

**THEMATIC EVALUATION OF UNICEF CONTRIBUTION TO
CHILD CARE SYSTEM REFORM IN KAZAKHSTAN,
KYRGYZSTAN, TAJIKISTAN, TURKMENISTAN AND
UZBEKISTAN**

Final report part II: Country reports

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Preface

This is the second volume of the two-volume evaluation of UNICEF's contribution to child care reform in central Asia between October 2003 and July 2007. It is intended to be read in conjunction with the first volume which accompanies it. The first volume constitutes the main report which includes a description of the scope, purpose and methodology of the evaluation as well as an outline of the diagnostic framework and a synthesis of findings across the region as a whole. It also contains the executive summary and terms of reference for the project. This second part contains the detailed findings for each individual country.

A note on the evaluation team (including UNICEF contact)

This evaluation was carried out by Oxford Policy Management (OPM), a UK-based consultancy firm, in partnership with CASE-Kyrgyzstan, a research organisation in Bishkek. The team consisted of Gordon Peters (team leader and senior expert in social services); Anne Thomson (senior expert in evaluation); Clare O'Brien (project coordinator and consultant in social services); Roman Mogilevsky (Kyrgyz team leader); Aziz Atamanov (CASE researcher); Irina Lukashova (CASE researcher); and Irina Makenbaeva (CASE researcher).

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Abbreviations

CEE/CIS	Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRD	Child Rights Department
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
FCSD	Family and Child Support Department
FCSU	Family and Children Support Units
HSTF	Human Security Trust Fund
ILO	International Labor Organisation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MPC	medical-psychological commission
MPPC	Medico-Psychological-Pedagogical commission
NCCR	National Commission on Child Rights
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PMPC	Psychological-medico-pedagogical Consultation
PromSys	Programme Management System
PRSP	Poverty reduction strategy paper
RCSAC	Republican Centre for Social Adaptation of Children
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

PART II: COUNTRY STUDIES

1 Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan, with 15.4 million people, is the second largest country in central Asia in terms of population; as of end 2006, there were 5.1 million children in the country. The country is politically stable. Since 2000 the country's economy has been growing very fast, with an average growth rate above 10% per year. This growth is contributing to the improvement of the living standards of the population and to an increase in general and social public expenditures, including expenditures on child protection, which have almost doubled (in nominal terms, 50% increase in real terms) in 2007 in comparison to 2004. The Government of Kazakhstan's goal is to speed up the social and economic development of the country so that it will become one of the 50 most developed countries of the world. This is a good starting point for promoting and supporting reforms in child care, because the position of Kazakhstan on many child care indicators—such as the proportion of children in full-time residential care—has yet to attain the best international standards it is seeking. Kazakhstan's most significant achievements in child care reform, and areas in which it has not yet reached its potential, are reviewed in this section.

1.1 Achievements and gaps in child care reform

The Government of Kazakhstan recognises that the system of child care it inherited has not always been fully able to support the rights of the child to live in a family, nor has it always provided parents with sufficient support to enable them to overcome short-term difficulties that impede the family's ability to look after the child. The relatively high numbers of vulnerable families, children classified as 'abandoned', children in residential care and parents legally deprived of their parental rights over their children are symptomatic of this. Moreover the attitude of the general public towards institutionalisation has previously been generally positive. The government has begun to reform child care in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and in recent years has already made some important practical steps towards the introduction of new elements into the system.

So far institutional care is still the prevailing component in the system, but the main direction of the reform puts an emphasis on deinstitutionalisation and the development of alternative forms of child care, which can be categorised as family support services (e.g. social work or financial support) and family substitute services (guardianship, foster care and adoption). While family support services are still largely at the pilot stage, there have been developments in family substitute services such as the allocation of financing for foster care which has been available since 2004. Key elements of the reform are outlined in the government programme 'Children of Kazakhstan' and some of the main features are expected to be incorporated into the current law on social services¹. Progress has also been made in developing appropriate governance structures to steer and implement the new system: an example is the creation in 2006 of the Committee on Child Rights Protection (CCRP) under the Ministry of Education and Science, which is to assume a coordinating role in the government child care system. Progress is summarised in Figure 1.1 below.

¹ The 'Children of Kazakhstan' programme was approved on 12 December 2007.

Figure 1.1 Status of child care system reform, Kazakhstan

Aspects of the reform process	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
Policy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ National programme “Children of Kazakhstan” has been adopted in December 2007 ❖ Specialized government body responsible for child care issues—Committee on Child Rights Protection (CCRP) under the Ministry of Education and Science—has been established in January 2006 ❖ Staff and budget of the CCRP has been considerably increased and local (oblast, town, and rayon) units of CCRP have been established in 2007 ❖ Relationships between CCRP and other relevant government bodies are not clear enough; CCRP has not assumed coordination role in the sector yet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Signatory to CRC since 1994 ❖ Several benefit schemes for families are in place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one-time benefit on the occasion of child birth for all families - monthly benefit on child care until achieving 1 year for all families - monthly benefit for children below 18 years old for poor families - special benefits for families with children with disabilities ❖ Pilot activities on creation of family support centres and school-based groups doing preventive work on children and families at risk ❖ Establishing of “Hope” groups at baby homes allowing for maintaining links between mothers and their children ❖ Establishing pilot day-care centres for children with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The government plans to encourage national adoption and introduce stricter rules for international adoption ❖ There is a plan to introduce regular payments for guardians; no financial estimates exist so far ❖ Foster care is established as a regular form of child care routinely funded from the government budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No change in the system of residential institutions ❖ Improved government funding of the institutions ❖ Network of youth houses for graduates of institutions ❖ Family-type children homes and children’s villages are developed and promoted by the government (tax privileges and rent-free land plots for children’s villages)
Legislation and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Framework Law on Child Rights has been adopted in 2004 ❖ Regulation on CCRP in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Law on Government Benefits for Families with Children has been adopted in 2005 ❖ Law on Government Targeted Social Assistance has been adopted in 2001 ❖ Law on Social Services is being developed; the draft law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Draft law regulating international adoption and harmonizing national legislation with Hague Convention is being considered by the parliament ❖ A framework regulation on foster care (adopted in 1999, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Law on Family-Type Children’s Villages and Youth Houses has been adopted in 2000 ❖ Set of standards for different types of institutions (for orphans, for children with mental disabilities, for baby

Country report: Kazakhstan

Aspects of the reform process	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
		puts big emphasis on family support services and deinstitutionalization	amended in 2002) is in place; it provides too big room for interpretation for local authorities, this results in inappropriate practices of foster care organization	homes,...) has been adopted in 1997-2005
Administrative and financial systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fragmentation of responsibilities over the child care system; CCRP is yet to become a coordinating body in the government; there is a risk that local units of CCRP would duplicate activities of other government bodies ❖ All government bodies are funded from the budget ❖ Government has legal procedures and allocates some resources to outsource social services to NGOs ❖ Local authorities have considerable discretion power over funds in their disposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ All family support services are run on pilot basis; sustainability of these services is not guaranteed; no regular administrative system and funding arrangements have been established so far ❖ Currently NGOs play important role in delivery of family support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Starting 2004 the government allocates a significant resources for foster care ❖ These resources are managed on rayon/town level; due to weak legislative base local authorities have too big discretion and are not prevented from mismanagement of these funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Institutions are dispersed between several ministries (education, health, social protection) with no coordination ❖ Institutions are funded and directly supervised by local authorities ❖ Government funding for institutions has significantly improved during last years ❖ In addition, government provides resource for development of children villages and youth houses ❖ No option for redistribution of government funding from institutions to alternative care services exists so far ❖ Sponsorship is important source of resources for institutions ❖ Gatekeeping function is with local authorities (guardianship departments and commissions on minors)
Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Few CCRP staff and relevant staff in other ministries are trained in social work; this problem is especially acute on local level ❖ Social work is established as a profession; there are standards for teaching social work at universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are some cadres in NGOs and universities trained in delivery of family support services and capable to provide training to other sector stakeholders ❖ There is Association of Social 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Many people wish to adopt small children ❖ There is a considerable supply of people willing to become foster parents ❖ UNICEF pilots provide some training to foster parents; no 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Experienced management in institutions with big influence and potential to block any reforms should these reforms threaten their authority ❖ Low turnover of staff despite of relatively low salaries

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Aspects of the reform process	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ UNICEF regularly holds Summer Schools for staff of ministries and local authorities, NGO and academia representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers, which contributes to professional development of people in the sector ❖ No human resources to deliver these services country-wide are available so far 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regular system for identification, training and retaining of foster parents is in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ High ratio of staff to children in some residential institutions ❖ Some training in modern social work methods provided to staff in residential institutions
Representation and participation, rights-based approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Right-based approach is officially recognized, but has not become yet a leading principle for practical actions of many government officials ❖ Ombudsman’s office supported by UNICEF made some first steps to establish referral system and reporting on child rights abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are some pilot attempts to involve non-governmental actors into service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Adoptions remain secret ❖ Seeking and obtaining consent to adoption and placement to foster families from children aged 10+ is obligatory ❖ Inappropriate practices of foster care related to “rotation” of foster parents lead to violation of the principle of action in the best interest of a child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Majority of children (80%) in institutions have at least one parent ❖ Institutionalized children usually study at regular school together with other children
Monitoring mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ CCRP has begun to publish a wide range of data on the number of children in institutions by type of institution, the number of domestically and internationally adopted children, the number of children under foster care and some other key indicators of the child care system ❖ No demand to use collected quantitative data for analytical purposes, hence no incentive to provide accurate information. ❖ Qualitative monitoring and evaluation of implemented reforms is mostly absent in the government agencies ❖ The government reacts in the situations when some problems in the system become publicly known due to media coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There is information system on benefits for families and children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No systematic monitoring of foster care practices on local level by the central government ❖ No systematic monitoring of impact, i.e. identification of improvements in child welfare after (foster) family placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Every Ministry regularly collects reports on situation in institutions and makes site visits

Source: OPM / CASE.

1.1.2 Governance structures

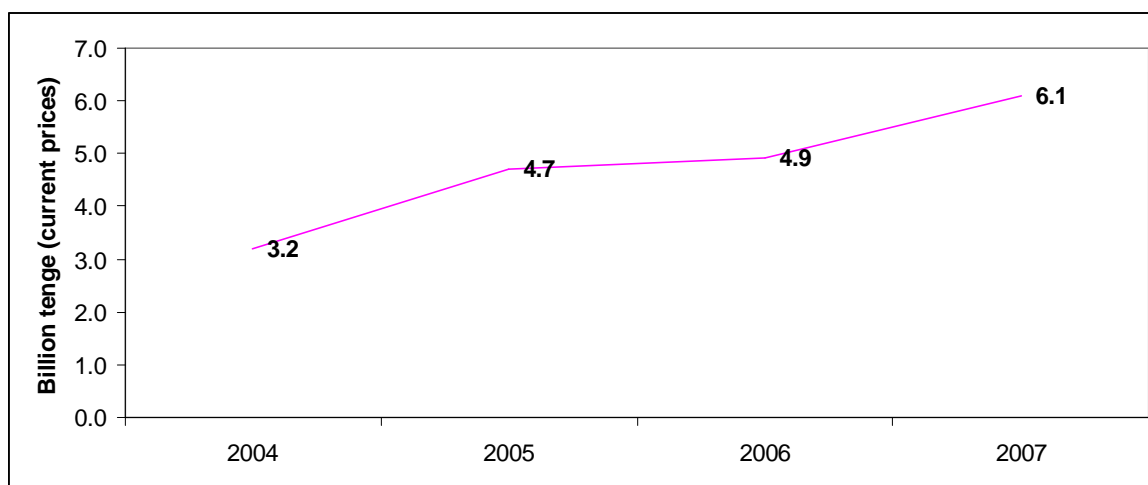
The CCRP is responsible for coordination among agencies and for the development of legislation regarding child care; it also has control functions with regards to the implementation of the UN CRC. Until recently the committee had only a central apparatus and no representation in the country's provinces, which limited its ability to influence child care practices; however, in 2007 the government allocated the necessary funding to establish *oblast* departments on the protection of child rights, which is expected to increase the potential of this government body. The CCRP leadership is supportive of the deinstitutionalisation agenda and declares its intention and ability to fight vested interests grouped around existing institutions. However, the placement of the CCRP in the structure of the Ministry of Education and Science may limit its ability to coordinate activities of other ministries.

In addition to being the home of the CCRP, the Ministry of Education and Science has other responsibilities in child care, being in charge of developing norms and standards for the institutions under its control. Other ministries having a role in the system of child care include the Ministry of Health (norms and standards for its institutions), Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population (development of policy regarding children with disabilities), Ministry of Justice (control of legislation development), Ministry of Interior (juvenile justice issues), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (international adoption). The Apparatus of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Kazakhstan is to protect the rights of all citizens of the country, including children. The creation of a special service for children in the Ombudsman's Apparatus is now under discussion (see section 1.4.1 below). It is clear that fragmentation of government policy development and implementation is likely to persist, especially while the CCRP is still in the process of defining its role and clarifying its relationship to other implementing partners. *There may be a role for UNICEF in supporting the clarification of the new structure. This is a process which is applicable, too, to the country offices in the Kyrgyz Republic (with the Department for Child Protection) and in Tajikistan (the National Commission on Child Rights), and it is recommended that the country offices share their experience in strengthening these structures.*

All government-funded residential institutions (see section 1.1.3) are subordinate to *oblast* Departments of Education (orphanages and boarding schools), Health (baby homes for children under three), and Social Protection (institutions for children with severe mental disabilities and wheelchair-bound children). These institutions are funded from *oblast* budgets only. This has implications for policy development as central government does not decide directly on the funding of the child care system. Therefore, any policy change which requires a change in budget allocations (which is typically the case) should be supported not only at the central, but also at the *oblast* level. *UNICEF is recommended to consider the implications of this for the targeting of its advocacy efforts and for any future approach to supporting the reform of funding mechanisms for social care services.*

Financial resources of the child care system have been considerably expanded due to the general increase in the government's revenues (see Figure 1.2) whilst retaining a more or less constant share (0.23%) of total public expenditure. It would be valuable to understand the breakdown of this expenditure among residential institutions and family-based alternatives to gain an understanding of the alignment of the trends with declared government policy.

Figure 1.2 Government budget expenditures on social protection of children in 2004-2007



Source: Ministry of Finance.

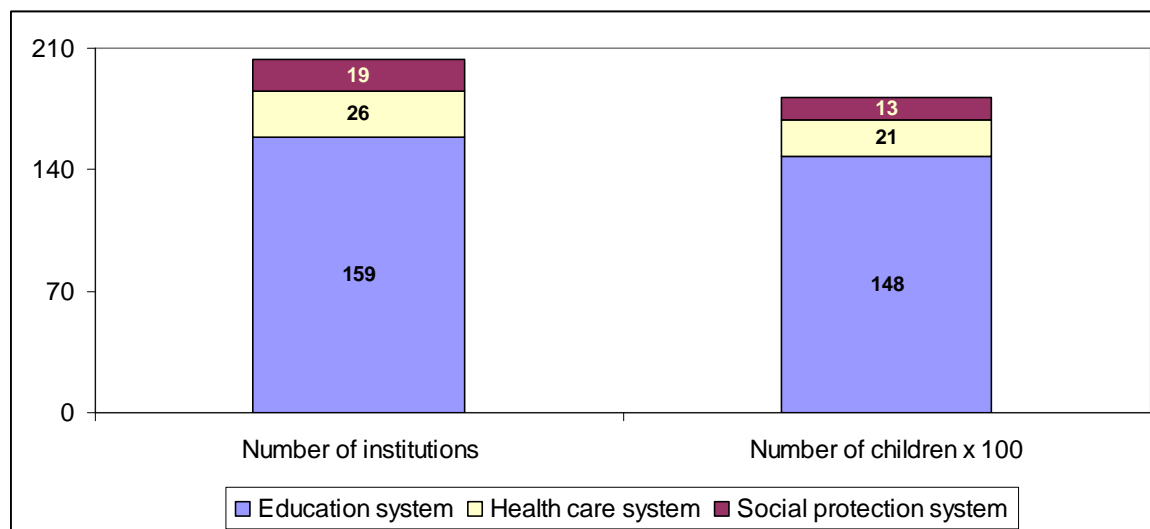
As for the capacity of **human resources** at the government level, there remains a shortage of staff in the CCRP and other agencies who are trained in social work. *UNICEF would be well placed, as a recognised leader in the provision of training, to fill this gap.*

1.1.3 Residential institutions

The number of children in full-time residential care is considerable. According to the data of CCRP, at the beginning of 2007 there were some 79,100 children living in 710 state-run institutions and a further 565 in 12 private institutions. Most of these children are not deemed to be without parental care: the total includes students at regular boarding schools, sanatoria and 'corrective' *internats*. Those that are without parental care comprise 18,200 children in institutions under three different ministries, namely the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population (see Figure 1.3). Even out of those who are considered not to have parental care, only one in every six (3,200 in total) is a full orphan; all others are so-called 'social orphans' with one or two biological parents alive, who may be in prison, long-term medical care, or deprived of parental rights among other reasons.

