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### United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

**Second regular session 2006**

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

### **Recommendation for funding from other resources without a recommendation for funding from regular resources**

#### **Croatia**

#### *Summary*

The country programme document for Croatia is presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comments. The Board is requested to approve the aggregate indicative budget of \$7,800,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the period 2007 to 2011.

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\* E/ICEF/2006/18.



*Basic data*  
(2004 unless otherwise stated)

Child population (millions, under 18 years)	0.9
U5MR (per 1,000 live births)	7
Underweight (% , moderate and severe) (1995-1996)	1
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, 2001)	2
Primary school enrolment (% , net male/female) (2002-2003)	90/89
Primary school children reaching grade 5 (% , 2002)	100 <sup>y</sup>
Use of improved drinking water sources (% , 2002)	—
Adult HIV prevalence rate (% , end 2003)	0.1
Child work (% , children 5-14 year-olds)	—
GNI per capita (US\$)	6 590
One-year-olds immunized against DPT3 (%)	96
One-year-olds immunized against measles (%)	96

<sup>y</sup> Survival rate to grade 4.

## The situation of children and women

1. Since the mid-1990s, Croatia has experienced solid economic growth (average annual growth of gross domestic product of 4.2 per cent) and single-digit inflation rates. The basic indicators of under-five mortality rate (7 per 1,000 live births) and primary-school enrolment rate (98 per cent) compare very favourably with other countries in the region. The rate of HIV prevalence remains below 0.1 per cent.

2. Croatia already had good social indicators when the Millennium Development Goals were established. Croatia is likely to achieve the Goals, provided there is a strong policy focus on lifting disadvantaged groups out of poverty (both income and non-income), backed by necessary resources. The Government has demonstrated a strong commitment to achieve Goal 2 on universal primary education in its new Strategic Framework for Development 2006-2013, which is currently being finalized. Goal 1 on eradication of extreme poverty and hunger and Goal 3 on gender equality and empowerment of women may be more difficult to achieve, however, due to long-term exclusion and persistent disparities.

3. The European Union has granted Croatia candidate status. Accession negotiations began in October 2005, and the country is now undergoing screening of selected legislation and working on the development of the Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion with the European Commission.

4. Croatia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. In order to monitor and coordinate implementation of the Convention, a National Council for Children was established in 1999. The normative framework was further strengthened by ratification of both Optional Protocols to the Convention in 2002. Croatia submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2004.

5. The new Government's Strategic Framework for Development 2006-2013 focuses primarily on the development of a competitive private sector. The Framework highlights the need for further work on social cohesion, reduction of

poverty, improved efficiency of social transfers and the protection of childhood and child development.

6. In 2006, the Government endorsed the new National Plan of Action for Child Rights and Interests 2006-2012, a comprehensive sets of measures to improve child rights fulfilment and protection, with special reference to: the issues raised in the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; *A World Fit for Children*, the outcome document of the General Assembly Special Session on Children; and other international and national commitments to children.

7. Good basic health and education indicators notwithstanding, there are structural and deeply rooted issues which are preventing the full realization of children's rights in Croatia. Children account for less than a quarter of the total population, with birth rates declining steeply over last 15 years. There is a three-to-six-fold disparity in family income and child poverty levels between socio-economic groups and between regions within the country. In 2004, nearly one in five Croatians lived in poverty. Unfortunately, there are no data on child poverty and there has been little progress in reducing poverty over recent years. A declining population, especially in impoverished rural and remote areas, has also diminished opportunities and access to high-quality social services for the remaining children. Gender disparities persist, with women being significantly overrepresented among the unemployed and underpaid workers, and single mothers having a higher risk of poverty.

8. The Committee for the Rights of the Child expressed concern about the fact that Roma children, children living in poverty, children with disabilities and foreign children do not have equal opportunities to access education. Despite recent progress, persistent exclusion, discrimination and stereotyping of children living with disabilities and also of minorities (especially Roma children) are still widespread. The overall pre-school enrolment rate increased from 36 per cent in 1995 to 43 per cent in 2005 but it is still too low, and even lower among the poor and excluded children who are not especially targeted by public policies.

