hungarian and 3 with Slovak and Ukrainian language of instruction,
- reduction of the fees in kindergartens compared with 1994. Kindergarten is free for children older than 5 years and for children not ready for school and on the basis of the recommendation of the psychologist or the doctor who will enroll in primary school a year later,
- innovation of the kindergarten curriculum,
- kindergartens have more space for their own initiatives, offer children and parents additional activities (art activities, foreign language and so on),
- several universities again offer courses on preschool education, so there is an opportunity to enroll in university education in the field of Preschool education,
- the regulation on kindergartens reduced the number of children per class to 20-25 (according to the age), allows for the integration of children with special needs (max. 5 in one class), reduced the teacher work time with children to 28 hours a week.

V. Services for children and families

- after 1989 nearly all day care centers for children from 6 months to 3 years of age were closed, now there are day care centers usually in bigger towns, financed by local authorities,
- kindergartens serve children from 2 to 6 years of age. Kindergartens can be organized as half or full day attendance, weekly kindergartens and kindergartens with permanent time of work,
- special kindergartens for special needs children, special classes in regular kindergartens, integrated classes,
- integration center for children,
- pedago-psychological consultancy center,
- kindergartens in hospitals or in spas for long term ill children,
- care of refugee children - there are functioning kindergartens in refugee camps, or refugee children attend local kindergarten.

VI. New initiatives are usually regional

- the Ministry of Education started to elaborate a new conception of preschool care and education, as a part of complex conception of education in the Slovak Republic,

- professional associations of kindergarten teachers like OMEP and the Association for preschool education offer a lot of local initiatives for children, parents and teachers,
- foundations or citizens' associations show also a lot of support, for example the association „Comeback“ supports guardian families, „Pro Familia“ helps to place Roma children into substitute Roma families; „Slovak hope for children“ is an association serving children at risk; Wide open school is a foundation working in favor of children, families and teachers and running programs supporting the education of Roma children.
- several kindergartens have initiated the implementation of the Step by Step program in kindergartens and primary classes.
- Associations of parents of disabled children are established for mutual help and support of these families.

VII. Legislation

The Slovak Republic ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- The main acts protecting children's rights are the Act on the school institution, the School act, the Constitution. According to the Constitution the education in primary and secondary schools is free, but not in kindergartens, even for example universities are free of charge too. Family law names the rights and duties of the parents, and concerns the adoption of children,
- until now the Slovak Republic did not ratify the Hague Convention on the protection of the children and cooperation in international adoptions (1993), but plans to do it, so it has already started preparatory work to ratify the European convention on the administration of children rights (1996),
- there is a need of ombudsman for children,
- the right to health care is assured through obligatory health insurance, however there has been a decrease of the number of pediatricians and nurses for children. Past practices, when pediatricians had to visit kindergartens and to follow the healthy development of children, have changed and the health care of children now belongs to the parents.
- If we take into account the quality of nutrition as a result of decline in living standards, we can speak of a risk, in particular for children from the lower classes, where parents do not pay attention to the healthy development of children.

VIII. System for looking after children taken out of the family, or having lost their family

- According to our laws a child can be taken out of the family after a judicial decision. The care of this child falls under the competencies of the Ministry of labor, social affairs and the family. Children taken out of the family or having lost their family can be placed into:
 - a/ children homes, orphanages
 - b/ institutions of social care,
 - c/ so called supplementary family care,
 - d/ guardian care,
 - e/ professional supplementary family.
 - f/ adoption (adoption is very long and complicated process.)

IX. Special needs children

Special needs children can be educated at home or in specialized institutions. Preschool aged children can attend regular kindergartens, or special kindergartens, or special classes in regular kindergartens. In case of parents taking care of a severely disabled child, some financial support is provided. When special needs children can be integrated

and educated together with other children, it decreases their number in specialized institutions. Parents can decide which type of education to give their disabled child.

There are working self-supporting groups or associations of parents with disabled children, but there is a lack of consultation centers for parents, as not all teachers are qualified for work with special needs children. Government will support the integration of special needs children during next 10-15 years.