The number of children in institutions and the number of institutions do not demonstrate any declining trend. This is despite the fact that the socioeconomic situation in Kazakhstan has improved significantly during the last several years and there is no widespread migration of workers to other countries. This suggests that, unlike some other countries of central Asia, extreme poverty and out-migration are not the main reasons for placement of children into institutions. Importantly, the perception of many people employed in the system and the general public regarding institutional care is rather positive. A significant increase in government funding for institutions has also contributed to the maintenance of the positive image of institutional care.

Agencies and private businesses are encouraged to provide 'sponsorship', or patronage for institutions to provide them with additional resources. This informal flow of resources to institutions is reported to be quite substantial.

Figure 1.3 Institutions for children without parental care in Kazakhstan

Source: CCRP. Note: Data are for 2007.

There are some signs of a shift in approach: the government is now promoting some new types of institutions like family-type children's homes (23 homes with 302 children in them) and villages (six villages with 332 children) and youth houses for adolescents who have graduated from orphanages (24 houses with 1,240 young people), as well as 'Hope' groups in baby homes (allowing mothers experiencing hardship to maintain links with their babies). The non-governmental institutions include seven children's homes, three villages, one youth house and one shelter.

1.1.4 Family support services

Community-based family support services are being implemented on a pilot basis. These include public and private day care centres for children with disabilities, and family support centres. Two day-care centres for children with disabilities operate in Astana and Almaty; this is a first step in deinstitutionalisation of this category of vulnerable children. Local departments of social protection also have a mandate and some funding to offer services at home for children with disabilities; delivery of these services has improved significantly since the adoption of the law on social protection of people with disabilities.

1.1.5 Family substitute services

Guardianship with a relative of the child is the most common placement where parents are absent or unable to look after the child. Of the total number of 51,300 orphans or abandoned children, some 31,300 are under guardianship.

Another form of family placement is foster care; there were 1,800 children in foster care at the beginning of 2007. Kazakhstan is the only country in the region where foster care has graduated from a pilot activity to a regular form of child care financed by the government on a routine basis. However, the regulations on fostering are as yet ambiguous and incomplete, and this has meant that at least in some places the form of foster care that has emerged is not in line with conventional international definitions. In Shymkent foster care is regarded as a special privilege for foster parents. Parents 'win' the opportunity to become foster parents and receive financial benefits from

the government for a limited period only, after which time they may cease to receive government funding and effectively cease to be foster parents, and the opportunity is given to another family. Similarly, children may be selected for placement in a family for a limited period and then may be returned to full-time residential care outside the family. This requires the child to make two adjustments, first to being in a family and then to being back in an institutional setting again, which can be a source of distress to the child. *It is understood that UNICEF already recognises these difficulties; it is imperative that efforts are continued to embed international best practice in foster care into the government system².* The main practical difference between fostering and guardianship is that foster carers are paid while guardians are not; and whereas guardians are legally responsible for the child, legal responsibility for children in foster care remains with the institution.

Another important form of family placement is adoption. Between 1999 and 2006, 26,400 children were adopted by Kazakh citizens and foreigners. Domestic adoption does not have any clear trend; the number of adopted children fluctuates in the range of 2,500–2,700 *per annum*. International adoption had been a growing trend until 2004, when the number of children adopted by foreigners exceeded 1,000, and then somewhat declined to around 800 in 2006. The high international adoption rate has now become a political issue, and the parliament of the country is now considering a law to introduce stricter rules for international adoption and harmonise the national legislation with the Hague Convention.

1.2 Activities of development partners and NGOs

UNICEF is the main player among donors in the area of child care and the only donor operating on policy development level. Within the UN, related support is provided by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in the area of poverty reduction and social services development. The European Commission provides some money for projects in child care on an *ad hoc* basis. In general, financial resources of international organisations are not significant in resource-rich Kazakhstan, so they have much less political leverage in comparison to what they have in neighbouring poorer countries. This leaves a mostly advisory role for international organisations.

Among international NGOs operating in Kazakhstan in the area of child protection, the Soros Foundation, Eurasia Foundation and SOS-Kinderdorf seem to be the most active. The Soros Foundation contributes to the development of juvenile justice system; the Eurasia Foundation promotes deinstitutionalisation by establishing family support services at the community level; SOS-Kinderdorf has established three children's villages, which are seen as an alternative to traditional institutions. All these international NGOs have reasonably good relationships with the government, while none of them has a position to influence policies comparable to that of UNICEF. This suggests that there could be a pretty natural division of labour between international NGOs and UNICEF: the latter takes lead in support to policy development, while the former implement pilot projects and test possible models of alternative care. While all parties seem to recognise the advantages of such an approach, in practice their coordination and collaboration is far from being optimal as it follows from the comments of some of these partners (e.g. Eurasia Foundation).

There are several active local NGOs in the area of child care, which offer different types of socio-psychological consultation and family counselling services. These NGOs partner with government agencies and international organisations in implementing different pilot projects and running awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns.

² See also section 1.4.3 below.

1.3 UNICEF's activities

The Government of Kazakhstan does not place a strong emphasis on child protection issues in its strategic development plan for 2001–10. However, its current agreement of cooperation with UNICEF allows for interventions in this area. The Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) of the UNICEF country office in Kazakhstan for 2005–09 includes three main programmes—Family and Community Empowerment, Improved Social Protection Systems and Social Policy Development, and Participatory Governance—of which the second aims to improve the possibility for children to grow up in a family environment. The first and third programmes aim to contribute to this objective by improving families' parenting skills and creating a suitable administrative and financial framework to facilitate the delivery of appropriate social services.

The programmes of the CPAP are intended to contribute to the achievement of outcomes agreed by the whole UN country team in the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2005–09. A small but explicit component of indicative resources available from UN teams to fulfil UNDAF goals (\$800,000, or about 5% of the UNDAF total) is pledged by UNICEF to improve the protection of vulnerable groups and enhance child protection, which includes promoting deinstitutionalisation as well as support for juvenile justice and victims of abuse and neglect³. The HSTF project has been a major funder of the child care reform component. Building the capacity of professionals has been a particularly important part of these interventions as judged on the basis of budget allocations. See Table 1.1 below for a summary of activities.

1.4 Evaluation of UNICEF's contribution

1.4.1 Relevance

A strategy for the long-term development of Kazakhstan was issued by decree of the president in 1997, which defined seven key areas of intervention to improve the welfare of citizens (Government of Kazakhstan, 1997). An intermediate strategy, the 'Strategic Plan of Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan up to 2010', was approved in 2001 and was therefore active at the time that the HSTF proposal was drawn up. It forms the basis of the development strategies for national and local governments and serves as a framework to enable international development partners, the private sector and others to identify national priorities. As was noted in section 1.3 above, there is little emphasis on child protection in the strategy to 2010. The closest mention of related issues is found in the objectives for social policy reform, which include 'ensuring high quality and a wide range of social services and targeted benefits for the population' (Government of Kazakhstan, 2001, section 2). There is no further elaboration of this objective in relation to child care reform. This indicates that, although not contradictory to the stated national priorities of the government, UNICEF's programme of child care reform activities was somewhat tangential to the government's main focus of attention at the start of the HSTF project.

³ This is part of the first planned outcome, 'Reduced (income and human) poverty at national and sub-national levels' (UNDAF 2005–09).

Table 1.1 Summary of relevant UNICEF activities, Kazakhstan

Area	Analysis and assessment	Advocacy	Capacity-building	Pilots
Policy, legislative and administrative framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on the situation of children in the Republic of Kazakhstan Review of national legislation's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to establishment of CCRP Advocacy to insert chapter on children into Law on Social Services Information bulletins on children's issues Summer School for a group of children and young journalists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to drafting of 'Children of Kazakhstan' policy document Provision of advice on best practice in relation to the Law on Child Rights and the Law on Social Services, and support to drafting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revision of the terms of reference for twenty three existing crisis centres
Community based services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformation scenario of the child care system for East Kazakhstan region Identification of the stakeholders' needs/views relating to family support/crisis centres Draft concept on community-based social services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first Central Asian Child Protection Forum Publications on Summer School on Social Work and on Training for Crisis Centre Specialists Publication and dissemination of Trainer's Manual - Communication Skills for Social Workers and Child Protection Glossary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer School on Social Work Training of crisis centre staff Publication and dissemination of Guidelines for Family Support Centre Staff Creation of Social Workers Association Inclusion of the Summer School materials into curricula of six Kazakh universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of two pilot family support centres in South and East Kazakhstan
Foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of foster care initiatives Guide on the Family Support Centre in South Kazakhstan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printing and distribution of resource materials on foster care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops on foster care for trainers and professionals Workshops for foster parents Publication and dissemination of Guidelines for Specialists of the Kinship Care Departments, Children's Institutions Staff and Foster Care Development Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selection and preparing children for placement into foster families
Deinstitutionalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of children in formal and alternative care in Astana, South and East Kazakhstan Draft concept on deinstitutionalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interministerial working group meetings 		

Nonetheless, as a signatory to the UN CRC, the Government of Kazakhstan is obliged to take consideration of child care issues, and since the CRC is a guiding document for both UNICEF and the government, their agendas can be expected to be consistent. In practice, as was mentioned in numerous interviews with different stakeholders, UNICEF has been considerably influencing the government's vision of child care issues, so this consistency is mostly ensured, while there are some discrepancies in approaches to different problems (see below).

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child agreed its first set of concluding observations on Kazakhstan's implementation of the CRC in June 2003, just as UNICEF's HSTF proposal was being developed. The project was therefore well placed to contribute a timely and relevant response to the main areas of recommendation from that report. Key issues to be addressed by the child care reform agenda in Kazakhstan, as advised by the Committee, include:

- **Policy formulation, administrative and legislative systems.** Effective and comprehensive coordination of the implementation of children's rights with provision of adequate financial and human resources. Provision of the Office of the Ombudsman with a clear mandate to monitor children's rights and implement the Convention at national, regional and local levels. Development of a national plan of action for the implementation of children's rights.
- **New services and alternative forms of care.** Development and financial support of community-based and family-focused services for families at risk of social problems and families who care for children with developmental challenges, disabilities or health problems. Speedy ratification of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993.
- **Public perceptions and awareness-raising.** Continuation of awareness-raising activities on parenting issues in order to prevent and reduce separation of children from their families and their abandonment. Increase in the number of well trained professionals, including social workers, providing assistance to parents.
- **Financial support.** Prioritisation of children's economic, social and cultural rights in the government budget policy.
- **Data collection.** Strengthening of efforts to develop a system for comprehensive collection of data on the rights of children.

In practice the UNICEF HSTF proposal and the subsequent activities addressed the first three of these concerns to varying extents: the government, supported by UNICEF, introduced important changes into its policy, legislative and administrative frameworks and developed new services, and there is some evidence of a small shift in public perceptions of family-based care. But there are also some problematic areas of the child care system (such as financing) which have not received attention from either the government or UNICEF, and other areas such as data collection and monitoring which have begun to be addressed by the government but where UNICEF has not been very strongly active. Key developments in child care and UNICEF's contribution to that development, along with areas that might have benefited from further consideration, are briefly summarized below.

Policy formulation, administrative and legislative systems

1. **Coordination.** A body responsible for coordination of all government's activities in the area of child care (CCRP) was established in 2006 and administratively and financially supported in 2007. UNICEF supported this development through its analytical work and advocacy activities.
2. **Policy.** The Government's programme "Children of Kazakhstan" was approved in December 2007; this programme is to re-focus child care activities on alternative forms of care and significantly improve inter-agency coordination. UNICEF has been supporting the development

of the programme providing situation analysis and draft concepts on community-based services and deinstitutionalisation.

3. **Framework legislation.** Amendments to the Law on Child Rights (2004) and regulation on foster care (2004) have been adopted; a Law on Social Services is being developed (expected to be enacted starting 2009); amendments to the Family and Marriage Code are being prepared, which provide for payments to not only foster parents, but also to guardians. UNICEF has supported these legislation development efforts by providing information on the best international practices, organisation of and participation in government's working groups and commenting on the documents' drafts.

Stakeholders' interviews provide some evidence that the sometimes narrowly understood mandate of UNICEF, with its focus on children, may reduce the relevance and effectiveness of its interventions. The law on social services is a case in point. Here, UNICEF's effort to introduce a special section on services specifically for children has reduced the relevance of its contribution to the development of the law, because the government has a different vision on how the law is to be structured.

4. **Adoption law.** A draft law on the ratification of the Hague Convention is being considered by the parliament of the country. But UNICEF has had little intervention in the resolution of the politically acute issue of intercountry adoption to date (though it provided some technical assistance to review the bill).
5. Models for a **Child Rights monitoring mechanism** in four regions of the country are being tried out and documented with support from UNICEF, including development of referral mechanisms if child's rights are violated. The appointment of an ombudsman exclusively for children, as advocated by UNICEF, has not been demonstrated to be relevant to the priorities of the government.

New services and alternative forms of care

1. **Foster care.** Starting from 2004, foster care has been introduced into practice on a regular basis. In this respect UNICEF's proposal to support the development of foster care—through provision of training for foster parents and professionals supporting them—is seen to be timely, feasible and more relevant to the priorities of the government than is the case in any other Central Asian country. There remain serious concerns, though, about the government's interpretation of fostering (see p.7 above) which indicate that to achieve maximum effect UNICEF might have considered a different combination of activities, including more advocacy on best practice in foster care to combine with the practical training that was provided.
2. **Alternative residential care.** The government is promoting family-type children's homes and villages and establishing youth houses (for adolescents who graduated from orphanages) and "Hope" groups in baby homes (allowing mothers experiencing hardship to maintain links with their babies). UNICEF has not been involved extensively in these activities since it does not consider that the placement of children in alternative residential institutions is in the best interest of the child. But the intervention of the government in this area even without a firm steer from UNICEF may at least be viewed as a positive alignment of the government's promotion of alternatives to traditional residential care with the deinstitutionalisation policy of UNICEF.

At the same time, administrative and financial models of transformation of institutions into centres of community-based services have not been sufficiently developed yet. Prospects for professionals currently employed in institutions, retraining programmes for institutions' staff, and the authority and incentives for local government bodies to redistribute resources from institutional to alternative form of care are not clear. It is hardly possible to expect any significant progress in deinstitutionalisation until a feasible and detailed strategy of such

transformation is developed. It is worth noting that the development of this strategy is also dependent on progress in other policy areas (i.e. fiscal decentralisation).

3. **Services for the disabled.** The Government has expanded the range of services for people with disabilities. Again, UNICEF's involvement in the development of these services has been limited. It is important for UNICEF to remain engaged in this area to assist the government in ensuring that services are provided in line with the principles of the CRC.
4. **Pilot projects** on community-based services (public and private day care centres for children with disabilities, family support centres) are being implemented. UNICEF has contributed to the development of these services by establishing two family support centres, in Shymkent and more recently Ust-Kamenogorsk, and by its information campaign (see below). UNICEF's pilot projects here have been co-financed by the local governments—an unusual arrangement for central Asia—which might seem advantageous in terms of financial sustainability. However, there is a risk that if the government considers the services no longer to be a priority, or does not commit the funds that are needed, the service ceases to operate and UNICEF's interest in sustaining the service becomes irrelevant. Unfortunately this has turned out to be the case in Shymkent. Section 1.4.2 below discusses the effectiveness of this intervention.