9. The issue of violence in families and in institutions was pointed out by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and by the United Nations Committee against Torture in 2004. Although violence in schools has been addressed and reduced, it is widely believed that the problem of domestic violence and violence in residential institutions remains a serious one.

10. Child abuse and neglect in families and as institutionalization continue to be poorly documented and reported and therefore are not adequately addressed. Most recent data show that 1,558 children without adequate parental care are placed in institutions and 2,331 are living in foster families. Children who are separated from their primary families stay in the institutions for an average period of 4.5 years due to the inefficiency of the child protection system. There are also large numbers of children with disabilities living in various types of residential facilities under the control of different ministries. Because the data collection system is weak, the exact number of such children is almost impossible to accurately ascertain. Even more worrying is the widely held attitude that special care in institutions is preferable to family-based care. Due to the lack of support services at local community level, some 4,000 children with disabilities are not attending any kind of school.

11. Poorer families do not have sufficient opportunities to enhance their skills for guiding and protecting children. Parental knowledge and practices relating to child care and development are insufficient and often inappropriate, including a high incidence of corporal punishment. Domestic and traffic accidents are main causes of death of children aged 1-18 years. Breastfeeding rates remain low, at under 30 per cent, especially in rural and less developed areas.

12. In addition, recent pressure towards decentralization is creating a new set of challenges for local governments, particularly for the least endowed in terms of planning resources and introducing new services for children and families. Disparities may actually be exacerbated if decentralization is not planned for localities that host the most disadvantaged sections of the population.

13. The national system for monitoring the situation of children is still underdeveloped. Although there is a comprehensive legal framework protecting the rights of children, enforcement and referral mechanisms are still very weak. Although government financial allocations to the social sector compare well with other countries in the region, poor targeting of social assistance and budgetary allocations in health and education is a major problem. As a result, social expenditures do not sufficiently benefit more disadvantaged children.

14. Children and young people are rarely consulted in decisions that affect them, but there are some very good examples of child participation, such as the Child-Friendly Cities initiative with active Children's City Councils. Seven towns and municipalities have been awarded child-friendly status and 53 others are in the process of doing so.

15. Croatia is moving in the right direction, but more needs to be done to tackle disparities and exclusion so as ensure that all children reach their full potential, and are included in and contribute to a cohesive Croatian society. To this end, what is needed is better parental care, reduction of institutionalization and violence, more rigorous and systematic child rights monitoring, and targeted measures to make public services socially efficient, backed up by the allocation of appropriate and targeted resources for disadvantaged children.

## **Key results and lessons learned from previous cooperation, 2003-2006**

### **Key results achieved**

16. Since the late 1990s, UNICEF has supported the Government of Croatia in strengthening the juvenile justice system, developing mechanisms for the promotion and monitoring of child rights and the creation of the office of an independent Ombudsperson for Children. Efforts were also stepped up to raise public awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to support the Government in developing policies for youth and for focusing greater attention on child rights.

17. UNICEF has provided overall advisory and technical assistance for policy reform. A major substantive focus in the past four years has been addressing violence in schools and the development of family-based care for vulnerable children deprived of parental care, through the "Every child needs a family" campaign. As a result, 216 schools were involved in violence prevention programmes with a tangible reduction in bullying in these schools.

18. Other concrete results include greater awareness of children's needs and rights. The perception of the value of children and their rights has increased greatly within the general public, particularly the corporate sector. The number of foster families has increased and there is a new support and monitoring system for children in foster care, the result of changes in national policies and legislation.

19. The current period of UNICEF cooperation has seen the transformation of the UNICEF presence in Croatia into a self-funded entity, with all programme activities funded through private sector fund-raising within the country. UNICEF Croatia has successfully raised funds from the general public and the corporate sector since local fund-raising began in 2003. Within only three years, the total income from product sales and private sector fund-raising has grown from \$345,000 to \$1,436,000, with 70 per cent of funds raised from individual donors and 30 per cent from the corporate sector. The office has also mobilized substantial in-kind contributions, particularly free media air time and pro-bono advertising and public relations services, the value of which has exceeded \$1 million per year since 2003.