X. Sharing and publishing good experiences, comparative research on the development of young children, analysis of special areas of interest (how to work with Roma families, social work with families at risk, lobbying in favor of children, pressure groups and so on).

Early Childhood Care and Development in Ukraine

Lydia Derkach

It is well-known all over the world that children are the future of a nation, perspectives of its economic, social and demographic development. At the same time we realize that children are the least protected part of the population in the world of adults.

Accepting the priority of children's interests and the role of the younger generation for ensuring survival and prosperity of mankind, Ukraine signed the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1991. The realization of these rights demands goal-oriented actions on the part of the Ukrainian State in order to create favourable conditions for children's development.

Biggest problems concerning the early childhood situation in Ukraine

Since 1991 when Ukraine gained its independence, it has been involved in organizational transformations under the banner of quality change for the third millennium. However a severe crisis broke out in all spheres of Ukrainian life and involves all sections and strata of society. Early Childhood Development in Ukraine is still recovering from the country's past political system and continues to mirror the present-day obstacles. It results, first of all, in a severe neglect of the needs of young children. The catastrophic low levels of living standards of the majority of the population in Ukraine created a situation where the slogan «The best - for our children» could not be made a reality. Firstly, the situation was typical of a society where social forms of wealth redistribution were destroyed. The collapse of the early childhood care and development, health care, and education systems immediately resulted in the decline of the family's income. The lowest level of family income in Ukraine since 1917 was possible because of chronic unemployment either of one or both parents who lost their job(s). Also one more tendency became evident and the population was not accustomed to it: wage and salary freeze. Workers of the governmental sector such as medical workers, teachers, students, pensioners could not get their wages monthly: delays in getting salaries, stipends and pensions were approximately from 6 to 9 months. Thus, a very low level of living standards crucially influenced the quality of life in general. Secondly, the ecological situation has deteriorated, which is dangerous for a developing organism in the course of its ontogenetic development. The percentage of children at risk who live in the streets, escaped from their homes though their parents are alive, is also one of the striking features of the Ukrainian life at present. The numbers of child-beggars, criminals, drug-sellers, robbers, prostitutes is rapidly growing from day to day. Life and value orientations as well as beliefs in the future were also ruined and deformed.

Looking at the current situation in Ukraine, it is of vital importance to analyze the early childhood situation in order to elaborate and implement urgent actions to assist and facilitate the care and development of Ukrainian young children in collaboration with scientists, educationalists, governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Economic and demographic situation

The contemporary state of economy is characterized by a rapid decline in the sphere of production. The economic crisis which Ukraine is undergoing now has created a so called informal, «shadow economy». It is impossible to define its real scale but according to the National Bank of Ukraine approximately 35% of money does not circulate through bank establishments. Moreover, the decline in a legal sector of economy and the absence of control in a non-governmental sphere create many obstacles in providing the state budget with financing and, consequently, financing the social sphere. It destroyed the system of health care and education, sharpened the demographic situation which is characterized by a decline in birth rate, a rise in mortality rate and changes in population as well.

Let's have a look at some statistical data characterizing the above mentioned issues on the example of one of the largest districts of Ukraine - Pridneprovsk Region.

Demographic situation in the Pridneprovsk Region

Index on 1000 people	1996	1997	1998
Mortality	15,7	15,5	14,8
Birth-rate	7,9	7,7	7,5

Age structure of children who died during their first year of life

	From 0 to 6 days	148 children	40.3%
Age	From 7 to 28 days	50 children	13.6%
	From 29 days to a year	169 children	46.9%

According to data obtained on January 1 1999, there are 200950 children in the Pridneprovsk Region who live in extremely difficult conditions including:

▪ orphans and children deprived of parents care	9 708
▪ disabled children	9 571
▪ Chernobyl children	7 625
▪ children from families with many children	79 654
▪ children from unsuccessful families	20 362
▪ children from low-income families	165 834
▪ children who reside in childrens' homes	438
▪ children who reside in childrens' homes of a family type	143
▪ adopted children	203

It is also a very peculiar situation for Ukrainian families when either one of the parents or both do not have constant jobs. Parents desperately look for any kind of jobs. Earlier, parents were guaranteed the right to a job. Nowadays most of their energies are channeled to earning money. Children are little paid attention to. The career development of parents, their organizational success or failure becomes of topical interest to families. And, consequently, a child does not attend a kindergarten as the parents cannot afford paying for it. A child is not prepared properly for preschool activities at home, with the help of parents. They are left at homes either alone or with their grandparents while parents are in search of work. As a result, there are growing numbers of pre-school children at risk.