Public perceptions and awareness-raising

1. The **deinstitutionalisation agenda** is becoming increasingly popular among government officials on central and (to a lesser extent) local levels, professionals working in the system and NGOs. UNICEF is promoting this change through its advocacy activities and capacity building efforts. However, the generally positive public attitude towards institutions has not yet been properly addressed. Considering the current mindset of the majority of the population, campaigning on this issue stressing the importance of a family environment (and not just meeting a child's nutrition and other very basic needs) for normal child development has to be much more aggressive and targeted.
2. It follows from the above that **residential institutions** seem likely to remain a key component of the child care system in the country for a considerable period of time. This may indicate that the situation in the existing institutions may be relevant to UNICEF's responsibilities on child rights protection and require UNICEF interventions not limited to deinstitutionalisation issues.
3. **Awareness-raising.** The issues of vulnerable groups of children (in particular, children in institutions) are brought to the attention of public through television programmes, public forums, publications and other awareness-raising activities. UNICEF organizes and funds many of these activities.

Financial support to child care system

1. **Financial resources** of the child care system have been considerably expanded due to general increase in the government's revenues whilst retaining a more or less constant share (0.23%) of total public expenditure⁴. Expenditures on child protection increased from 3.1 billion tenge in 2004 to a planned 6.1 billion tenge in 2007. UNICEF recognises the availability of state resources and has been advocating for changes in the budget process in the interests of children, holding a conference on the subject in 2007. It has also prepared a study on international experience in this arena.

The evaluation team concludes that in an environment where child care reform is not top of the political agenda it should not be considered that activities in this area are irrelevant. On the contrary, this may give UNICEF all the more reason to pursue this agenda, to help the government fulfil its international obligations under the CRC. In Kazakhstan UNICEF has shown that it can

⁴ Ministry of Finance data.

provide inputs that are relevant to some of the government's concerns (though there are many more avenues that could also be explored). The effectiveness of UNICEF in helping the achievement of its objectives is discussed next.

1.4.2 Effectiveness

The evaluation team's ability to measure the effectiveness of the HSTF project in achieving its objectives in Kazakhstan, as in all other countries, is severely hampered by the absence of a clear directive in the proposal about what measurable targets were intended to be achieved. The proposal cites a dozen 'specific objectives' relating to deinstitutionalisation and the development of family-based alternatives to residential care. UNICEF has succeeded in making some headway in some of these objectives, while others have been less effective. Independently of the overall objectives, the proposal also contains lists of desired outputs and outcomes. It is useful to consider these last two categories separately since the effective achievement of an output (e.g. the provision of a training course) does not necessarily lead to an effective outcome (e.g. improved understanding of social work). Progress in these areas is discussed further here.

Policy formulation, administrative and legislative systems

UNICEF has been generally effective in producing planned *outputs* (documents and events) to contribute to the development of policies, administrative structures and legislation. For instance, it has:

- prepared situation analyses (e.g., a report on the situation of children in the Republic of Kazakhstan prepared together with the Ombudsman's office);
- drafted concepts / strategies / regulations (e.g. draft concept on de-institutionalisation or draft standards / minimum requirements for family support / crisis centres); and
- organised different kinds of forums for policy discussions (International Conference on Child Rights (2005), the first Central Asian Child Protection Forum (2006) or interministerial working group meetings).

In a few cases (e.g. revision of the Commission on Minors' terms of reference) the desired output has not been achieved because UNICEF's partners had insufficient background information to discuss innovative approaches.

The evidence of UNICEF's ability to produce desired *outcomes* is mixed. In some areas an outcome has been achieved. For instance, UNICEF can be considered to have contributed through advocacy efforts to the establishment of the CCPR, the government body responsible for inter-agency coordination, which is in line with its objective to achieve an integrated approach to child rights and institutional care. There is some debate as to whether the CCPR will be able to achieve full coordination across ministries and command of all areas of child rights, given its subordination to the Ministry of Education and Science, though it is too recently established to determine whether this is a difficulty.

In other directions some positive progress is visible but outcomes are yet to be produced, because of the time-consuming procedures of multi-stakeholder decision-making and shifts in the general approaches of the government. The drafting of the 'Children of Kazakhstan' policy document is one such example. This document has been under discussion by the government throughout the entire period of the HSTF project: indeed, according to UNICEF's own records it was already prepared and awaiting approval of the president in 2004. The document has only just been adopted, in December 2007; the delay was partly attributable to the fact that the political environment was

antipathetical to the constant emergence of cross-cutting 'programmes' and had suspended its approval of any more.

Deinstitutionalisation, new services and alternative forms of care⁵

UNICEF activities in the area of deinstitutionalisation and development of alternative forms of child care have included:

- advocacy for introduction of community-based services,
- organisation of and support to some pilot activities (e.g., establishment of pilot family support centres in South and East Kazakhstan, early prevention of family disintegration, social adaptation of children with disabilities),
- critical assessment of current practices of foster care and crisis centres, and
- publication and dissemination of materials on foster care and community-based services.

In general, these activities are assessed as only partially providing a desirable effect, in outputs as well as outcomes. Some of the pilots have been successful in providing necessary services to families and vulnerable categories of children. Crisis centres have been somewhat re-oriented by UNICEF towards serving not only children in families, but also children deprived of parental care. In Shymkent, during the period of operation of the pilot centre, the centre's staff provided training and consultation to foster parents and prospective foster children; to a lesser extent they worked also with staff of residential institutions and the local authority guardianship departments. However, it is of concern that this centre is no longer functioning. It was reported that the government co-finances community-based services where they are supported by donors, and in the event that the government withdraws its funding the centre ceases to operate. This was the case in Shymkent, where activities closed after one year for bureaucratic reasons relating to the renewal of the government's funding for the NGO running the centre.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Interior a telephone helpline has been established for children requiring an urgent assistance. However, few people use this helpline and of them only 4% are children.

There seem to be no evidence of progress in gatekeeping despite UNICEF's intentions to improve this component of child care system through institutionalization-preventing activities of the family support centre.

Most importantly, *the number of children in institutions show that there was no significant progress towards deinstitutionalisation or systemic introduction of alternative forms of care country-wide.* This was corroborated during interviews with stakeholders (including UNICEF staff).

It might be considered that the introduction of foster care in 2004 as a regular form of alternative care for children might be a demonstration of UNICEF's effectiveness in advocating family-based child care. However, it has already been mentioned that the form of foster care being practised is not always in the best interests of the child. Interviews with staff of the guardianship department, foster parents and the focus group with children held in Shymkent revealed the fact that the city guardianship department practices 'rotation' of foster families, i.e., the department often allocates funding for a foster family for one year only and the next year funding is provided to another family, which is waiting its turn for funding. The motivation for this rotation is said to be a provision of equal opportunities to receive government support for all families selected for provision of foster care. A

⁵ Capacity-building activities in this area are covered in a separate subsection below.

consequence of this practice is that some children who were under foster care in the family funded in one year, in the next year have to return back to the institution. This leads to upheaval and disappointment, and a desire on behalf of reinstitutionalised children to be able to return to their substitute family. Moreover, foster parents who have received training in good practice are not able to build on their experience to improve their provision of care to subsequent children. *This system cannot be considered to be a desirable outcome for either the children or the families concerned.* It must be noted that regardless of the actual distribution of responsibilities and roles, in the eyes of third parties (NGOs, parents) UNICEF fully determines the government's policy and practices in child care, so these imperfections are regarded—rightly or wrongly—as resulting from UNICEF advice. As UNICEF is aware, the organisation therefore has a responsibility to address these shortcomings.

Capacity building

In contrast to other countries in Central Asia, the profession of social worker is being established in Kazakhstan and the necessary educational provision is in place at universities. For this reason UNICEF's capacity building activities in the area of child care consisted chiefly in providing *ad hoc* training events (summer schools and courses) for existing professionals and university teachers, as well as training courses for others in the education system and for foster carers. In addition UNICEF published and disseminated training materials and case studies documenting Kazakh and international best practices, and offered support to networking for child care professionals (establishment of the National NGO Coalition for Child Rights and Social Workers Association). Much of this training was provided in the pilot areas of South Kazakhstan and East Kazakhstan *oblasts*.

Again, planned *outputs* (the number of people trained or number of copies printed) have mostly been achieved. Moreover, *the interviewed participants of training events mostly expressed satisfaction with the courses* and appreciated the quality of training and the materials provided. Some suggested that the high turnover of participants of training events rather reduces than increases effectiveness of training; one-time short-term training may not be sufficient to produce desirable professional development of trainees.

In some interviews outside the county's capital respondents have not been always aware of UNICEF publications, which could be potentially useful for their work. This suggests that *there is some room for further increase in the effectiveness of dissemination activities*.

As for the *outcomes* of capacity building efforts, these are difficult to measure, as it would require the implementation of special evaluation activities (e.g., running a survey of professionals, who participated in training activities, and assessment of their progress in professional development), which are out of the scope of current evaluation. However, imperfections in the foster care practices which take place in the area where the staff of the guardianship department had received some training from UNICEF suggest that, at least in some cases, effectiveness of the training was not high. Concern has also been expressed that many people who have been trained have not been able to put their learning into practice (Semiya, 2005)⁶. Taking into account that (judging on the project budget allocations) capacity building was the main direction of the HSTF project activities in Kazakhstan as well as in other countries, it would be worth considering the inclusion of special activities to measure outcomes of training into the project design already on project proposal preparation stage.

⁶ Dr Semiya observes (p.15) that some two-thirds of the people trained in foster care in Almaty over a period of 18 months have not become foster parents.

Some identifiable positive outcomes include changes in social work curricula (e.g., introduction of a discipline “Standards and monitoring of social services in the area of child rights protection” for third-year students) at six universities involved in the UNICEF training programmes, and the independent functioning of the professional associations initially supported by UNICEF.

1.4.3 Efficiency

The amount of funding allocated to Kazakhstan under the HSTF project, at \$444,000 in total, is almost identical to that provided to Uzbekistan and some 20% higher than the amount allocated to the other three central Asian countries. The distribution of the overall project budget appears to have been determined on the basis of the relative size of the countries rather than in relation to a detailed analysis of the financial capacity of the country governments or the prospect of successful reform. Kazakhstan stands apart from the other countries in that it is a middle-income economy with a much larger resource base, so UNICEF's financial leverage is correspondingly smaller. Under these circumstances one might expect to find UNICEF focusing its attention on advocacy and capacity-building, influencing policy change at a national level, rather than delivering small-scale pilot activities. This is particularly the case in Kazakhstan where other stakeholders including national and international NGOs are well placed to deliver community-level services.

It is a pity, then, that the project funding was arbitrarily allocated to sub-components on the basis of some kind of norm rather than on consideration of the country circumstances. A mere 2% of the budget was allocated to advocacy, while eight times as much was devoted to pilot projects (although there were very few pilot sites here in comparison with other countries such as Tajikistan). Fortunately capacity-building activities were generously resourced, commanding about 40% of the overall budget. The table of expenditures in the annual HSTF progress reports indicate that this distribution of resources was adhered to⁷. *The team concludes that this is unlikely to have resulted in the most efficient use of resources since it did not take into account any particularities of the aid environment in Kazakhstan.*

The country office recovered well from the delayed start to the project which had initially resulted in only 1% of the project budget being spent in 2004. A further 39% was reported to have been spent in 2005 and 49% in 2006, with the remainder reportedly being used by the end of the project in mid-2007. However, this rate of expenditure means that by the end of 2006 had used up all its funds for situation assessments and analysis, advocacy, the development of pilot sites and support for foster care. All that remained for the last seven months of the project was less than \$30,000 for capacity-building as well as most of the budget for monitoring and evaluation (which all country offices were slow to spend). *This suggests that the funds provided may have been inadequate to cover the range of activities required at the desired intensity.*

It is also important to consider whether the funding was spent not just promptly, but justifiably in the light of the benefits. Certainly, the training and advocacy activities that did take place were generally seen by respondents as a worthwhile investment. With regard to spending on pilot projects, it is notable that a large fraction of total expenditure—\$65,000—was devoted to equipping community centres at pilot sites and supporting initial salaries at those places. However, the pilot site at Shymkent had already ceased functioning at the time of this project evaluation and the facilities were not in use. This expenditure, whilst undoubtedly being of use at the time the facility was in operation, is therefore no longer generating regular benefits. *UNICEF should consider carefully how to encourage the re-opening of the facility so that the investment is not wasted.*

⁷ However, experience from other countries suggests that external funding is combined with regular resources during project implementation and that expenditure is only retrospectively assigned to the various budget headings (assessment and analysis, advocacy etc.) for the purposes of reporting to the donor.

It is a particular disappointment that more resources were not made available to support foster care activities. The Kazakhstan country office was the only one to use up its budget in this area, and the only office to operate in a country that actually has a government-approved foster care system which attracts finances from the state budget. It is noted throughout this report that the Government of Kazakhstan could have benefited from support in ensuring that its foster care policy remained oriented towards the best interests of the child. *Further expenditure on advocacy and capacity-building activities in foster care would therefore have been welcome, and is still to be encouraged.*

The only area of the HSTF budget which was already overspent by the end of 2006 is the staff costs, which exceeded the total planned budget for that line item by more than \$6,300 by December 2006 with another seven months of the project remaining. As of the end of 2006 administrative costs made up 12% of total project expenditure so far, against the planned proportion of 7%. It is difficult to say whether this is due to underbudgeting or whether it represents a significant loss in project efficiency, but the evaluation team considers that this merits further explanation. It would be valuable for UNICEF to review the causes of this difference in order to better understand whether the administrative burden has been affected by changes in the emphasis of project activities or by external circumstances; or if changes to planning and administration processes can be made in order to improve efficiency. It seems that some of this difference is attributable to the fact that staff costs were being incurred in 2004 even when no project implementation was taking place.

1.4.4 Impact

As was mentioned in section 1.4.2 above, many *outcomes* of UNICEF activities under the project, especially those in the area of policy formulation, legislation reform and capacity building, are difficult to identify so far. Correspondingly, the *impact* of these activities on ultimate beneficiaries, i.e., vulnerable categories of children, is yet to materialize. If the quantitative indicators cited in the HSTF proposal are viewed by the donor as revealing the impact of the project, it is difficult to ascertain that the overall impact has been positive⁸. It should be emphasised here that a particular difficulty here is the absence of reliable data upon which to make the judgement: it is not necessarily the case that no positive impact has been achieved (see discussion of results-based management in section 1.4.7 below).

An assessment of the *real* impact of child care reform should reflect on the improved well-being of the child. It is not apparent that UNICEF has been able to ascertain what progress it has made in this regard. There is no evidence of any system for monitoring the welfare of children who have been fostered. The reinstitutionalisation of children who have previously been cared for in a family-based environment is directly contrary to the intentions of the CRC and is unlikely to have a positive impact on the children concerned.

There is some indication in the HSTF proposal that the project was intended to be pro-poor, which would suggest that UNICEF might, if desired, choose to support the targeting of its own pilot projects at the poorest section of the population. In practice in Kazakhstan the link between poverty and institutionalisation of children is not as strong as in some other countries of Central Asia such as Tajikistan: children may be placed in residential care because there is less of a perception that this is detrimental to the child's wellbeing, not because the family is too poor to look after the child

⁸ The indicators are the number of children in all forms of residential care; the number of cases of children in institutions effectively reviewed by competent authorities and the number subsequently released to a family environment; the number of trained social workers; and the number of community-based child/family social work services.

and has no alternative. The issues of resolving poverty and resolving institutionalisation are therefore not entirely linked. Perhaps for this reason, the project does not seem to have been implemented in a way which has a great impact on the poor. Activities have been focused mainly on Astana, Almaty and towns in South and East Kazakhstan oblasts rather than on rural areas where there is a greater concentration of poor families. An additional factor here may be a sense that it is harder for UNICEF to achieve influence in remote areas with less capacity, in terms of financing and human resources, than is the case in the major urban centres.

One of the more important developments in the child care system during the HSTF project implementation, which promises to provide a positive impact, seems to be the establishment of the CCRP and its local departments. This creates a body in the system, which has a mandate to coordinate all components of child care and promote alternative forms of care. This is expected to result in higher quality of services for children. However, the actual impact will depend much on the ability of CCRP to implement its coordination and quality assurance role and to collaborate with local guardianship departments.

1.4.5 Sustainability

Financial sustainability

Unlike governments of other countries of Central Asia, the Kazakh government has both sufficient financial resources and general commitment to implement reforms in child care. This makes financial risks for sustainability of reforms much less significant than in other countries. The role of UNICEF in this situation is to supply viable models of new services for children rather than provide resources for their implementation. But in the situation, when the government manages itself all (or, in case of pilots, a significant part) of financial resources of the system, the task of UNICEF becomes even more complicated, because it needs to be in a permanent and very active dialogue with the government in order to ensure proper channelling of resources to the new services and avoid possible inappropriate practices of financial management by local governments (as was the case with allocation of funds for foster care in Shymkent).