20. The general population's level of spontaneous awareness of the work of UNICEF increased from 10 per cent in 2003 to 50 per cent in 2006, and that of the corporate sector from 5 to 77 per cent. This rapid increase is a direct result of the UNICEF strategy of launching focused, high-profile education campaigns. Supportive public relations and advertising companies won a total of 12 prestigious international and national awards for the creativity and impact of their UNICEF campaigns.

### **Lessons learned**

21. Reliable data and consistent monitoring are essential for effective, evidence-based advocacy and policy development. Demands for change by the Government and civil society must be based on solidly documented information, especially when new policies are being developed to reduce poverty and other forms of exclusion, to address improving societal practices for raising children, to reduce violence against children and to change general attitudes towards violence in families and in society.

22. Strong and innovative partnerships are vital to ensure a high level of public support and demand for better standards for children. Reaching out to literally every household with communication on child rights through mass media and direct mailing has created an environment in which Croatian society has become aware, committed and inspired to act on behalf of children. This in turn facilitates the leveraging of further structural and policy changes, and stimulates the private sector to contribute essential resources to carry out programmatic interventions.

23. The fast-changing environment and increasing competition in local private sector fund-raising require innovative and active approaches to gain and maintain market share and attract donor support for children. Programme interventions need to be carefully chosen and focused, and must be implemented quickly, efficiently and transparently in order to assure easy communication and reporting to media and donors. Achieving milestones and objectives in a relatively short period of time is essential, even when longer-term changes are being pursued. Reporting and accountability to donors are ways of building trust in the organization and pre-conditions for maintaining their support in the future.

## The country programme, 2007-2011

### Summary budget table

<i>Programme</i>	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i> <i>Other resources</i>
Child protection from violence, abuse and exploitation	1 800
Young child development	2 000
Policy advocacy and partnerships for children's rights	1 800
Cross-sectoral costs	2 200
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 800</b>

### Preparation process

24. The programme was developed through systematic consultation with government and civil society counterparts, the private sector and key international partners, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the European Union and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The draft country programme document was presented to a wide range of partners during a half-day consultation.

### Goals, key results and strategies

25. The overall strategic intent of the country programme is to improve the promotion, protection and fulfilment of child rights through tackling the interrelated issues of disparities, social exclusion and violence against children.

26. In supporting the Government and civil society and working with private sector, media and other partners, UNICEF will contribute nationwide to the achievement, by 2011, of the following results: (a) doubling the identification, documentation, recording and referrals of cases of violence against children; (b) at least 80 per cent of primary schools comply with standards for violence-free schools; (c) at least 50 per cent of parents apply positive parenting skills; (d) increase in the allocations of public funds for children of disadvantaged and excluded groups; and (e) the country's knowledge base on children will be strengthened, and the system of independent monitoring of child rights will be enhanced.

27. In addition, it is expected that locally generated resources will triple, with a sustained growth in income. Partnerships will be further strengthened so as to double Croatians' readiness to support UNICEF work for children in other countries.

28. Partnership will constitute the major strategy of the country programme. Work with the media and the private sector will ensure strong demand and support for changes in policy and social change, and mobilize financial resources needed to initiate these changes.

29. UNICEF will build on existing national priorities and on the priorities recognized by the general public in regular opinion polls, in order to maximize resources, public support and political will for the benefit of children. Substantive themes for social mobilization, resource mobilization and interventions will be part

of the programme's focus on child protection and young child development, but will be selected consistent with emerging issues and ongoing situation analyses. In order to ensure sufficient support by local private donors, the selected themes and areas of interventions must be easy to communicate, with specific measurable targets and with potential to include a variety of different segments of Croatian society.

30. The programme will give particular focus to strengthening families and influencing perceptions, social norms and behaviours towards children; and emphasize strengthening the capacities and increasing the accountability of service providers. In order to improve systemic sensitivity to children's problems, enhance early identification and provide efficient response to child rights violations, UNICEF will support the Government through enhancing the mandates and improving the competencies of service providers and professional associations.

31. In addition, UNICEF will assist the Government through research that can inform policies for children and demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of investments in social services for children.

32. Although all programme funds to meet needs of Croatian children will be mobilized within the country, opportunities will also be sought to initiate fund-raising for UNICEF-supported programmes elsewhere.