Demographic portrait of children at risk

The research conducted by scientists of Dnepropetrovsk State University and Regional Officers was aimed at investigating socio-psychological reasons for neglected children; factors, conditions, reasons that make children escape from their parents; to evaluate value and life orientations of homeless children; to define the level of alcoholism, drug and smoking dependence. As the experimental data shows, the major reason of homelessness is the structural and functional crisis in the family. Unemployment, hunger, immigration processes are also among the reasons of increasing numbers of neglected children. As a result children at risk prefer to leave their families and to live with street children communities.

Socio-economic reasons are connected with the worsening of the family climate (26%); the harsh attitude of parents (20%); the lost of one of the parents (2%); divorces and conflicts between people. Psychological reasons of vagrancy are attributed to the necessity of wandering (10%); living in unfavourable conditions, that is, cruelty on the

part of adults (62%). In 1998, 868 children at risk were arrested, among them 427 tramps, 194 beggars and 104 who violated social norms.

Structural and functional bankruptcy of Ukrainian families

Among 50 children at risk, 25 have both parents alive, only 30% have a mother, and 2% a father. The children in the study responded that 58% live with their parents, 8% with immediate and distant relatives, 18% in orphan homes, and 16% wherever possible. Other results showed that:

- 39% of the children smoked from the age of 5;
- 36% at the age of 11;
- 48% started to use alcohol at the age of 5;
- 28% at the age of 11;
- 165 do not remember when they used alcohol for the first time;
- 8% did not use it at all;
- 24% constantly use drugs.

Life and value orientations

Every child irrespective of his/her social status dreams. But the dreams of homeless children are of a specific nature. Children between 6 and 8 dreamt about:

- not returning to a boarding school (16%);
- having a lot of money (14%);
- being a wealthy person (10%);
- becoming a grown-up as soon as possible (10%);
- acquiring a good profession (lawyer, driver, football player) (6%);
- returning home (4%);
- having a private car (4%).

At the same time, the children observed believed their major life orientation to be:

- 80% -family;
- 70% -health;
- 60%- money;
- 32% - peaceful life without wars;
- 30% - work.

Concerning value orientations, children point out to the role of friends in their life has the most important; delicious food (22%); a merry life (16%); having a car (8%); and a desire to learn (10%).

Kinds of services that exist for young children and their families

The most effective form of child care in the Pridneprovsk Region, as the experiment proved, is a continuous form of education which is provided by the following scheme: a Kindergarten - Primary School.

At present, there are 30 establishments of this type, 5 of which are of non-governmental. Parallel to that, 350 regional kindergartens function as kindergartens of the humanitarian, aesthetic, care-sanitary, etc. profiles. Services which are rendered here include: psychological counseling; physical education; services of a defectologist and other specialists. It is worth mentioning that in 1997 148 kindergartens were closed because the number of children attending them rapidly declined. In 1998, 54 were not functioning and during the first half of 1999, 9. The total number of kindergartens in the

region is 1209. At present 60% of the parents are not able to pay for the kindergarten services because of:

- lack of money
- unemployment
- lack of necessary clothes for children to attend the establishment
- the large sum of money to be paid for services provided in the kindergarten (such as, English classes; ballet-classes; painting-classes, etc).

To improve the situation, Regional Officers have done the following:

- 30% of governmental budget are transferred monthly
- a number of pre-schoolers are attending kindergartens free of charge, staying there from 2 to 4 hours
- a reduced kindergarten fee for those parents who have more than one child.

At present, the quality of nutrition in pre-school establishments is not balanced, deprived of a proper balance of vegetables, fruits, meat and fish as well as dairy products, except in the non-governmental kindergartens.