Institutional structures

From the institutional point of view, the creation of CCRP and the recent decision to establish its branches in regions of Kazakhstan seem to be a much welcomed development. Availability of the government agency with sufficient central and local apparatus directly responsible for implementation of the child care reform significantly increases chances for achievement of sustainable change in the system. CCRP and especially its local departments require, of course, a lot of support in terms of advice and capacity building. *Offering this support to the CCRP seems to be a very important task for UNICEF in the nearest future.*

A group of stakeholders that seem to be supportive of reforms and useful in their implementation is the NGO community. NGOs are often responsive to provided training and have a potential to test and deliver alternative types of services. In comparison to other countries of Central Asia Kazakh NGOs seem to be stronger from professional and institutional point of view. Also, a positive fact is that in Kazakhstan government has a working system allowing for procurement of services from NGOs. At the same time, this does not automatically guarantee sustainability of the services run by NGOs and supported by the government. Experience of the family support centre in Shymkent, which initially received support both from the local government and UNICEF, but failed to attract government funding for the next year and had temporarily stop its operations, shows that

sustainability of new services requires ongoing institutional support from all parties—central, local governments and UNICEF.

Practice shows that commitment of the government to co-fund some activity depends on the continued provision of funding by the donor; it is often the case that co-funding is provided almost exclusively for the purpose of attracting and retaining the donor's resources. Once the donor's funds are fully spent, incentives for government to continue co-funding diminish. Therefore, in conditions when the genuine commitment of government is not guaranteed (as seems to be the case in Shymkent) donors often deliver their resources in several instalments in order to ensure that conditions (including co-financing) are met. This is also no guarantee that the activity will be sustained, but it is more difficult for the government to stop funding an activity after it has already been running for three years than to stop after just one year. In practical terms this could mean that UNICEF contribution to this centre's development might have been better provided in smaller amounts, but over a longer period of time in order to provide some safeguard against possible changes in local government attitude.

Attitudes

Different groups of domestic stakeholders seem to have different attitudes towards child care reforms. Central government representatives demonstrated general understanding and positive approach to the deinstitutionalisation agenda and introduction of alternative forms of child care. This attitude is an important factor contributing to the reform sustainability. It could be attributed to the UNICEF advocacy and capacity building efforts, but it is also related to the fact that in the Kazakh child care system, representatives of central government do not have vested interests in keeping institutional care unchanged⁹. Local governments' representatives seem to be generally supportive of the reform, while they are less informed and interested in the change implementation.

These vested interests are present at the level of institutions' staff, who fear that they may lose their jobs and control over financial flows as a possible consequence of deinstitutionalisation; therefore, one can see a much more cautious and protective attitude towards deinstitutionalisation among this group of the sector stakeholders. This group is influential in the child care system and capable of effectively inhibiting the reform process. It is necessary, therefore, to involve staff of residential institutions in dialogue and concentrate advocacy efforts on this professional group. Experience of establishing pilot family support centres suggests that UNICEF could find ways to convince the staff of institutions to become actively involved into introduction of alternative care. *Advocacy and capacity building efforts of UNICEF need to be refocused onto the staff of institutions, who compose the majority of personnel employed in the sector.* Any reform plan should explicitly offer them reliable retraining and employment prospects; this is to be an important reform block ensuring sustainability of reforms.

As was indicated by practically all interviewees, the general public demonstrates so far little understanding of the deinstitutionalisation agenda. This lack of support on the side of public could be seen as a risk for sustainability. *The reform would benefit from an increased intensity of awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns.* It would be important to emphasise that the main problem of children deprived of parental care is not insufficient supply of material goods and services (which seem to be seen by many as a main task of child care), but the lack of a family

⁹ Note, though, that this understanding is not translated into vigorous support to promote the 'Children of Kazakhstan' strategy which has now been left without presidential approval for three years. It seems that this positive attitude is perhaps passive (i.e. no objection to children living in a family-based environment) rather than active (concerted efforts to achieve the goal of deinstitutionalisation). This passive approval is a welcome first step that needs to be supported and further developed to achieve positive results.

environment which could not be provided in the framework of institutional care. On the other side, many people are responsive to the opportunities offered by the new services; this is confirmed by the large number of families expressing willingness to provide foster care to children.

1.4.6 Rights-based approaches

A child rights approach has been both implicit and explicit in the UNICEF interventions, and in the lobbying of government. Reporting to CRC in 2006 was an important instance for UNICEF to mobilize interest of the government to the child rights agenda and to achieve putting this agenda into cornerstone of the reforms in child care. Collaboration of UNICEF with the Ombudsman's Office and support to this office in preparing a report on the situation with child rights in the country, which provides a critical reflection on the situation of children, as well as ongoing work on establishing of children's Ombudsman service have also been useful in mainstreaming right-based approaches in the government policy.

It should be noted, however, that right-based approach has not become yet a leading principle in government activities on all levels. The re-institutionalization of children in Shymkent caused by inappropriate local government practice of foster care implementation could be seen as an example of violation of the principle of action "in the best interest of a child" in favour of strangely understood considerations of foster parents' equity. Of course, this kind of inappropriate practices is difficult to rule out completely in any system, but the lack of monitoring of the situation and corrective measures on the side of higher government authorities indicates that more efforts in advocacy and capacity building in recognition of child rights violation and prevention of such practices are needed.

Gender issues have not been particularly highlighted in the UNICEF activities. It is well known that boys prevail among children in institutions; however, no source of information suggested that this has something to do with any kind of conscious gender discrimination. Since girls are less likely to be found in institutions, and therefore perhaps are more likely to remain at home in vulnerable conditions, UNICEF should consider how best to reach these children through family support.

1.4.7 Results-based management

UNICEF's support to government-level monitoring

From the point of view of the accessibility and availability of data, the situation in the Kazakh child care system is the best in Central Asia, even without UNICEF's intervention so far. At the government level, the CCRP has begun to publish a wide range of data on the number of children in institutions by type of institution, the number of domestically and internationally adopted children, the number of children under foster care and some other key indicators of the child care system. These data cover all key segments of child care including institutions under the ministries of education and science, health and labour and social protection of the population. The statistics also includes information on private child care institutions in Kazakhstan. Since its inception in 2006 the CCRP has published one set of system indicators, with reference to the situation in the country as of January 2007.

While this monitoring system is still in its early stages UNICEF may be able to take the opportunity to support the CCRP in improving the flexibility and use of its data by, for example, advocating and assisting the disaggregation of data by gender and by age of children, which is not always available yet. There are also some discrepancies between different sources of data which can

usefully be resolved (e.g., between data on international adoption from CCRP and from the Ministry of Justice).

While the government takes care of the collection of quantitative data on the system, qualitative monitoring and evaluation of implemented reforms is mostly absent in the government agencies. Again, this is an area where UNICEF could usefully provide support.

Monitoring of activities is limited and mostly focused on inputs and outputs rather than on outcomes and impact. For example, the government strategy 'Children of Kazakhstan' does not include any outcome or impact indicators.

The production of information is an important first step but not an end in itself. Generating *demand* for such information, and then assisting organisations in interpreting and acting on it, is vital for the overall development of a child care system that is driven by a system of managing for results. At the moment—and unsurprisingly, given the short amount of time that detailed information has been disseminated—this next step is still in its infancy. An example of this is shown by the databases on fostering that UNICEF has supported. The databases contain data on children to be placed in foster families and potential foster parents. Ideally, this information should help in the proper selection of foster families and their matching with children. In practice, it is known that decisions are made on the basis of very different considerations (who receives money and how much); so the full value of these databases is not yet achieved. UNICEF's complementary set of activities in advocacy and capacity-building will be useful for helping to generate the demand for management by results and it is important that these activities continue.

Monitoring of child care reform in the UNICEF project

UNICEF in its own activities applies only very basic monitoring tools. For the HSTF project itself, the proposal optimistically claimed that,

'The project will be monitored and evaluated against the key indicators developed by the National Child Protection Task Force in the inception phase by using the logical framework analysis. The Steering Group will play a key role in monitoring and internal evaluating project progress through regular project site visits.' (HSTF proposal, p.20).

Since it also recognised that such a task force and steering group did not exist in Kazakhstan at the time of the inception phase (see p.12 of the proposal) it is unsurprising that key indicators were never developed and a logframe never produced. Nor is there a record of regular site visits being made. The comment about site visits highlights the misperception which was found in all evaluation countries that 'monitoring' amounts mainly to a synonym for inspection of facilities rather than an essential component of the policy cycle.

Key planning documents of UNICEF—UNDAF, CPAP, annual work plans—are no more specific and contain only output indicators for the child care system. The CPAP for 2005–09, for example, has a component of its results framework that refers to deinstitutionalisation and juvenile justice (Programme 2, no. 8) but the expected outputs are vague and unmeasurable (e.g. 'decision-makers are able to develop policies') and there is not one single baseline estimate of any figure. A general logframe for child protection was produced for 2007 but it is not yet clear how it will be used.

If UNICEF is interested in managing for results and becoming a 'knowledge centre' for other development partners and the government *it is absolutely critical that it addresses urgently the shortcomings in monitoring* and develops an approach in which policy development takes into account the available evidence. UNICEF staff region-wide (including Kazakhstan) needs to be trained in use of M&E techniques and then has to support governments in developing proper monitoring systems.

1.5 Conclusions

1.5.1 The status of reform in Kazakhstan

The scale of the deinstitutionalisation problem is bigger in Kazakhstan than in any other country owing to both the population size and the rate of institutionalisation. Nonetheless, the situation regarding child care reform is characterised by a set of positive circumstances and opportunities, alongside other areas that are in the process of being improved and developed or that would benefit from further attention. On the positive side, some basic legislation is in place and the recent adoption of the 'Children of Kazakhstan' programme may generate some momentum for the continued development of child care policy and the promotion of deinstitutionalisation. The availability of financial resources at the central government level improves the chances that policies can be costed and funded (although, as the UNICEF country office recognises in its SWOT analysis, many of the financial issues need to be resolved through local government mechanisms where the willingness and capacity to develop alternative services may be less strong). The establishment of the CCRP offers the prospect of enhanced coordination of child care at the central level—provided it is supported to clarify its mandate and its relationship with other key actors in the reform process—and its expansion to the regions of Kazakhstan may permit it to strengthen its capacity. The presence of social workers is good for supporting the development of community-based services and improving understanding of deinstitutionalisation in the long run.

There is still progress to be made in terms of encouraging widespread public acceptance of the deinstitutionalisation agenda as well as ensuring that child protection is a priority of the government. Consideration of the interests of the management and staff of residential institutions remains one of the most considerable challenges for reform. There is also not yet full understanding among policy makers and practitioners of the nature and purpose of the type of foster care system advocated by UNICEF, which has resulted in the introduction of a regularly funded foster care system—itself a positive step—which does not always adhere to best international practice in operation. The CCRP has not yet been long enough established to succeed in unifying child care reform policy and eliminating overlap between all the different agencies with responsibility in the field. There is some progress in beginning to develop a monitoring system but both the demand for, and supply of, data are at a very early stage.

1.5.2 UNICEF's contribution to reform

UNICEF considers itself to have a good reputation, a solid knowledge base and a good negotiating position with government representatives and international donors. Close collaboration of UNICEF with the CCRP, the ombudsman's office and other central agencies has proven beneficial. UNICEF also has working relationships with some local government bodies that have a key role in service delivery, though it is too soon to determine its impact on their performance. Institutions have mostly remained unaffected by UNICEF interventions. It is acknowledged that UNICEF contributed to the policy process which resulted in the adoption of the 'Children of Kazakhstan' programme at the end of 2007. UNICEF has already carried out a substantial amount of work developing family support

services and much useful experience will have been gained, though it is regrettable that the facilities in Shymkent have already closed down. The organisation has also paid attention to family substitute services, although with very mixed results which suggest that it has not always been possible to adhere to a fully rights-based approach in the delivery of services. Public awareness campaigns have been supported by UNICEF, and it is hoped that the message that children have the right to live in a family environment will, in time, be absorbed.

1.6 Lessons learned

Experiences in child care reform in Kazakhstan during the period under evaluation have provided valuable lessons for the government, for development partners and for UNICEF itself.

For the government, it is apparent that delivering quality services and abiding by the rights of the child are achieved not by resource availability alone, but also by a range of factors including informed decision-making procedures and the setting in place of incentives for stakeholders.

For development partners, in the environment of a country which has its own considerable resources their role as a source of expertise on child care development becomes crucial. The key required features of advice are specificity, ability to address existing gaps in the government's knowledge (e.g. establishing sustainable ways of financing of alternative care services), and flexibility. In conditions when the domestic monitoring and evaluation system is not yet fully developed, development partners can have a key role not only in conducting critical analysis, such as of their own practical experience of policy implementation, but also in developing domestic monitoring and evaluation capacity. These interventions can help to provide necessary feedback to the country's policy makers and improve demand for information.

For UNICEF itself, the experience during the lifetime of the HSTF project shows that the organisation's comparative advantage in child care reform is in policy advice and advocacy at the central government level. In areas such as piloting of different types of alternative care in the country and advocacy campaigns for the general public, where other international and domestic private donors are also active, UNICEF's comparative advantages are not so great. The role of coordinator of donor activities in child care may be a natural next step for the organisation.

1.7 Recommendations for UNICEF

- **Governance structures.** Reforms are driven by the national level but are mainly implemented at the level of oblasts, towns and raions. It is therefore beneficial for UNICEF to maintain dialogue with local authorities in order to understand obstacles to implementation, generating feedback that can help it to further improve its support to central-level structures. As part of this interaction it may wish to support the development of systematic training programmes to staff of local guardianship departments (which may be indirect, through training of trainers, or direct to relevant authorities).
- **Residential care.** UNICEF, in close collaboration with CCRP and local research community, should develop a feasible strategy of transformation of institutions into centres providing a broad range of services to children and families allowing for reintegration of children into biological or substitute families. The strategy should explicitly address the securing of working places for, and re-training of, institution staff, and issues of available government funding and responsibilities of different bodies for management of these funds.

UNICEF could intervene more in the area of deinstitutionalisation of, and services for, children with disabilities in order to ensure that their rights for development in family environment are

equally addressed and to prevent concentration of increased government funding on institutional care.

- **Family substitute services.** UNICEF could usefully support the development of legislative and administrative proposals to enhance foster care activities and offer further necessary training in this area. Part of this could include a review of how foster care policy is being implemented, and consideration of how to approach the resolution of any shortcomings in collaboration with the government.

The introduction of government payments to guardians as well as to foster families is also under consideration, and UNICEF could support the production of reliable financial estimates in order to be sure whether this proposal is financially and administratively feasible.

- **Family support services.** It is necessary to carefully evaluate results achieved by UNICEF and other parties paying special attention to sustainability of alternative service providers.
- **Problem identification.** It is recommended that UNICEF continues to align its own efforts in situation analysis and assessment with government objectives in this area.
- **Policy development.** A significant contribution to child care reform in Kazakhstan might be for UNICEF to help achieve a shift in attitudes away from the positive approach to institutionalisation by means of public awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns.
- **Policy implementation** is an area in which other partners are already active and have expertise, so the need for UNICEF to intervene there is less urgent. UNICEF could and should play coordination role in the international support to child care system assuming policy development and advocacy role, while increasingly outsourcing activities on pilot testing of child care models to international and domestic NGOs. However, if implementation is delegated to other actors it is, of course, essential that the different organisations collaborate to ensure that the activities that are implemented are in agreement with the policies that are being developed and advocated.
- **Monitoring and review.** In general, results-based management is rather limited in both UNICEF and in the government agencies, but a fledgling system of monitoring is in place. It would be useful to understand and share the Government of Kazakhstan's experience of developing a monitoring system that covers both public and private institutions, disaggregated by geographical location and by cause of institutionalisation. This may provide useful lessons for other countries in Central Asia. UNICEF should support the government in further developing this capacity, particularly assisting with the disaggregation of data by gender and age.

UNICEF should also consider how to support the collection and use of qualitative data, and the monitoring of outcomes and impact as well as quantitative inputs and outputs, in order to ensure effective and efficient use of resources. This includes the development of systems for measuring the *effectiveness* of capacity-building and training activities.