#### **Relationship to national priorities and UNDAF**

33. The country programme will strive to support Government's development strategy and plans, with special attention to the sections of the Strategic Framework for Development that relate to children, reduction of poverty, building social cohesion and promoting corporate social responsibility.

34. The programme will contribute directly to the priorities of the National Programme of Action for Children's Rights and Interests 2006-2012, in particular strengthening the role of parents and families, prevention and efficient response to violence against children and reduction of disparities.

35. The country programme cycle, 2007 to 2011, is consistent with the UNDP programme cycle and with the national development plan, which is currently being finalized. Croatia has not completed a Common Country Assessment or a United Nations Development Assistance Framework, but the programme's strategies and anticipated results have been coordinated with relevant United Nations agencies, including the World Bank.

36. Specifically, the country programme interfaces with the World Bank's efforts to ensure equitable regional development as part of its Country Assistance Strategy, and with the Bank's focus on public administration reform and rationalization of the current high level of public expenditure while at the same time improving service delivery. Combating social exclusion is also integral to the UNDP programme. Together with UNDP, UNICEF will work with the World Bank to support reform processes in health, education and social welfare systems.

#### **Relationship to international priorities**

37. The country programme will seek to support Croatia in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, specifically through the reduction of disparities, so

that children living in the country's more disadvantaged areas will be guaranteed the rights to health, education and protection standards.

38. The key priorities of the European Commission's current country strategy paper for Croatia are: democratic stabilization; economic and social development; enhancement of social cohesion; and the need to develop a strong and active civil society. The Commission's strategy also includes supporting the current decentralization process through assisting in the development and implementation of a national strategy for regional and local development. The aim is to ensure that all levels of administration have the necessary capacity to carry out the obligations required from their new mandates.

39. The country programme is designed to contribute directly to these strategies by focusing on developing the capacities of individuals, institutions and professionals to prevent institutionalization of children and violence against children, and to allow children from socially excluded and marginalized families to benefit from the reform process.

### **Programme components**

40. The **child protection from violence, abuse and exploitation** programme is designed to address the concerns of the Croatian public and the Committee on the Rights of the Child about violence against children. The programme will contribute to doubling the identification, documentation, recording and referring cases of violence against children. In addition, 80 per cent of primary schools will comply with standards for violence-free schools.

41. This component will focus on upgrading the sensitivity and responsiveness of society in general and of the education, social welfare and health systems to violence against children. In the education sector, it will assure continuation of work on violence in schools and support the development of alternatives to residential institutions for vulnerable children. Within the social welfare system, it will work to upgrade the competencies of professionals who assist families and children at risk. Professionals will be able to identify and respond to early signs of risk and to facilitate support to vulnerable and substitute families. Within the health sector, it will focus on developing the capacities of professionals, in particular home visitation nurses, paediatricians, doctors and nurses in maternity wards. This will be linked with parenting practices as described in the young child development programme, to address corporal punishment and violence in families. The component will support efforts of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and Ministry of Science, Education and Sports and will include partners from the University, Institute for Schooling and professional associations.

42. The **young child development programme** responds to a shortcoming in Croatian society that was identified by the World Bank and the European Union: people's lack of awareness and participation and the weak involvement of civil society in the social development of their locality. This is mirrored at the level of the family by poor parenting practices and a high incidence of corporal punishment, accidents and injuries among children. This programme is designed to improve parenting practices and to assure the healthy, safe, stimulating and emotionally stable development of young children within their families. At least 50 per cent of parents living in disadvantaged areas will adopt and apply positive parenting skills.



43. A broad intervention for the prevention of various harmful practices will be initiated and scaled up to achieve national coverage, including appropriate feeding practices, reduction of injuries and corporal punishment. Through different communication channels, parents and families will be supported in their role of providing a protective, nurturing and stimulating environment for young children, and in demanding quality services on the community level. Such support will include enhanced access to social benefits and services specifically targeted to disadvantaged families. This component will be closely linked to, and form part of, the other two programmes. Using the health system, especially through a network of home visitation nurses, paediatricians and family doctors, greater attention will be given to parenting skills and the emotional and cognitive development of the child. Early identification of families at risk of neglecting or abusing their children will be supported through modifications in competent departments' mandates and the development of referral systems.