Annually 40 infants are left by their mothers at the «House of a New-Born» where children are brought up till the age of 3. Then, they are transferred to «Nursery Pre-school Houses» which are mainly for children with special needs, with disabilities, intellectually retarded children, etc. In the city of Dnepropetrovsk, for example, there are 11 Municipal Nursery Houses where children live till the age of 7.

Another feature of contemporary Ukraine is the appearance of Orphanage Houses. The total number of them in the Pridneprovsk Region is 13. Children at risk who are living in poverty in the streets and experiencing deprivation, have restricted services, bad housing or no housing at all can stay there for 3 to 9 months. Moreover, children who have been taken out of their families or who have lost their families and became beggars, robbers are also among the children residing in these orphanages. Major pre-school services including school-based monitoring of children's health need to be revitalized and improved. Besides, adequate nutrition, stimulation and care also need to be introduced.

New initiatives concerning young children and their families

One positive change in the work carried out with children at risk is the creation of Orphanage Houses of the Family, numbering 9 in the Region. Home-based care-givers are generally married couples who have no kids of their own, and adopt from 5 to 18 children. They help them to develop a positive self-image, to be resourceful and curious about learning, to maintain spontaneity and creativity. There is an urgent need in developing innovative strategies of family education for parents in such families in order to make child protection the concern not only of parents but also of all social organizations involved. This needs to be supplemented by the provision of facilities to allow mothers to identify problems related to health, nutrition, environmental sanitation, vocational training, income generation and cultural activities.

Encouraging the development of this type of family protection houses based on knowledge, values and skills reflecting a growing understanding of child protection work in its various forms must be established as a priority in comparison with traditional Orphanage Houses. Parents are persuaded that the simplest thing they can do is to allow the child to discover the richness of family life.

Family education programmes

Quality education of parents and especially teenage parents having early pregnancies is provided via Parent Education Courses, community meetings, home visits, workshops, self-study groups, follow-up activities aimed at improving the quality of family life and family interactions. Psychologists convince parents to learn to read their child's temperament like a new language. Qualitative data analysis prove that parents after a

short period of training seem to express more love, praise and encouragement for their children. It also demonstrates that mothers show a healthier self-confidence and have an improved opinion of themselves under unbearable conditions of unemployment, stagnation, socio-economic instability. Moreover, they have better relationships with their husbands, both attempting to generate a climate of positive emotions.

The main idea of family education programmes is to develop the concept of social solidarity between care-givers and their off-springs. Such programmes as «Children of Ukraine», «Children of Dnepropetrovsk Region», «A kiddy», «A child», «A pre-school child», «A gifted child», «A child that does not attend a kindergarten», «Pre-school education», «A village school», «Social defense of pre-schoolers», «Primary school», are aimed at implementing student-centered activities in the process of education and upbringing, all-round harmony development of the pre-schooler, taking into consideration the sensitive periods of personality formation, transition from pre-school to primary education.

Special needs children

Concrete services for children with special needs and disabled children are provided at the Centre of Social Services for Youth. The major goal of the Program «Borisphen» (1996-2000) is aimed at the psychological adaptation and the health-cultural rehabilitation of young people. Furthermore, early intervention is considered to be particularly beneficial for disabled children. Thus, the Program provides greater physical and intellectual stimulation for children with difficulties. It also helps to give support for parents to overcome practical obstacles. Very popular with these children are «Festivals of creative works»; Intellectual-Cognitive games such as «Welcome, erudite!», visits to the theater, Christmas gatherings, summer health camps.

Conclusion

Early childhood in Ukraine attempts to put forward appropriate and collaborative development models. Its major concern is to protect and preserve health, care, intellectual, cultural and social development of young children, disabled and children at risk. Regional officers of social services work extensively and fruitfully on the improvement of existing patterns of children-rearing and care. They also promote alternative approaches to education of pre-schoolers by encouraging innovative technologies in teaching and upbringing. But too often Ukrainian health and development workers feel isolated or marginalized. Very often they lack resources to work effectively at the local level. What matters is that Regional Social Services work according to well-established and direct objectives which are grounded on a rich experience of field-workers. Communication and exchange of information within the Region is carried out by producing posters, audio-visual teaching aids, a regional newsletter. In order to promote community awareness and participation much work is done focusing on working with parents.