UNICEF's regional office for CEE/CIS should consider the possibility of running a series of training programmes and increasing the level and quality of reporting requirements for UNICEF country offices on the basis of contemporary M&E methodology.

2 Kyrgyz Republic

The socioeconomic situation of the Kyrgyz Republic is broadly characterised by a high rate of poverty and the widespread external migration of adults seeking work abroad. This offers a challenging environment for child welfare at the household level, with many children living in difficult economic circumstances or in families where one or both parents are away from home. At the start of the period under review, in October 2003, the Kyrgyz Republic was in its seventh year of economic recovery following some years of experiencing a contracting economy at independence in 1991. But since 2003 economic growth has been volatile, and gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have declined slightly in 2005 around the time of the change of presidential administration. More than four in 10 people now live below the poverty line. Between 2003 and 2006 the unemployment rate has remained relatively flat at about 9–10%¹⁰. Migration of the labour force plays a major role in the economic and social development of the country, since an estimated 350,000 people—30% of the active workforce—now work in other countries of the former Soviet Union, and many others may be working abroad unofficially (Social Research Centre, 2007).

At a macro level these characteristics have brought about a perceived shift in political emphasis away from the direct addressing of social welfare issues (including child care reform) and towards economic growth and labour market policies. This is, of course, not necessarily detrimental in the long run to the well-being of the child but it has an impact on the government's responsiveness to issues regarding children currently at risk or in immediate need of protection.

The political framework of the Kyrgyz Republic has undergone considerable change in recent years, with the major rupture occurring in the 'Tulip Revolution' of March 2005 with the collapse of the government and the departure of President Akaev. This has resulted in a reorganisation of administrative structures and frequent changes of personnel.

2.1 Achievements and gaps in child care reform

In the Kyrgyz Republic, as with other countries of Central Asia, the institutionalisation of children has remained evident during the transition period since the country's independence. But developments in the government's legislative and administrative framework (though not yet its financial framework) indicate a shift in favour of alternative forms of family care, in line with the UN CRC which was ratified by the Kyrgyz Republic in 1994. This section of the report reviews the status of the reform, and Figure 2.1 below provides a summary.

2.1.1 Governance structures

Several important changes have happened in the governance structures responsible for child protection issues at the central and local level from both a legislative and an administrative point of view. The most important change has been the enactment of the Children's Code (2006) which sets the broad framework for a decentralised system of child support services. The Children's Code stipulates that three specialised bodies are responsible for the protection of child interests and rights: the State Agency for Physical Culture, Sports, Youth Policy and Child Protection; the Commission on children's affairs; and Family and Children Support Departments (FCSDs).

¹⁰ UN country office, Kyrgyz Republic.

The focal point of the new structure that is emerging to support child care reform is the Department for Child Protection under the State Agency for Physical Culture, Sports, Youth Policy and Child Protection, which was set up in April 2007 and which has been given responsibility for raising awareness on child rights issues, ensuring adherence to international standards and the overseeing of national standards in child care, as well as accreditation and inspection of child care services. It has absorbed the functions of the National Council for Women, Family and Gender Issues which was under the president's office and played an important role in policy development and promotion. The department has been allocated financial and human resources but lacks experience and has not yet established a strong influence over the line ministries.

At the local level changes have happened only in the pilot areas so far. The FCSDs which are being established at the local level are responsible for identifying children in need of protection or at risk, making an individual assessment of their needs and providing appropriate services including preventive as well as rehabilitation services. They also select and monitor foster families, and they look after the interests of children in residential institutions. Although FCSDs are still at the pilot stage—with UNICEF supporting three, in Moskovsky, Issyk-Ata and Batken *raions*—the intention of the government as agreed in the matrix of conditions for disbursement of the European Union's budget support programme is that this system will be catered for in the state budget and implemented across the whole country by 2010.

The Children's Code makes provision for the establishment of Commissions on Children's Affairs at *raion* and *ayl okmotu* level. These commissions are expected to work on a temporary basis but under a permanent secretariat, monitoring the activities of the FCSDs and approving the FCSD's most important decisions such as on institutionalisation and placement into foster care. At the moment the regulations are not in place for these commissions to be established and the gatekeeping function is instead provided by the existing Commission on Minors. In general, there are contradictions between the Children's Code and existing legislation related to governance structures responsible for gatekeeping, guardianship, trusteeship and adoption functions.

The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Development and the Ministry of Internal Affairs are considered responsible for coordinating and monitoring activities in child rights according to the New Generation programme. The Children's Code tasks the 'authorised government body' in labour and social protection with informing children about their rights in social protection and concluding international agreements on child rights; the division of these tasks between the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the Department for Child Protection is not clear.

The president's office and prime minister's office retain an important role in policy development and promotion, despite the abolition of the National Council for Women, Family and Gender Issues. The president's office has an advisory group on social development, while the prime minister's office has a unit dedicated to social protection issues.

Reforms have been carried out in the sphere of capacity building in governance structures and residential institutions. Training has been provided to the staff of different ministries, Commission on Minors, FCSDs, the staff of residential institutions, and some NGOs. Long-term capacity building is being addressed by UNICEF by developing and improving the curriculum for social work students at Bishkek State University, including the preparation of a manual on modern social work and the establishment of a resource centre.

Figure 2.1 Status of child care system reform, Kyrgyz Republic

Aspects of the reform process	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
Policy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ State Programme “New Generation till 2010” (2001) considers creation of FCSDs in all regions under the local state administrations. However, the programme does not have budget support and is considered to be out of date. ❖ Creation of FCSDs is supported in the matrix of EU budget support programme (2007) . ❖ The Country Development Strategy (2007-2010) does not deal explicitly with governance structures in child social protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ State Programme “New Generation till 2010” and Country Development Strategy propose development of alternative services and transforming residential institutions into day care centers, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In the State Programme “New Generation till 2010” it is intended to develop foster care, guardianship care. To strengthen control over the adoption process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ State Programme “New Generation till 2010” and Country Development Strategy propose deinstitutionalisation and transforming residential institutions into day care centers, etc.
Legislation and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Children’s Code was approved in 2006. However, it contradicts existing legislation, and the secondary legislation for implementation is not yet far advanced, so its potential is not yet fully seen. ❖ In the Children’s Code there are two new specialised bodies responsible for protection of child interests and rights: Commission on children affairs and FCSD. Commission on children affairs should be supported by the secretariat working on a constant basis. The regulation on the Commission on children affairs is being developed now. Regulation on FCSD has not been developed yet. ❖ In the Children’s Code it is not clear who is responsible for informing children about their rights in social protection and concluding international agreements: Ministry of Labour and Social Development or Department for Child Protection ❖ There is also a regulation on guardianship and trusteeship bodies (at the local self-governance and local state administration), and Commission on Minors which contradicts the Children’s Code. This regulation stipulates that there are guardianship and trusteeship bodies. ❖ New department for child protection was created according to the law on State Agency for Physical Culture, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No draft laws on bodies providing family support services were developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are laws on guardianship authorities and adoption. Family substitute services are also described in Children’s Code. ❖ Draft regulation on foster care exists, but not approved. ❖ There is a contradiction between Children’s Code and old legislation on the agency responsible for adoption. De jure this function is transferred to the State Agency for Physical Culture, Sports, Youth Policy and Child Protection, but de facto Ministry of Education continues to work in this field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are laws on different types of institutions: boarding schools, family type children homes, etc. E.g. “On boarding schools”, “On family type children homes”, etc. The law “On boarding schools” was adopted in 1995 and amended several times. The law stipulates the limit on the number of children in different institutions, conditions, staff, etc. ❖ The law on family type children homes/foster parents was enacted in 1998. This law stipulates the number of children (5-10), requirements to family, conditions, etc. ❖ The standards of care for children left without parental care and orphans in institutions are developed, but not approved.

Aspects of the reform process	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
	Sports, Youth Policy and Child Protection			
Administrative and financial systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ State Agency for Physical Culture, Sports, Youth Policy and Child Protection is financed through the budget and has responsibility to raise awareness on child rights issues, ensuring adherence to international standards and the overseeing of national standards in child care, as well as accreditation and inspection of child care services, but de facto it is weak and does not have capacity to perform its functions. ❖ Gate-keeping mechanism is provided through Commission on minors at the local level, where deputy akim serves as a chairman. ❖ Pilot Family and Child Support Units are established in 3 regions with temporarily supplement from UNICEF, but their establishment all over the Republic will be financed through the EU budget support programme. They will perform gate-keeping functions with the Commissions on children affairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There is little budget support for the development and provision of alternative services through the grants provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Development. ❖ There are pilot institutions transformed into bodies providing family support services, e.g. Belovodsky children home was transformed with the support of UNICEF. It is financed through the budget. ❖ Medico-Psychological-Pedagogical commissions exist and have not been reformed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ According to the Children's Code, responsible for foster care are pilot FCSDs which identify, approve and monitor foster families locally. ❖ Those several foster families are pilot and do not receive money from the budget. Guardians also do not receive money. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ministry of Health looks after the infant homes. ❖ The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection manages the homes for children over the age of three who are classified as having mental disabilities. ❖ Ministry of Education is responsible for all other residential institutions for children. ❖ There are private children homes. ❖ Mainly institutions are financed through the republican budget, but there are institutions financed through the local budget too. For instance, family type children homes.
Human resources (recruitment and training of personnel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The staff from local governance structures, both pilot and existing institutions is trained. ❖ Curriculum for social work students at Bishkek State University was improved and the manual was prepared. ❖ Social resource centre at the Bishkek State University was supported by UNICEF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The staff of transformed institutions was trained by UNICEF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The staff of pilot FCSDs and transformed institutions were trained the principles of foster care. ❖ Foster parent were trained in pilot areas. ❖ Foster care manual was developed. ❖ Specialist of the NGO "My family" are capable to train foster parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The staff of residential institutions are trained modern social work, concept of deinstitutionalization, foster care, etc.
Representation and participation, rights-based approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ During development of Children's Code participation of civil society and donors was ensured. ❖ The Department for Child Protection has difficulties in obtaining data from Ministries that complicates his work on policy analysis and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Each case in pilot institutions is reviewed case by case. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Adopted child has not right to know his real parents. ❖ it is necessary to have a consent of adopted child above 10 years age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The study on child abuse was prepared by UNICEF ❖ In the laws on residential institutions it is not stipulated that a child may complain.

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Aspects of the reform process	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ During preparation of the “New Generation” civil society and ministries did not have opportunity to contribute. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ All activities of FCSDs should take into account opinion of a child as stipulated in Children’s Code. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The principle of placing children to institutions as a last resort is stipulated in Children’s Code.
<p>Monitoring mechanism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Data on institutional care and other key statistics are provided by ministries and by the National Statistical Committee, including via UNICEF’s TransMONEE project associated with the Innocenti Research Centre. The capacity for, and interest in, ensuring and improving the quality of the data is limited at present. ❖ There is no systematic monitoring of budget resources spent on child care, as well as output or outcome indicators in this field. Cost-benefit analysis, e.g. comparison of costs of residential care with alternative services, is confined to an analytical report prepared by UNICEF and some further analysis that has taken place outside the period under evaluation. ❖ Monitoring of the activities and effectiveness of the pilot FCSDs was carried out in 2007. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In pilot/transformed institutions there are some mechanisms developed to review the cases regularly. ❖ In Issyk-Ata a database was developed, but the format does not allow for any analysis and up-date and so it is not used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Guardianship authorities have to check the condition of a child under guardianship not less than twice a year. ❖ The same body has right to terminate adoption. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Each ministry has its own database on institutions. Information-sharing between ministries, and with the Department for Children protection, would benefit from further development. ❖ There are many private children homes which are not monitored by any ministry, so even the total number of institutions, and children in them, is not known. ❖ Collected information is not analysed and there remains a need to stimulate demand to do this.

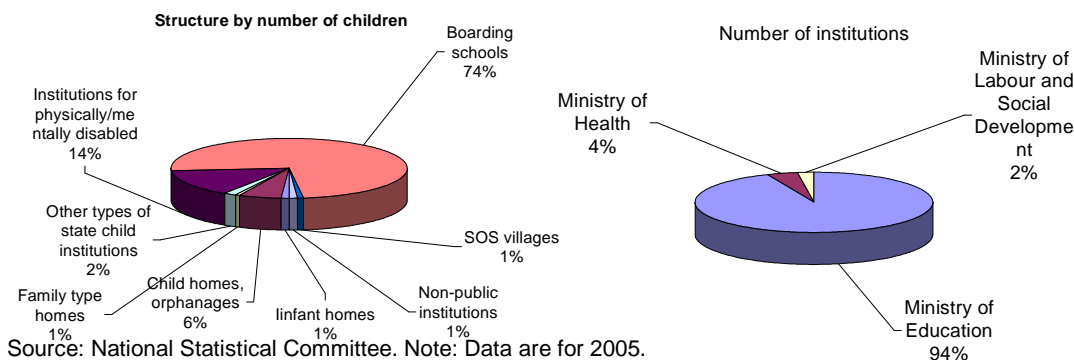
A well functioning system of monitoring in child care is not yet established. Data on institutional care and other key statistics are collected by ministries and by the National Statistical Committee, including via UNICEF's TransMONEE project associated with the Innocenti Research Centre; however, ministries are reluctant to share information with each other. No agency has sufficient responsibility or capacity for monitoring.

It is recognised by the government as well as UNICEF that for the Children's Code to be implemented successfully it is necessary to make further progress in developing secondary legislation and in resolving the contradictions with existing legislation that has created ambiguity and duplication of functions (it was intended that this latter should happen within three months of approval of the code). Further reforms will also depend very much on external financing to set up the local bodies to deal with child protection issues and strengthening and enhancing capacity of the Department for Child Protection.

2.1.2 Residential institutions

Oversight for residential institutions for children is divided among three ministries: the Ministry of Health looks after the infant homes for children up to and including the age of three; the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection manages the homes for children over the age of three who are classified as having mental disabilities, and the Ministry of Education is responsible for all other residential institutions for children, which include *detskie doma* for children aged four to seven, and *internaty* for children over the age of seven. In addition to state-financed institutions there are many private orphanages which are not monitored. Information on the number of children at different institutions and number of institutions by supervising agency is presented in Figure 2.2. The data show that the majority of institutions and children are under the Ministry of Education.

Figure 2.2 State-financed institutions in the Kyrgyz Republic



The work of residential institutions is based on some fairly long-standing regulations such as “On boarding schools” (1995) and “On family type children homes” (1998). These laws stipulate norms such as the limit on the number of children, conditions, and staffing requirements. Draft regulations on minimum standards for institutions looking after children without parental care have been developed but not yet approved.

Deinstitutionalisation and the transformation of the residential institutions into day care centres, and the development of alternative services are proposed in the State Programme “New Generation till 2010” and the Country Development Strategy 2007–10. However, *de facto* progress on reducing the emphasis on residential care in recent years has been mixed. There was little change in the total number of children in residential care in the 10 years up to 2003, with numbers

fluctuating between about 4,500 and 5,400 children, and averaging around 5,000 (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2006). By 2003 the number of children aged three and under entering infant homes stood at its highest since independence (261 children, or a rate of 67 per 100,000 children aged 0–3). Since 2003 the number of children in residential institutions is reported to have increased, and stood at more than 6,300 in 2005¹¹. The number of institutions has also increased.

Considering deinstitutionalisation from the micro-level, this process has only happened in the places where UNICEF has had pilot activities improving the gatekeeping mechanism through the establishment of FCSDs, working with institutions, providing training and technical support. It is necessary to mention also that in some cases improving conditions at institutions has had rather the opposite impact to the direction intended by the CRC and has increased demand for institutions. In general, there is still a strong “pro-institution” attitude among key stakeholders both in ministries and institutions. This complicates and slows down the process of spreading deinstitutionalisation throughout the republic in spite of some successful examples in the pilot areas.

2.1.3 Family support services

The main bodies responsible for providing and coordinating the family support services that were envisaged in the 'New Generation' programme and other strategic documents are the three pilot FCSDs. Performance of the new bodies has been found to depend very much on the local environment, including the commitment of the local authorities, available resources and the existence of institutions in the region. There is no regulation on FCSDs except for general points in the Children's Code which nominates this body as a specialised institute to protect child rights and interests. The new structures have the prospect of becoming sustainable in financial terms: although at the moment they depend on supplements provided by international donors, it has been agreed with the EU Food Security Programme that this system will be catered for in the state budget and implemented across the whole country by 2010. Regarding the development of alternative services there is a little budget support through the grants provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development.