44. This programme will support the Ministry of Family, Veteran's Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity, and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. UNICEF will also work in partnership with the mass media, especially television, to reach out to all families with young children. With the involvement of parents' associations, community-based networks of parents will be organized to facilitate learning of parenting practices and for parents to articulate their demands for improved services.

45. The **policy advocacy and partnership for children's rights** programme is designed to support the Government through the public expenditure reform that is recommended by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. It will do so by supporting close monitoring of the situation of children so that re-allocation of resources should ensure greater efficiency and enhanced equity of public services. The reform of the public administration, particularly the process of regional and local development, also needs to be accompanied by an analysis of how these processes affect equitable access to services for all children and reduce and or exacerbate disparities. This programme will work closely with the Government as it develops the Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion with the European Commission, in order to move to the centre of the debate concerns about health, education and protection of children in marginal and excluded areas.

46. The programme will provide technical advice to the Government for the formulation of policies, laws and regulations and for planning and allocating resources for children, paying particular attention to excluded groups. This policy dialogue will be supported by a targeted operational research and evaluations, in particular an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of services for disadvantaged children. The knowledge base on children will be strengthened, and independent data collection and monitoring of child rights will be enhanced. Through close cooperation with the State Bureau of Statistics, key indicators for children will be integrated into existing data collection systems, with priority to indicators related to violence against children. UNICEF will continue close cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman for Children in order to strengthen independent monitoring of child rights.

47. Within this component, communication activities will support all other components and fund-raising activities to facilitate changes in systems, attitudes and behaviours. The component will support child participation and the Child-Friendly

Cities initiative. An Editors' Club for Children's Rights will be established in order to develop media practices which are consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including increasing coverage of child-related issues in a positive way.

48. Partnerships will be built with the media and private sector to maximize financial resources for programme implementation. The very rapid rate of growth in funds generated from the private sector will inevitably slow down, although there is still some untapped potential. Initially, the major emphasis will be on consolidating existing donors. Direct mail to the general public will be promoted as a main fund-raising method. Corporate alliances will receive major attention to build long-term integrated alliances. The involvement of celebrities in high-profile events will continue to be an important and integral part of the overall fund-raising effort. Product sales will be strengthened with further development of retail and catalogue direct mailing.

49. In addition to fund-raising for programme costs within Croatia, the office will initiate fund-raising for children in other parts of the world, especially for emergencies. This will gradually build a base of donors who are willing to support international causes.

50. The funding of policy advice, research, advocacy and communication activities will largely come from the proceeds of greeting card sales, and the cost of the campaigns and specific project interventions will be supported from corporate sector contributions and direct fund-raising from the general public.

51. This programme component will support the National Council for Children, the Office of Ombudsman for Children and primarily the Ministry of Family, Veteran's Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity. UNICEF will also work in partnership with the National Bureau of Statistics, independent research organizations, local governments and civil society actors.

52. **Cross-sectoral costs** will cover basic operational costs of the office, such as utilities, equipment, fuel and care maintenance, as well as office staff.

### **Major partnerships**

53. UNICEF will continue to work under the overall coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. Key partners from the Government will be the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare; the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports; the Ministry of the Family, Veteran's Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity; the Institute for Schooling; the Ombudsman for Children, Office for Human Rights; and the State Bureau for Statistics. The main civil society partners will be professional associations, parents' associations and non-governmental organizations that deal directly with violence against children. The particular strength of the UNICEF presence in Croatia is its strong partnership with the private sector and mass media, which will continue as a major drive for change.

### **Monitoring, evaluation and programme management**

54. Implementation at national, subnational and local levels will be carried out using a varied mix of partners as mentioned above. An annual mechanism for reviewing progress will be established under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration to review accomplishments and develop the following year's annual work plan.

55. The monitoring of progress towards results of the country programme will be based on a set of indicators that will use routine monitoring of partners in government. Joint field observations with government and UNDP colleagues will also form the basis of continuous assessment. For those programme components that show good progress and/or can yield significant lessons for the Government, joint evaluations will be commissioned to inform the mid-term review, with the aim of informing policy-making and scaling up of successful interventions.

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