The capacity of services for young children in Ukraine is still rather limited and requires much better financing from various sectors, both national and international. The work being done represents a unique partnership that can contribute to the future planning of policy and provision for young children in Ukraine in the third millennium.

Suggestions for the future: planning for the ECCD Network

1. Joint efforts of ECCD networks, based on fruitful ideas might result in cross-cultural research, including: "The effects of play and learning activities on the psychological and social development of young school children at risk" Thus, intelligence, perceptual and motor maturation, self-esteem and self-control, motivation, plans and expectations for future, family interactions and schooling are to be addressed. We predict that both social and psychological variables will show positive changes.

2. A range of studies should be undertaken to provide qualitative data in such areas as the psycho-social needs of sick children and the impact on family life of long-term caring for a sick child.
3. Of utmost importance for Ukraine because of Chernobyl effect is the research of the impact of poor socio-economic conditions on the access to health services of children from birth to 6 years of age.
4. Of crucial importance is the investigation of facilities and provision of them in the community and workplace for breast-feeding over a longer period of time.
5. Health education and its promotion for children at risk.
6. There is an urgent need for research in Ukraine to be conducted on the problem of non-attendance (why? and how? the current educational system is failing them) at schools by young children from not wealthy families .
7. As a matter of urgency the research should be conducted into the impact of direct deductions to benefits for earnings from families with dependent children.
8. The Programmes aimed at preparation of trainers committed to the workplace and organizational success with disabled young children is required.
9. Distance education and its impact on personality development of children with special needs.

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All-Ukrainian NGO «Our children»

Vadim Georgienko

The All-Ukrainian NGO «Our children» has been working for the past 10 years on issues and problems concerning the development of children. It unites about 12500 children and parents from such cities as Kiev, Odessa, Dnepropetrovsk, Lviv, Odessa, Harkov and others. It is very important, that such international organizations, as UNICEF, Save the Children, UNESCO and the experts of various countries aspire to attract attention to the idea of that preschool education is really a problem of vital importance, and, to convince all of the necessity to show the appropriate purposefulness and ingenuity in the development of even more effective forms of activities in this area.

This is of significance for the Ukrainian society, which is in the initial stages of constructing a democratic state. Ukraine holds the 118th place in the world for under-5 mortality rate. Mortality of children in this age group is a result of many factors, including dissemination of knowledge about balanced meals and health measures among mothers and children, level of immunization, availability of obstetric-gynaecologic and pediatric services, access to pure water, general safety of children's environment. In 1997, 2 655 000 children under 5 lived in Ukraine. In relation with the economically unstable situation in Ukraine during the last 10 years, there has been a constant decrease in birth rates (1970 - 15 %, 1997 - 10 %). All this testifies that the question, related to the development and care of preschool children, should become a main priority in Ukraine.

The first years of a child's life are very important and, taking into consideration this fact, broaden the unity of points of view, that the care of children and bringing them up are inseparable: it is impossible to look after a child correctly, without bringing him up, and it is impossible to bring him up without good care. Now it is impossible to exclude the early years from what is covered by the concept of "education". In such industrial countries, as Belgium, Denmark, Italy and France, 80 % of children aged 3 attend different preschool establishments. In Thailand and Tobago 60 % of children aged 4 attend nursery schools, organized by voluntary services at the request of the government. In comparison, in Odessa, a large industrial, cultural and resort city of Ukraine, with a population of about 1,5 million people, only 41 % of children (43 902) attend 163 preschool establishments: 110 urban and 53 departmental. Also, 12 preschool establishments, which work on non-conventional programs (parent school, school of physical training, program «step by step», program of valeology, program of Walfdorf pedagogics, intellectual-aesthetic direction, program of Montessori, program of Efimenko), function in Odessa. 60-70 % of the traditional preschool establishments have additional services in the form of extension programs (drawing, dance, English). There are also 2 specialized nursery schools: a Jewish nursery school and the Bavarian House, where children study German and German culture.