2.1.4 Family substitute services

Family substitute services in the Kyrgyz Republic are mainly represented by guardianship and trusteeship care. According to the National Statistical Committee, each year during the period from 2000–05 the average number of children that entered this type of care was about 1,400. Guardians do not receive any payment from the state. Guardianship is traditionally carried out by grandparents and other close family members (80%). In second place is adoption with an average of about 900 per year during 2000-2005. In 2005 among 924 adoptions 20 were inter-country. Fostering is the most underdeveloped form of care and only practised as a pilot service without paying salaries to foster parents. In spite of this, the staff of one NGO have been trained and now can provide training for potential foster parents.

The current practice of family substitute services is based on the Civil and Family Codes, the laws on “Guardianship and trusteeship authorities” and “Adoption”. However, as was mentioned above, the approval of the Children's Code has made the situation with substitute services unclear. Three obstacles illustrate this point. First, the Children's Code stipulates that FCSDs are responsible for adoption, guardianship / trusteeship and foster care, but they exist only in pilot areas. Second, there is a contradiction between the Children's Code and previous legislation regarding the

¹¹ On-line resource package for CEE/CIS: http://ceecis.org/child_protection/home.html

national agency responsible for adoption: this function has formally been transferred to the State Agency for Physical Culture, Sports, Youth Policy and Child Protection, but in practice the Ministry of Education continues to work in this field. Third, in spite of the stipulated general framework for foster care in Children's Code there is no secondary regulation on it (as with other aspects of the code), which makes it impossible for it to receive financial and administrative support from the state. So, again, the delay in supplementary legislation for the Children's Code has made its implementation difficult so far. Successful cooperation with the EU budget support programme has eliminated the problem of financial sustainability of the FCSDs for a few years, but there remains an opportunity for UNICEF to support the Kyrgyz government to understand the financial costs and benefits of providing these alternative services in comparison to residential care. Some work in this area has begun since the end of the HSTF project.

2.2 Activities of development partners and NGOs

International intervention in child care reform issues is relatively limited outside UNICEF. The European Union has a new programme of support for the social sector which offers €24 million in direct budget support to the government during the period to the end of 2009. One tranche of this is linked to child protection and is conditional on the ongoing development and implementation of a social protection strategy for children as well as the phased establishment of FCSDs mentioned above. The Department for Child Protection is authorised to monitor and report on progress, and the Ministry of Finance is required to provide for the development in its budgetary calculations.

While the European Union is paying attention to social services as part of its programme of budget support, the World Bank focuses more on the related topic of cash benefits. DFID supports poverty reduction work in Osh of a multidisciplinary nature which includes outreach social work to poor families. SIDA has implemented several projects devoted to children at risk, namely developing new methods for social workers' assistance to children at risk and support to their families. SIDA cooperated with the Association of Social Workers of Kyrgyzstan, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and Bishkek State Humanitarian University to develop text books on modern social work. However, the agency is no longer active in this field.

Within the UN, related support is provided by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in the area of poverty reduction, the International Labour Organization which works on child labour issues, and the International Organization for Migration which is supporting the government in the development of migration policy.

Significant support from NGOs is provided by Save the Children (UK and Denmark), EveryChild and *Moya sem'ya*. Save the Children (UK) and EveryChild are piloting community-based services in *raions* in Chui, Jalalabad and Osh *oblasts* which includes components on restructuring residential institutions towards family support and advocacy with children.

2.3 UNICEF's activities

UNICEF's programme of cooperation with the Kyrgyz Republic for 2005–10 reflects the organisation's global priority for child protection with a major component on social policy reform and communication which includes a subprogramme on child policy reform. The programme (the Country Programme Action Plan, CPAP) aims to develop and implement legislative and administrative structures to support child rights, and to carry out pilot projects at local level which can be replicated nationally. Annual work plans are derived from the CPAP rather than from the proposals submitted to donors.

Table 2.1 Summary of relevant UNICEF activities, Kyrgyz Republic

Area	Analysis and assessment	Advocacy	Capacity-building	Pilots
Legislative and administrative frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysis of legislation and regulations on alternative care for children deprived of parental care analysis of legislation and regulations on standards of care in residential institutions draft of standards of care for residential institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advocacy in favour of establishment of department for coordination of child protection at high level of government regional forums on family and child poverty presentation of drama by children from pilot institution to parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support to development and finalisation of Children's Code 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provision of technical assistance to pilot FCSDs in Moskovsky, Issyk-Ata and Batken <i>raions</i> temporary supplement to salaries of social workers in Issyk-Ata <i>raion</i>
Deinstitutionalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> individual assessment of 500 children in residential institutions study on child abuse in residential care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> national conference on standards of care in residential institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> training of staff in institutions in social work methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reform of Belovodsk children's home
Community-based services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysis of existing child care services development of concept of community-based family centres in Chui and Batken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> national children's forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improvements to curriculum of social work students manuals on social work for Bishkek Humanitarian University (BHU) training of staff in pilot institutions and local government on social work methods, prevention of institutionalisation, family support training for social service professionals in art therapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishment of day care and art therapy services, rehabilitation centre, Bishkek support to respite care centre, Orlovka establishment of family-type home, Jalalabad establishment of day care centre for children with disabilities, Jalalabad
Foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> draft of standards of foster care (not yet approved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promotion of foster care in Children's Code 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> training of trainers in foster care some foster families identified and trained manual on foster care for BHU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> foster care set up for nine children in Issyk-Ata

Source: OPM

Funds from donors such as the HSTF are combined with UNICEF's own resources and those from other donors to form a pool from which programme activities in the area of child protection system reform are implemented. In the Kyrgyz Republic the HSTF has been UNICEF's main source of funding for these activities, with a planned budget of \$379,000 over the lifetime of the project; this contrasts with the situation in the neighbouring country, Tajikistan, where HSTF funding for child care reform has been far exceeded by a deinstitutionalisation project from SIDA which has brought donor-funded support there to about \$1 million since 2003. In the Kyrgyz Republic the total amount spent specifically on child care reform by UNICEF is difficult to calculate owing to the overlap with other child protection interventions in the field of juvenile justice and child abuse¹².

The HSTF interventions have been applied to various aspects of child care reform including the development of a legislative and administrative framework at national and local level, support to deinstitutionalisation, the establishment of community-based services and the promotion of foster care. Many of UNICEF's activities during this period are mentioned in the annual progress reports for the HSTF project, and these and others are summarised in Table 2.1 above.

2.4 Evaluation of UNICEF's contribution

2.4.1 Relevance

In the case of the Kyrgyz Republic the government has started to align its objectives and policies with those of the CRC. But the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, on consideration of the initial report of the Kyrgyz Republic on its implementation of the CRC in 2000, noted among its principal subjects of concern that the country suffered from a lack of coordination on children's issues at national and local government level and a lack of budgetary resources, and that it needed to promote alternatives to institutional care and improve its understanding and monitoring of children's issues (see Box 4.1 below). The government set out to implement some of the recommendations, including the adoption of a national plan in the form of the 'New Generation' initiative, and other activities outlined above.

Box 4.1 Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2000

Key recommendations on child care reform included:

- adoption of a national action plan to implement the CRC
- improvement of coordination, including support to local authorities for implementing the CRC
- consideration of the adequate distribution of resources
- establishment of a mechanism to analyse data and to monitor and evaluate implementation of the CRC
- further efforts to disseminate information on children's rights and provide training
- strengthening of foster care, family-type homes and other family-based alternative care services
- development of comprehensive guidelines on adoption, including mechanisms for review and monitoring.

¹² See sections 2.4.3 and 2.4.7 for further discussion of project expenditure and monitoring.

The activities that were selected in the HSTF proposal are relevant to part of this agenda. In particular, they address the need for the dissemination of information, the provision of training to professionals and the advancement of deinstitutionalisation and the development of family-based alternatives to residential care.

1. **Information dissemination.** Lack of public awareness is highlighted as a barrier to reform. The HSTF proposal intends that professionals who have been trained will use the mass media to promote awareness of the principles of child rights and standards of care for children. The proposal also assumes that the implementation of a situation analysis will lead to improved public awareness of the right of a child to grow up in a family environment (though the means by which this information will be disseminated is not described).
2. **Training.** The provision of training is one of the most developed aspects of the HSTF proposal. Extensive consideration is given to training as part of the capacity-building activities for professionals in contact with children in need of protection. Workshops and training courses form the largest part of the project budget. Support to long-term training activities, in the form of social work programmes at university level, is also discussed and consideration is given to the current status of social work training in the Kyrgyz Republic.
3. **Deinstitutionalisation and family-based care.** The deinstitutionalisation agenda is at the core of the HSTF project and all activities are intended to work towards an achievement of a reduced rate of institutionalisation of children and an increase in the number of children being looked after in a family-based environment. The approach of supporting service delivery at a local level by implementing pilot projects for foster care and guardianship is useful for helping to understand what works in a local context.

However, the activities chosen do not respond explicitly to the three crucial issues that must be addressed at central government level in order for reform to be effective and lasting, namely coordination and consensus across government; adequate financial resources; and effective monitoring.

1. **Coordination.** The proposal recognises the lack of coordination within government and the need for a better legislative framework, and cites the achievement of an 'integrated approach' to child care reform as one of its objectives. But capacity-building and advocacy activities are targeted more at social workers and other frontline service providers than at national policymakers, the key individuals who would be able to steer the debate on the reform at the highest level of government and in parliament. (Training of social workers is, of course, an important contribution to child care reform but its impact would benefit from improved support and understanding at a national level). A strong partnership with ministries is declared to be important, but only in the context of improving the sustainability of UNICEF's pilot projects, and not for helping the government to deliver *its* policy priorities. The proposal relies on the 'New Generation' secretariat to provide a coordinating function for child protection activities although this is not a permanent mechanism.
2. **Finance.** There is no mention at all in the proposal of encouraging the reform of central government budget allocations in favour of community-based non-residential care and the development of social work. This lack of attention to the financial implications of implementing its child care policy has been one of the major gaps in UNICEF's approach to reform.
3. **Monitoring.** The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child explicitly recommends to the Kyrgyz government in 2000 that it should seek technical assistance from UNICEF to improve mechanisms for data analysis so that policy-making can be founded on a better evidence base and progress can be monitored. The HSTF project does not offer support in this area.

Moreover, activities related to improvements to the adoption system are entirely absent from the HSTF project even though the proposal acknowledges that the regulation of domestic adoption is a problem.

In the course of implementation of the HSTF project, and in developing complementary activities funded from other sources, UNICEF has shown that it can reflect on the national context and can respond flexibly to changing country circumstances and new opportunities in order to maintain and improve the relevance of its programmes. For instance:

- the change of government and the extensive reorganisation of administrative structures allowed UNICEF and others to press for the establishment of the Department for Child Protection, which now provides an opportunity for improved coordination across government;
- the active support for the development of the Children's Code has been important since this code provides the framework for the reform of administrative, financial and regulatory systems which are necessary for the strengthening of deinstitutionalisation and the establishment of family-based care services;
- the establishment of FCSDs in Moskovsky and Batken *raions* takes advantage of the successes of the earlier Issyk-Ata pilot which emerged from the 'New Generation' programme and which UNICEF also supported; and
- a chance discovery of the activities of a residential institution in Orlovka led to a productive collaboration between the institution and UNICEF, bringing about a redirection of its objectives away from long-term institutional care towards respite care and eventual reintegration of the children.

The effectiveness of these responses is discussed in section 2.4.2 below.

Unfortunately the issues of financing and monitoring of child care reform remain unaddressed even when the opportunities for change have arisen. The concluding observations of the second report of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in 2004, repeat the recommendations of the 2000 report that the government should consider its allocation of financial resources for implementing the CRC and should improve its data collection and analysis. The committee recommends again that the state seek technical assistance from UNICEF in these areas, but UNICEF has not actively incorporated these considerations into its programme of support. Some recognition of the need for improved monitoring and evaluation processes is seen in UNICEF's current CPAP but there is no suggestion of improving the government's own capacity to monitor its activities.

UNICEF must also bear in mind the relevance of its activities for other development partners and find opportunities to align their agendas. One positive example where it has done so is in its coordination with the EU. This has been timely since it has enabled the incorporation of child care reform criteria into the matrix of conditionalities for budget support, which has a much greater financial leverage over the government than UNICEF is able to achieve alone. In contrast, it has not yet made its deinstitutionalisation policy central to a project being implemented by UNDP, on 'Vocational training for street children', where it might have had relevance. Under this project street children are being accommodated in residential institutions in order to receive vocational training and life skills to achieve poverty reduction and improve employment opportunities. It is useful for UNICEF to consider whether deinstitutionalisation is an appropriate policy to pursue in the context of vocational training institutes, where, for instance, students might otherwise be accommodated with local families and attend as day pupils. It is understood that UNDP plans to collaborate with UNICEF on a future phase of this project, and this is to be encouraged.

It is evident that the agenda of advocacy and capacity-building in local public administration and the development of community-based social services is closely aligned with the objectives of the major NGOs in the Kyrgyz Republic, including EveryChild and Save the Children (UK and Denmark). In Issyk-Ata UNICEF's role of supporting policy development and advocating for government reform is viewed as being an appropriate complement to the work of Save the

Children Denmark, which offered good practical support at the local level to individual children and families.

2.4.2 Effectiveness

Legislative and administrative frameworks

UNICEF's support to the development of legislative and administrative frameworks has achieved mixed results. Some significant outputs have been produced, while the effectiveness of other activities in this area are yet to be seen.

The adoption of the Children's Code by the government in 2006 is justifiably viewed by UNICEF and others as being a positive step towards the realisation of the goal of deinstitutionalisation and the development of family-based child care services, the achievement of which is a long-term process. This is an important contribution to the framework for a decentralised system of child support services including a gatekeeping mechanism, foster care and other family-based care services, and activities to reduce the risk of children being in need of protection. However, as is widely recognised, as a standalone document it can have no impact. UNICEF is aware that it must now support the next steps required to make the Children's Code an effective document. These are:

- the elimination of inconsistencies between the Children's Code and other legislation, including the removal of earlier contradictory regulations which are still being applied;
- the development *and approval* of secondary regulations without which the Children's Code has no practical force;
- the widespread dissemination of the implications of changes in the legislation not only to professionals but also to the general public; and
- the integration of the funding requirements arising from the Children's Code into national and local government budget allocations, a task which will only be achieved by widespread interministerial collaboration and which will potentially, of course, necessitate an increase in the budget of some government bodies at the expense of a reduction elsewhere.

The recent establishment of the Department for Child Protection may facilitate the implementation of the Children's Code if it can provide a leadership role. However, there is concern that the location of the department within the State Agency for Physical Culture, Sport and Youth leaves it in a poor position to exert influence over the larger ministries who control the residential institutions and their budgets, and that this may increase rather than reduce the fragmentation of child care responsibilities. This choice of location was a decision of Parliament, not that of the president, line ministries or other development partners, which reaffirms the importance of working across the whole political arena to promote awareness and public support for the proposed changes. While UNICEF may be seen to have had some degree of effectiveness in supporting the initiation of this government coordination body, it might be considered an advocacy failure that UNICEF was unable to persuade the relevant authorities of the importance of locating the department in a sufficiently high position in the administrative structure. The department is extremely new, so concern about the inexperience of its staff and its limited influence may be resolved as it becomes more established.

The department will benefit from strong support from UNICEF and other partners in developing its credibility. It is observed that while UNICEF supported the development of the department's strategy, it has been less forthcoming in turning to the department as a first-choice partner in government or providing analysis that may be of use in policy development.

The lack of access to UNICEF's analytical work is not confined to the Department for Child Protection. There is generally little evidence of the regular use of UNICEF reports at government level. One ministry regularly uses a statistical report issued by UNICEF in 2000 and urges UNICEF to update it. No reference was made to more analytical pieces such as the recent comprehensive analysis of the procedures and practices of adoption or the review of legislation concerning children without parental care. UNICEF could improve the effectiveness of its research activities by proactively disseminating results to key policymakers and other stakeholders (including NGOs and relevant donors) without waiting for specific requests.

Deinstitutionalisation

The trend in the numbers of children entering residential care remain counter to the intentions of the government, UNICEF and others.

The potential effectiveness of the deinstitutionalisation agenda is seen in Issyk-Ata, which has been piloting an FCSD since 2002. Many children in that *raion* have been prevented from institutionalisation by the implementation of an effective gatekeeping mechanism and a system of family support by social workers; and according to the head of the FCSD only a dozen children from Issyk-Ata now remain in *internats*. Important factors in this success are the commitment of the *akim* and the relatively high level of resources available in that *raion* compared with others. It is also helped by the fact that the region has no residential institutions of its own and there is good public awareness of the existence and activities of the FCSD.

In many other areas the culture is still 'pro-institution', among people at central as well as local government level (including in some areas where UNICEF is operational) and also among the general public, particularly in places where alternative options for supporting children and families are not widely known. In Moskovsky *raion*, where an FCSD was set up at the end of 2006, FCSD staff do not consider that deinstitutionalisation is favoured by the local community, nor do they feel sufficiently well resourced to tackle the obstacles to the implementation of the policy. Their view is reflected in the focus group with parents of children in Belovodsk children's home, where parents say they aspire to keep their children in the home so that they themselves can work and save for the future.

There are vested interests in maintaining institutions among ministries, local governments and staff. For ministries the running costs are factored into their overall budget allocations which enhances their financial and political strength. For local governments and staff institutions are an important source of employment (and therefore are seen to be good for votes), particularly since many are located in areas where alternative employment opportunities are limited. The presidential decree of August 2007, on 'Protection and support of children', mandates an increase in the salaries of staff in residential institutions, which risks further entrenchment of these interests. If these interests are not challenged the government's child care reform agenda will be constrained and it will be difficult to make swift progress in implementing the strategies that have been proposed.

UNICEF has the opportunity here to play a crucial role in identifying the factors that prevent the deinstitutionalisation policy from being effective and using its influence in policy discussions and advocacy, where it is viewed by others as having particular credibility, to encourage reform. This may include:

- identifying champions for change;

- providing support to the government in developing its plans for the reallocation of resources to family-based services and the process of closure or reform of institutions, including retraining or redeployment of staff; and
- working to change public attitudes towards institutions.

At the same time as residential institutions are being reformed, an important element of child protection is supporting the improvement of standards in those that remain. Here, too, UNICEF has had mixed success. Regulations on standards of residential care have been drafted but not yet approved. The report on child abuse in institutions has been effective in exposing malpractice to policymakers and implementing partners, and of all UNICEF's analytical reports it was the one most widely referred to by people interviewed by the evaluation team.

But there is evidence (e.g. in Belovodsk) that improvements to residential institutions have been detrimental to the deinstitutionalisation process, resulting in increased applications for the admission of children to residential care, where the issue of public awareness has not been addressed and family-based alternatives are underdeveloped. This suggests that UNICEF needs to consider the sequencing of its activities in order to maximise their effect. Where institutions remain in operation, UNICEF can further develop the 'shared care' model and advocate this to policy-makers, offering a transitional alternative to closure. Under this model the institution becomes an adjunct to family life, supporting the parents but not being used by them as a permanent resource; it offers outreach functions and is allied to a gatekeeping system on entry.

Family substitute services

UNICEF has been effective in achieving some of its intended outputs in relation to the development of a foster care system in the Kyrgyz Republic. These include the recruitment and training of foster care families and specialists in Issyk-Ata, the provision of training on foster care to specialists in institutions, and the production of the foster care manual for social work students at the Bishkek Humanitarian University. With UNICEF support the NGO *Moya sem'ya* now also has the capacity to train foster parents and social workers. The activities have been useful in raising awareness about fostering as an alternative to residential care among people at local administration level in pilot regions, and among social workers.

But opportunities for foster care will remain scarce until regulatory mechanisms and financial incentives are established. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development approved of UNICEF's interest in foster care but acknowledged that government policies are not yet in place to support the process, although it is in keeping with the principles of the 'New Generation' programme. The Children's Code makes provision for FCSDs to identify, approve and monitor foster families locally, but the secondary legislation is not yet in place to allow for implementation. Draft regulations have been produced by the Ministry of Education, with the support of UNICEF, but have not been approved. Without these any activities in foster care are likely to remain premature and unsustainable.

Family support services

While UNICEF is seen by many partners to have an important role to play in policy discussions, it has also proved to be effective in some aspects of its work piloting community-based services at local level. Examples of this work include the transformation of Belovodsk children's home, the introduction of new services at a rehabilitation centre for street children in Bishkek, and the opening of a day care centre for disabled children in Jalalabad. Specific interventions to demonstrate reform of methods of working in institutions have had successful outcomes and do

provide models for others: for example, the Belovodsk model mentioned above demonstrates how institutional care can be reformed 'on site' to provide family-based support. But at the same time these pilots can leave existing practices untouched where government officials or managers do not consider them relevant. UNICEF now needs to consider how to replicate the successes of its pilot projects, taking into account the fact that some of the key factors in those successes may be specific to the pilot areas.

In terms of its support to local governments in pilot FCSDs, it has been described above that the Issyk-Ata pilot (which has been the longest running) is showing signs of being more effective than those in Moskovsky and Batken *raions*. A reason for the effectiveness of Issyk-Ata FCSD is the absence of institutions in the region, a contrast to the situation in Batken where the pilot FCSD is in a *raion* with two institutions and where the deinstitutionalisation programme is proving less effective. The inappropriate application of this model to other areas without due attention to the local context may pose a risk to the acceptability of the policies being implemented. One *raion* objected to what it saw as the endlessly repeated parading of Issyk-Ata as a model FCSD. It felt that it had learnt some useful lessons during the first few times it had attended training sessions and seminars about that pilot, but now it lacked support from UNICEF in applying and adapting what it had learnt to its own context.

As for UNICEF's support to pilot institutions, satisfaction amongst the institution staff is high. Training and advocacy activities, including workshops and study visits, are particularly well regarded. UNICEF's analytical reports are generally better valued by these local partners than by national and international partners, perhaps because there is limited access to alternative information.

UNICEF will benefit from working towards greater synergy between its pilot projects and those being carried out by Save the Children and EveryChild within EU and DFID programmes, in order to present policy alternatives to government in a more coordinated manner and with a stronger voice from the donor community.

Crucial to the expansion of the pilot projects to the whole country is the resolution of the issues of financing and administration mentioned above. The shift towards community-based rather than residential services, in the context of increasing decentralisation, necessitates a transfer of resources from the central to the local level. In discussions with the government it was acknowledged that this is possible in principle, but in practice there is a reluctance to move from what is considered to be more reliable central government control of funding to a system of more 'vulnerable' local government control, where it is perceived that administrators have not yet developed everywhere the capacity to disburse and monitor funds as efficiently.

Moreover the Ministry of Finance has not yet resolved with Parliament its objections to two-tier rather than three-tier budgeting, i.e. the concentration of funding at central and *ayl okmotu* level only, removing the control of funds at *raion* level. The concern is that if the *raions* do not have some control over local funds then the capacity limitations will be even greater. There is no mechanism for earmarking transfers from republican level to local-level budgets for child care reform. Further progress by the government in determining and implementing its broad decentralisation policy is therefore crucial if the government's own strategies in child care reform are to carry their intended weight.

2.4.3 Efficiency

The HSTF-funded project has recovered well from the contractual delays which led to the late disbursement of the initial project funds. Although there was very little expenditure in 2004 (just 5%

of the total project budget), the UNICEF country office spent a further 24% of resources in 2005 and 42% in 2006, and UNICEF reports that remaining funds have been disbursed by the end of the project in July 2007¹³. This suggests that there has been an increasingly heavy concentration of project activities as time has progressed.

Annual progress reports for the project in the Kyrgyz Republic summarise expenditure according to the original budgets and the five main sets of activities (situation analysis, advocacy, capacity-building, pilots of community centres, and promotion of foster care), as well as on monitoring and evaluation and on project support (administrative costs). Funds have been spent on the broad areas of activity listed in the original proposal of 2003, and as of the end of 2006 expenditure on each of the five main activities was reported to be within the planned ceiling for that part of the budget.

All the planned budget for advocacy activities was used up within the first two years of the project, so no funds at all are reported to have been spent on advocacy in 2006 (UNICEF, 2006). The UNICEF country office indicated that it would have liked to carry out advocacy activities on a much larger scale, encouraging behaviour change with respect to attitudes towards institutional care and community-based services among the wider public, which might have improved the environment for developing a sustained demand for change; with a small budget for advocacy it was necessary to focus efforts on a smaller group of key professionals and experts, running the risk that if those people left their jobs or were replaced—as has been the case during this period of widespread political change—then the impact of those efforts would be reduced. The evaluation team understands that UNICEF responded to this by either funding additional advocacy activities from other sources or else attributing them to different lines of the project. These activities include two large regional forums on family and poverty.

Nothing is shown as being spent on pilot community centres in 2004 or 2005. UNICEF suggests that, if it had been possible to spend the funds exactly as it wanted, it would have been keen to spend more funds on the development of alternative services and less on reorganising existing residential institutions. Despite the apparent lack of expenditure in this area in the first two years it is known that a few initial inputs did start to take place during this time.

One area of concern with regard to programme expenditure is that only 2% of the planned budget for monitoring and evaluation—just \$735 out of \$37,000—is reported to have been spent by the end of 2006. The team recommends that UNICEF probes further the causes of this considerable shortfall, which may have arisen for any one or more of a number of reasons ranging from a lack of interest or technical capacity in monitoring, to a lack of data or of activities to monitor, to misreporting of M&E activities under a different budget line. Again, see section 2.4.7 for a further related discussion.

Some of these anomalies may be explained by the difficulty in attributing actual expenditures to the five activities prescribed in the proposal, and therefore they may simply highlight a problem with the mechanism for *reporting* expenditure rather than a problem with spending the funds themselves. Results-based monitoring and reporting activities are discussed further in section 2.4.7 below. The proposal budget was intended to be generic to all five countries, and it has been difficult for UNICEF to carry out extensive reallocation of overall resources between line items in order to respond to country-specific circumstances. The line items do not match exactly the items under UNICEF's annual work plan in child protection which is drawn from its country programme, and which responds more flexibly to current needs. UNICEF seems to retrospectively assign the activities it has carried out under its annual work plan to match the line items listed in the proposal.

¹³ The project team was not able to verify the expenditure for 2007 during the visit.

The evaluation team endorses this flexible response as it represents an attempt to improve the effective use of project funds rather than be constrained by the very detailed terms of the original budget. However, it highlights the potential challenge that can often arise when a single region-wide programme has to be fitted into individual country processes. It is possible that the proposal did not make sufficient allowance for country-specific approaches to child care system reform. It is suggested that donors should be prepared to accept greater flexibility in the design of projects, particularly in the era of the Paris Declaration and increased national country ownership of development programmes, in order to reduce the risk of inefficiency during implementation.

The only area of the HSTF budget which was already overspent by the end of 2006 is the administrative costs of staffing and equipment, which exceeded the total planned budget for that line item by just under \$2,000 by December 2006 with another seven months of the project remaining. As of the end of 2006 administrative costs made up 12% of total project expenditure so far, against the planned proportion of 8%. It is difficult to say whether this is due to underbudgeting or whether it represents a significant loss in project efficiency, but the evaluation team considers that this merits further explanation. It would be valuable for UNICEF to review the causes of this difference in order to better understand whether the administrative burden has been affected by changes in the emphasis of project activities or by external circumstances; or if changes to planning and administration processes can be made in order to improve efficiency.

The overall budget and actual expenditure on other UNICEF projects on child care reform were not available to the evaluation team. It is noted that, as with the HSTF project, estimates for the annual project budgets are included in the annual work plan. The team recommends that UNICEF continues to use its financial reporting system to monitor its budgets and to ensure that it is satisfied with reasons for divergences from planned expenditure.

As far as the efficiency of UNICEF's expenditure is concerned with regard to expenditure by other development partners, the team found some instances of successful coordination and some opportunities for future collaboration. In particular, it is important that UNICEF has worked with the EU budget support programme to identify conditions for disbursement of instalment of funds on the basis of an improvement in the management of vulnerable families and children at risk. Some 30% of the variable instalment of EU budget support funds for the financial years 2008–10—more than €4 million in total—is dependent on this condition, which includes provisions for the establishment of FCSDs throughout the country, funded by the state budget. Since these departments form an essential part of the government's infrastructure for delivering community-based family support services and for working towards a reduction in the institutionalisation of children, this can be seen as a positive example of donor coordination and effective leverage.

On a smaller scale, the complementary activities of UNICEF with Save the Children Denmark in Issyk-Ata (see section 2.4.1 above) are another example of an efficient use of resources to achieve more comprehensive coverage of activities for the client than UNICEF would have been able to do by itself alone. It is recommended that this type of collaboration, which in this instance arose by chance, be sought out and formalised in future cases of involvement at the local government level.

2.4.4 Impact

Details of the impact of the HSTF programme on deinstitutionalisation are confined to anecdotal evidence. In Issyk-Ata, for example, nine children were placed in foster families at the time of the support from UNICEF and Save the Children Denmark; once the pilot funding for foster care ended and was not replaced by state funding, four of these children were placed in institutions but the other five were able either to return to their biological families or to remain in their foster families as adopted children. In Bishkek children who were previously living on the streets now sometimes

voluntarily refer themselves to the rehabilitation centre for support in being reintegrated into a family.

Nonetheless, the national trends since 2003 in general appear to be contrary to UNICEF's objectives. UNICEF's own research indicates that there may have been a large growth in the rate of children being brought up in the official care system between 2003 and 2005 (TransMONEE, 2006)¹⁴. The 20% reduction in institutionalisation sought by UNICEF in its HSTF proposal was ambitious and has not been achieved in the Kyrgyz Republic. It may be some years before the changes set in place with the support of UNICEF are able to achieve this considerable impact.

According to UNICEF the number of residential institutions for children increased from 66 to 95 between 2003 and 2005. This is thought to include many privately run institutions which are not known to be widely regulated or monitored. While UNICEF is focusing its efforts on the important task of working with the government to try to reduce the number of children in government-run residential care, it should not be forgotten that many children are being looked after outside that system. This is seen in Orlovka, where intervention began after a chance reading of a newspaper article and where UNICEF's support has resulted in the adoption of practices that are conducive to children having an improved opportunity to return to a family-based environment (such as the regular review of individual cases and the provision of support to the children's families). UNICEF should consider how it can best influence the development of these unregulated institutions even without working on a project basis with each one individually. Here, a continued emphasis on public information campaigns and advocacy work to increase the acceptability and availability of alternatives may be one option.

Expenditure on residential institutions operated by the Ministry of Education has increased from KGS 67.9 million in 2003 to KGS 100.5 million in 2006, a rise of some 48%, with much of this increase occurring in staff salary costs: salaries for staff in residential institutions have increased by 71% during this period, rising from KGS 28.0 million to KGS 48.0 million¹⁵. Annual inflation has remained within the range of 3–6% so these figures represent considerable real increases in expenditure on institutional care by the Kyrgyz government during the time that UNICEF's projects on deinstitutionalisation have been in operation (International Monetary Fund, 2007). The latest presidential decree is expected to result in further increases in expenditure, particularly on salaries. There is a risk that the strength of the system of residential institutions will be reinforced rather than reduced. There is no evidence that any option has been proposed to ensure that the funding of the institutions becomes linked to their capacity to change their function by retraining staff and developing outreach and family support capabilities.

UNICEF has had little impact on the flow of children into the institutions run by the Ministry of Health. Although preventing very young children from being admitted to infant homes is crucial for reducing both the rate and the duration of institutionalisation, it is a problem which does not appear to be changing and is not addressed by UNICEF. UNICEF's programme of work with the ministry concentrates more on nutrition, early years care and good practice in infant homes.

It is not certain that the child care services are well targeted at the poorest or those most in need. In Belovodsk many beneficiaries are parents seeking regular care for their children while they are at work. Coordination with organisations on cash benefits and labour market policy may reduce the number of families who look for residential care for their children because of employment problems.

¹⁴ Precise figures in that report should be treated with caution since they conflict with other reports drawn from the same data source and the discrepancy has not been verified.

¹⁵ Figures are from the Ministry of Education.