As shown in the example from Odessa, in Ukraine there is a large variety of programs and technologies at regional and local levels, and also a plenty of different innovative programs. The main difficulty with reforms is connected with the fact that till 1991 all preschool establishments of Ukraine worked under a common educational program, which included a lot of sections: intellectual, moral, physical, aesthetic education, development of speech, mathematical submissions. Methodological recommendations, calendar plans of studies, detailed abstracts of realization of each study, all these efforts were worked out to help program performance. The strict following of all these instructions was required from the educator.

The main parameter of quality of work was the volume of knowledge and skills, which children should demonstrate during various inspection checks (for example, knowledge by children of the certain quantity of verses, stories, skill to count within the limits of ten). Thus, the system of preparation of the pedagogical staff was accordingly organized: in teachers' training schools and high schools students were taught how to realize the given program. Therefore, the reform of preschool education system must be connected, first of all, with a change of professional consciousness of teachers, retraining of staff, especially nowadays, when the social security for teachers-educators is not provided. Besides, the number of children's preschool establishments has decreased, and the fees for children attending them have increased for the last 5 years.

As education covers not only cognitive needs of children, but also physical, social, emotional, ethical and spiritual development, in Ukraine, recently, attention has focussed on the significance of the psychological comfort of a child. Very often psychological discomfort arises as a result of frustration of children's needs. For example there is a well known phenomenon of deprivation, when a baby is deprived of parental attention and care, that a delay in its mental and physical development is observed. For the last 10 years Ukrainian physicians and psychologists notice more often the psychosomatic and psychological frustrations of children. According to studies, situations of increased risk are the reason: situations connected with absence or loss of security (hostile, severe

family, emotionally rejecting family, inharmonious family (breaking or broken up), excessively requiring family, occurrence of a new member of family (stepfather, stepmother, brother, sister)), alcohol dependence of the parents, alien environment behind frameworks of family - rejection by collective, teacher, change of children's collective, change of a residence. Such situations, with a high influence on mental development, are capable of disturbing the social adaptation of a child seriously, and of deforming deeply its mentality. Thus, special preventive measures, directed to the prevention of psychosomatic diseases, to the creation of an atmosphere of psychological comfort for children, are necessary. But currently there are not enough psychologists, who could assist with the psychological development of the child, and family education.

Summarizing, it is possible to say that the important period in the development of all persons is the period before reaching the age of eight years. At that time children enter into public life outside of their family and learn themselves to become members of society. Until the end of this period, children form concepts about themselves, about social values, and they accept that certain important decisions depend on own's personal abilities and dignity. Their behavior in the future will always be linked with their feelings about themselves and about what they would like to become; this imposes a special responsibility on all those who are involved in the development of children during that period of life.

Transforming early childhood practices in Yugoslavia

Mirjana Pesic

Summary

The following presents nearly 20 years of systematic efforts to transform early childhood education practices, from traditional, adult-centered and "transmission of knowledge" pedagogy into a child-centered, open education and "interactive pedagogy".

The story begins with an earlier attempt to change the 'too school-like' preschool education by introducing new curriculum guidelines (a new official preschool program, i.e. "Program guidelines" were introduced in 1976.) and an evaluation study that followed three years later. The study proved that only the rhetoric was changed in accordance with the new guidelines, while the practices remained the same. It was obvious that only school-based, participatory research that would involve teachers could bring about the real educational reform.

In the next period (during the '80s), the Institute for pedagogy organized three action research studies, dealing with curriculum development and parental participation. They included over 40 practitioners from several preschools, lasted 3 to 6 years each, and led to the transformation of educational practices, opening up of preschool institutions and teachers professional development. One of those studies was followed by the "Dissemination of action research" project, involving new groups of teachers and pedagogues in action-research activities for transforming educational practices in kindergartens.

New Program guidelines, consisting of two models (Model A - based on the open education philosophy and Model B, a more traditional type of program orientation) were introduced in 1996 and offered teachers as a choice. Model A was developed following the experiences and results of the above-mentioned action-research studies and three years of pilot testing of the Program. A series of in-service training through workshop seminars is organized for teachers following Model A. Finally, a postgraduate degree program in Curriculum Development and Evaluation was offered to pedagogues working in kindergartens.

The program is an experimental one and consists of action research in developing open education curricula at the school level. Pedagogues - students are instructed in facilitating action research and at the same time coordinating teams of teachers at the local level, engaged in developing open curricula in their kindergartens, according to the new Program guidelines.

Basic facts

Early childhood care and education in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (as well as in the whole of the former Yugoslavia) was and still is to a degree a state owned, uniform and centralized system, consisting mainly of kindergartens (whole day, care and education programs for children aged 3 to 7 years) and crèches (same type of programs for children 1 to 3 years old). Priority is given to children of working parents and less than 20% of the population (1 to 7 years) in the country is attending some kind of preschool programs (in 1997). However, the percentage of enrollment in some regions and for the age range of 5 to 7 is over 90%. In Montenegro, preschool education is under the Ministry of education and science, in Serbia, it is covered by two ministries: the Ministry of family (until last year it was under the Ministry of work, social and veterans affairs) and the Ministry of education, with the last one responsible for educational programs.

Preschools are organized as "public institutions for preschool education", at the municipal level, some of them consisting of only one preschool (with 3 to five

kindergarten groups) and some as large as to include 15 preschools, hundred of teachers and groups, and thousands of children. There are two teachers per group of children, and age formed groups can include 40 or more children (this is the situation in the last couple of years). Only teachers with two years college can work with children and there are psychologists, pedagogues, special pedagogues and social workers as educational advisers (one for each 24 groups of children).

Programs and practices

There is, and there has always been, an official educational program, or "program guidelines" issued by the Ministry of education at the republic level. All but the last one were content-based types of programs, specifying general educational goals in the broad areas of child development (e-g., cognitive, socio-emotional ...) and then, defining specific objectives followed by contents in the 6 areas of the program: language, maths, sciences, arts, musical and physical education.

Based on such programs and the similar kind of teacher training, educational practices in our kindergartens were and still are in many places, "transmission of knowledge", adult-centered type of practices white, preschools remain pretty closed institutions, in regards to children, their needs and interests, parents and teachers.

The process of change

Program Guidelines were introduced in 1976 instead of the earlier Program, with the intention to "de-school" preschool education. "Free" and "guided play" were used as terms in order to emphasize the change from lesson-like, teacher planned "occupations" to more child-centered educational activities. However, the structure and content of the text, except for the Introduction, remained very similar to the previous Program: i.e., specific objectives followed by subject-matter like contents for the 6 areas of educational work, thus making the text itself internally inconsistent.

Three years later, I organized a comprehensive evaluation study "E-S"- Basic characteristic of the educational process in kindergartens of Serbia. The general aim of this process evaluation was to obtain a detailed picture of the reality of preschool life and compare what really happens with the Program guidelines (i. e., the conception of education as expressed in the Introduction).

The study proved that only the rhetoric was changed in accordance with Program guidelines, but the practices remained the same (the same teacher-delivered lessons were now called "guided play"). More precisely, there were at least two levers or types of "program", besides the official Program guidelines: individual teachers personal programs (or "implicit pedagogies") and "real programs", reconstructed from classroom observations, that were often different for free and guided activities in the same groups "The real program" of the guided activities was "highly academic, structured, and teacher centered, with the predominance of verbal instruction as a method", and thus quite contrary to the conception the Program guidelines and the intentions behind this program reform. Besides, kindergartens functioned as closed institutions, with fixed roles and many implicit rules: closed to parents (even literally), to children's specific needs and interests but as well to teachers (whose practical creativity was welcomed but intellectual even sometimes punished).

The results of this study, indicated once again that changes in educational practices, the real educational reform, cannot be brought about without the direct engagement (research and professional development) of those whose practices they are, i.e., teachers. This called for teacher's participation in both designing and implementation of teacher in-service training and professional development and research for educational improvement.

A number of action-research and in-service training projects were jointly organized and completed by the Institute of Pedagogy, University of Beograd and numerous practitioners from kindergartens of Serbia and Montenegro during 15 years following the

evaluation study. These brought about the transformation of educational practices, together with the transformation of preschool institutions towards open schools, in at least those kindergartens included in the projects. For them, the adoption of New Program Guidelines - Model A by the Ministry of Education in 1996 meant a recognition of the reform already completed or underway, rather than the beginning of a reform.

Some of the research and/or training projects resulted directly from the issues and problems raised during the evaluation study. First of them, "Drama in education in teacher in-service training", answered teachers' request for different methods in their permanent training and was at the same time a kind of in-service training and an evaluation study into the merits and effects of drama workshops as a means of teacher professional development (in particular, the development of sensitivity to and capacity for non-verbal communication). Nearly all of the 22 participants in this project (teachers, psychologists and pedagogues) were later engaged in action-research studies.

The second study, "Different models of ECCE programs and services", was an investigation of the actual need and interests of parents of preschool children for different types of ECCE programs and kinds of services as well as the design of a nomenclature of such programs and services. One type of programs offered, "The playroom" (similar to British playgroups), was later developed in an action-research project, involving teachers and parents.

Most important for the transformation of educational practices in our kindergartens, were three action-research projects in school-based curriculum development: "Vila - school-base curriculum planning", "Thematic curriculum planning" and "Transforming preschool into an open school". Although different in organization (first and last included one kindergarten each, and the second several kindergartens from 2 towns) and in the specific problem they started with, all three studies eventually lead to some degree of the transformation of educational practices, to teachers developing into reflective practitioners and to the opening up of preschools to parents and local community. There was altogether over 50 practitioners in all three studies. The first action-research - Vila was the longest and developed into a series of action-research projects, some going deeper into curriculum development issues with the same group of practitioners ("Developing interactive pedagogy" and "The construction of written language in the preschool") and the other, "Diffusion of action research, enlarging the "community of reflective practitioners". In fact, Vila, the kindergarten where the first study was completed, became a kind of training and development center, where systematic visits and training seminars were offered to interested groups of practitioners from other preschools of Serbia. After the seminars, they started their own action research studies that were partly facilitated by the researcher from the Institute. In the course of five years, 5 more kindergartens, with over 40 teachers and 5 educational supervisors were included in the process of transforming educational practices.

Two independent projects, sponsored by UNICEF and the Open Society Fund, added to teacher professional development and/or curriculum development as well as to the enhancement of teachers-parents cooperation and both included parents as participants - "Teachers and parents in action: education for the rights of the child" and "Preschool as a family center" (part of an international project, coordinated by Georgetown University, USA).

The described bottom-top process of educational change in the preschool system of Serbia, although encompassing only a small part of it, provided grounded pedagogical theory as a source for the new Program guidelines, consistent with the open education philosophy and a constructivistic conception of learning and education. Such a model of program, in the form of Program guidelines Model A, was developed by a group of researchers from the Institute of Education, and adopted by the Ministry of education in 1996, as one of two models of programs. Since Model B is a more traditional type of educational program, similar to the previous official Program guideline, the danger of a "hierarchically incited reforms" that "tend to be resisted and are likely to fall" (Elliott, 1993:176) is smaller than usual.

The first trial version of Model A Program guidelines was completed during 1993, and then tested in 20 kindergartens during 2 years. Half of those kindergartens were earlier included in action-research or other projects. A one-year time period is planned for kindergartens to choose between the two models and prepare for the implementation of the new Program guidelines. A series of in-service training seminars is organized in the form of workshops, lead by the authors of Model A as well as lectures by the author of Model B.

In Montenegro, with two kindergartens included in the international project "Preschool as a family center", only Model A has been adopted by the Ministry of education and science. The same Ministry is sponsoring a project "Preschool education reform", facilitated by the Institute of Education. The two mentioned kindergartens function as training and dissemination centers, and their staff as trainers for teachers from other kindergartens of Montenegro.

Last, but not least, the Educational department of Beograd University, Faculty of Philosophy, has organized an advanced study program (postgraduate studies called "specialization") in Curriculum development and evaluation. It is a two-year program for graduate psychologists and pedagogues, working in preschool as educational advisers. The specific character of this program is that it is at the same time an action-research project. Each of the 16 participants has to facilitate a school based action-research in open curriculum development with a group of teachers in her kindergarten. Thus, there will be 16 small-scale studies and the whole postgraduate program is another, second order action research project. This will produce, we believe, a new group of reflective practitioner as well as a group of trained facilitators who can carry the process of transformation at the school level.

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