2.4.5 Sustainability

Financial sustainability

At the broadest level, the financial sustainability of the initiatives supported by UNICEF is not yet assured. There is no fixed ceiling to child protection expenditures in the overall government budget because this expenditure can be spread across several ministries. However, the ceilings for expenditure by individual ministries can only be altered during the preparation of the annual budget and even then are only likely to take place on the basis of formal decrees. Changes to salaries are only possible by government decree or by documents of a similar level. The president's decree on child protection, issued in August 2007, will affect the government budget though no quantitative estimates were available at the time of the evaluation; but that decree, not linked to any change in function, increases rather than reduces the flow of money into institutional care and therefore runs counter to UNICEF's efforts. Funds for foster care and guardianship, in contrast, have not been approved.

There is no evidence that UNICEF has been able to articulate to the government the financial implications of its proposals, or supported the government in generating its own estimates of the costs of funding alternative services. Moreover, the Ministry of Finance said it had not had any dealings with UNICEF, nor had UNICEF participated in budget processes. It is understood that UNICEF is undertaking some costing work at the moment on child care services. The team urges that this work is continued and disseminated as widely as possible as it will form an essential component of the debate about the relative value of community-based services in comparison to residential care.

The move from centrally provided residential care towards community-based services entails a redistribution of funds from the centre to the local level. UNICEF must consider how to advocate and support this process if it is to achieve long-term sustainability in its community-level projects. It was clear from discussions with the Ministry of Finance that while it is theoretically possible to transfer resources from a central budget to a local authority, there is widespread resistance to this move on the grounds that local authority funding is less reliable and that local governments may have less capacity to disburse resources effectively. There is no practical mechanism for earmarking transfers from republican to local level for child protection expenditures. If parliament insists that the budget remains a two-level budget, i.e. with funds being spent at central or *ay/okmotu* level but with no authority for expenditure at the raion level, the incentive to retain money at the centre will be even stronger.

With regard to the financial sustainability of individual projects, UNICEF has achieved mixed success. On the one hand, salaries for two specialists at the Centre for the Rehabilitation and Adaptation of Homeless Children in Bishkek have now been absorbed successfully into the mayoral budget, which allows for long-term sustainability of those posts. On the other hand, in Issyk-Ata FCSD, a two-year subsidy by UNICEF for social workers was ended without an alternative means of additional funding being established; now the social workers have reduced pay this has resulted in the FCSD feeling less able to place the same demands on their workload and the service is considered to have become less effective. The small grants process initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development for community-based work is currently a very limited amount, but if good practice is supported and documented it could be a useful lever for gaining further resources.

Institutional structures

One reason for continued support of residential institutions by local administrations is the lack of alternative services (which may also provide alternative job opportunities). In many instances the reason for not developing alternative services was cited as being the lack of the legal framework to permit these services to be carried out. The adoption of the Children's Code is a step towards resolving these issues but, as the Ministry of Finance confirmed, further detailed legislation must be developed and passed before funds can be redirected away from institutions. It is imperative for UNICEF to work with government and other development partners to understand the reasons for delays in passing draft regulations and to work towards a resolution of problems.

Attitudes

It was mentioned above (section 2.4.2) that there are mixed attitudes towards deinstitutionalisation and the establishment of community-based services, not so much because of considerations about the welfare of the child—although that sometimes remains an issue—but rather because of the implication of the closure of institutions for the allocation of resources to ministries and the availability of jobs in remote areas.

In localities where UNICEF has been able to identify and work with local champions for change the prospect of longer-term sustainability for pilot projects has been improved. For example, as mentioned in UNICEF's review of its work in Issyk-Ata and confirmed in interviews with the evaluation team, the support of the *akim* in Issyk-Ata was instrumental in establishing the FCSD, and the practical support of the head of the department, Ekaterina Horoshman, has been important for continuing its development (see also Evans, 2007). Widespread publicity about the department ensures both that local people use its services, and that it is considered politically unacceptable for subsequent *akims* to make any substantial cuts in service provision.

In contrast, where there are political and economic interests in maintaining local institutions, as in Moskovsky and Batken *raions*, the political will for reform is less strong and children continue to be admitted to institutions.

2.4.6 Rights-based approaches

There is evidence that the principles of a rights-based approach are being applied in the Kyrgyz Republic. Formal acknowledgement of the rights of the child is widely evident in government documentation. The government's 'New Generation' programme of 2001–10 was developed to implement the principles of CRC in the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Children's Code has a particular focus on the articulation of those rights. UNICEF is recognised by its partners, to varying degrees, as having contributed to this awareness. Any increase in interaction between UNICEF and key players at the highest levels of government may offer an opportunity to ensure that this commitment continues to be translated into practice.

At a facility level, awareness of the rights of the child was evident among both staff and users at facilities visited by the evaluation team. A list of rights is displayed on the wall at both the respite centre in Orlovka and the Centre for the Rehabilitation and Adaptation of Homeless Children in Bishkek, and children are able to cite examples of their rights, e.g. the entitlement to be cared for and to receive an education. In practice there was no evidence that those rights were being violated. There was evidence of the use of a rights-based approach e.g. in the practice of admitting children to Orlovka for a defined period with a review at the end of the term to allow for consideration of reintegrating the child into the family, and in the participation of children and their

families in discussions about their welfare (principle of participation and inclusion). It is understood that UNICEF has been influential in developing these processes, which are commendable.

In both facilities there are children who have been resident for several years. It was not possible within the timeframe of this evaluation to ascertain whether those children might have been found family placements. It is recognised that there are circumstances when it may be in the best interests of a particular child not to be returned to a family environment.

The 2006 report on child abuse in institutions is intended to assess the extent to which the rights of the CRC are being observed in an institutional setting and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate. This report is perceived by some respondents to be a valuable contribution to the open discussion of child rights issues. However, it was evident from the Ministry of Education's response to questions that it was reluctant to accept the likelihood of systematic neglect or abuse taking place in institutions: it would be advisable for UNICEF to seek ways of bringing more open accountability for practices and demonstration of rights of children who are looked after by the state, into government policy.

2.4.7 Results-based management

The UNICEF country office in the Kyrgyz Republic shows some evidence of the results-based programming approach that is adopted by UNICEF worldwide, particularly in the design of its core documentation. At the highest level this approach is seen in UNICEF's medium-term strategic plan, which sets out the organisation's international goals and commitments, and indicates the partnerships through which it expects to achieve results. The medium-term plans that cover the period being evaluated are for 2002–05 and 2006–09; child protection is a focus area in both plans. The CPAP for 2005–10 outlines the set of activities agreed between UNICEF and the government for that period. The results matrix it contains is based on the earlier medium-term plan but also does not conflict with the later plan. The results and resources framework is reflected in the UNDAF and also matches the planned activities under the annual work plan. The HSTF-funded project was already in operation when the most recent set of plans were produced; again, its objectives do not seem to conflict with the national and international strategies.

However, it is not clear to the evaluation team whether or how the raft of results matrices and frameworks have been used during the implementation of the project, nor how it was intended that they should be used. Many of the country targets are ambiguous or difficult to measure. For instance, the key progress indicator 3.1.1 in the country programme document results matrix is 'number and type of benefits and services for children and families in place at provincial level', but it is difficult to ascertain how services will be counted, and whether 'more' services is necessarily better, and in what way services can be ranked such that the type of benefit can be an indicator of progress (UNICEF, 2005). Similarly, indicator 3.2.3 cites the number of cases of abuse and violence that are registered and referred within the child protection system. It is not known whether the intention is for this number to increase (implying an improvement in identification of vulnerable children who are registered and supported by the system) or decrease (which might indicate that the incidence of such cases is decreasing). It is therefore unsurprising that little use is made of these targets and indicators. No reference was made to them by any interviewees, nor are they cited in the project progress reports.

The problem of imprecise definition of activities to be implemented and monitored is not confined to the results matrices and the M&E sections of proposals and reports. The difficulty of defining and monitoring 'institutional care' is a striking example of this problem. The HSTF proposal contains an objective of achieving a 20% reduction in the number of children in institutional care by the end of 2005. But in discussions with UNICEF staff and government representatives there was no

consensus on what counts as an institution. It might include institutions of the three main ministries with responsibilities for child care; but it seemed that there was no agreement on whether it should also include the dozens of private institutions. It was thought not to cover vocational training institutions, even though the children of those institutions might have an opportunity to live locally in families and UNICEF might have a view on whether this would be preferable for their welfare and development. It was not apparent whether one should count children who might be in residential schools because they came from remote areas and would otherwise not receive education at all.

Regular reports for the HSTF project tend to concentrate more on output indicators—the number of people trained, the number of meetings held etc.— than on the overall impact of those activities; however, there are some positive efforts to look at the wider picture in terms of reporting the number of children prevented from being institutionalised, as reported in that project and the report on the project 'Integrated community-based services for children and families'.

One of the difficulties in monitoring is the poor quality of available data. Data on institutional care and other key statistics are provided by ministries and by the National Statistical Committee, including via UNICEF's TransMONEE project associated with the Innocenti Research Centre, but no support is provided to improve the quality of data collection and analysis. In fact, the team was informed by UNICEF that it was not the organisation's business to query the content of data provided by other institutions, or even to check whether analysis of figures from ministry sources matched their own analysis using the same data sources. It is disappointing to recognise that this means that not only does UNICEF have difficulty identifying data for indicators, but also that the government and other partners in the child care system are also unable to monitor progress. This makes it impossible for a monitoring system to feed into policy review and development as one might hope.

There is therefore a large opportunity here for UNICEF in terms of supporting the further development of systems for data collection and analysis, and encouraging the use of evidence in developing policy at national and subnational level. This aligns well with UNICEF's intention to deepen its expertise as a knowledge base.

2.5 Conclusions

2.5.1 The status of reform in the Kyrgyz Republic

The distinguishing feature of the child care system in the Kyrgyz Republic is that, while some reform activities are having a positive effect at a micro level, the number of children entering residential care appears to be continuing to expand. The reform of child care policy alone may not be sufficient to turn around this trend: successful outcomes are affected by broader issues which may include employment and migration policy. In part the delayed progress is also an inevitable consequence of the turnover of staff and restructuring of government departments arising from frequent political changes. Moreover, public expenditure on residential institutions increased enormously during the period of the HSTF project and has continued to do so since.

Nonetheless, the government has already started to align some of its policies to the CRC. Measures can be—and have already begun to be—taken to support the reform of child care in favour of family-based environments. A significant step forward was the adoption of the Children's Code, which was achieved even during this period of considerable administrative restructuring. But detailed consideration of how the activities in the code will be funded has not yet occurred; and although one would not expect secondary regulations to be in place simultaneously with primary

legislation, a broad costing of the implications of the policy would have ensured that its proposals were financially viable. The unresolved debate between the Ministry of Finance and parliament about the best model for decentralisation is an impediment to the implementation of a decentralised and fully funded child care system. As in other countries of the region, the pace and sustainability of reform is also affected by the degree of acceptance of the deinstitutionalisation process by the general public as well as by policymakers, particularly in parliament.

The establishment of the Department of Child Protection may reduce the fragmentation of child care policy at the central government level if it is able to develop a position as the lead organisation for these issues. However, the current status and resource base of the new department are not on a par with the larger line ministries. Since it was a new department at the time of the evaluation the team is unable to draw conclusions yet about its effectiveness.

2.5.2 UNICEF's contribution to reform

UNICEF has made positive contributions to the child care reform programme and the implementation of the UN CRC in the Kyrgyz Republic, including in areas such as support to improved coordination among government structures where action was recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child but which was not an explicit part of the original HSTF proposal. Its contributions are seen especially in pilot projects, which appear to be appreciated by users and where UNICEF's support is warmly acknowledged by staff. UNICEF has contributed to a shift in attitudes in favour of family-based care services, both with immediate effect through activities such as the drama about the experiences of street children and also, in the long run, through influencing the curriculum of social work students at Bishkek Humanitarian University. In some other locations UNICEF's interventions so far seem to have had a lesser effect, and the attention to the development of governance structures at the national level mentioned above has not achieved as strong an outcome as might have been hoped. In general the impact of UNICEF's interventions is difficult to determine, particularly given the lack of programme- and sector-wide monitoring. Evidence on the likely sustainability of the activities is very mixed. Some aspects of rights-based approaches have been considered and promoted during implementation of the project, and there is awareness of rights among children in pilot facilities. Results-based management, in contrast, has not yet become established as a regular practice for UNICEF in the area of child care reform.

The emphasis of UNICEF's Kyrgyz office during the period of the HSTF, perhaps more so than in other countries, is on policy development. Additional resources have been spent on advocacy, for example, beyond those provided by the project. This focus has reaped benefits such as the approval of the Children's Code and the successful cooperation with the EU budget support programme. However, the full benefits will not be seen until it is certain that the policies such as the Children's Code can be financed and the institutional framework set in place to make it feasible; for other policies such as the draft standards on foster care and on residential institutions there needs to be political will to approve them. The evaluation team was not able to obtain evidence that these developments were likely to take place in the near future.

2.6 Lessons learned

Some lessons have been learned from the Kyrgyz experience that may be useful not only to UNICEF but also to other stakeholders in child care reform:

- Policy outcomes are influenced by a very wide range of stakeholders. As an example, the location of the Department for Child Protection in the State Agency for Physical Culture, Sports,

Youth Policy and Child Protection was determined by parliament, despite conflicting views from the president's administration and many development partners. Another example is that the number of children in institutions is affected by the actions of private individuals who open residential facilities independently of the state. Activities are therefore more likely to be successful if they engage a range of different partners; otherwise there is a risk that achievements with one partner will be offset by contrasting activities by another.

- Policy development has been an area in which UNICEF has invested a lot of its efforts. Several significant achievements in this area have been cited above. The lesson, though, is that policy development ultimately has little impact if the systems cannot be put in place to implement it.
- UNICEF's activities, especially at pilot level, are particularly effective in places where a change of attitude in favour of its programme of family-based support has already occurred. The positive attitude includes both individual champions, such as the *akim* of Issyk-Ata, and the general public. A widespread campaign to transform public opinion will enable the principles of the CRC—even if not mentioned explicitly—to be better understood and received.
- For effective, small-scale interventions at pilot level to achieve their greatest impact it is important to tackle at the same time the wider issues of why people are entering the system. This need to look at the wider picture was also recognised by the UNICEF team during the evaluation in its own analysis of its strengths and weaknesses.
- An understanding of the effectiveness and the most efficient use of resources for child care is a challenge in the absence of a demand for reliable and up-to-date information.

2.7 Recommendations for UNICEF

- **Governance structures.** Scale up support to the national coordination body, the Department of Child Protection, to improve its ability to influence policy, including over other ministries; this includes supporting it in the development of regulations and funding to implement the Children's Code. The department considers that it could benefit from greater intervention from UNICEF than it currently receives. Where appropriate, act as a consolidating and coordinating organisation for the activities of other partners.

Work with the EU to assist the Ministry of Labour and Social Development in supporting the development of FCSDs across the country.

- **Residential care.** Identify the causes of the lack of progress in deinstitutionalisation, reviewing the whole policy cycle to assess what the gaps are at the stages of policy development, implementation and monitoring. Work with relevant government bodies and development partners to resolve them. This is likely to include evidence-based discussions with the government on the need to reallocate its budgetary resources, with more precise demonstration of the high costs of residential care, the cost of alternatives and the means of effecting transition to family support through reprofiling.
- **Family substitute services.** Understand the reasons why the foster care regulations have not been approved, and work to resolve the issues.
Take a higher profile role in adoption, seeking improved legislation and practice for national and international adoption.
- **Family support services.** Continue support to the university social work curriculum which is a sound contribution to long-term policy change and sustainability
- **Problem identification.** Information sharing has generally been of an *ad hoc* nature, good at times but lacking planning. UNICEF has already undertaken a number of relevant studies in the area of child care reform but partners often find out about the results only by chance or when they make a specific request. Where analysis is known about it is generally appreciated. If UNICEF is interested in pursuing a role as a focal point for knowledge it could achieve a

positive impact by sharing more widely the results of its research and encouraging the relevant partners to implement its findings and recommendations. With little extra investment it could therefore considerably improve the reach and impact of its research.

- **Policy development.** Capitalise on the widespread perception of UNICEF as the most effective partner in policy-making for child care reform. Improve collaboration with the highest levels of government, including the presidential administration, the prime minister's office and parliament, to achieve greater impact by means of support to long-lasting policy development.

Continue advocacy and capacity-building activities in all line ministries with responsibilities for residential institutions, particularly the Ministry of Education. Pay attention to the ongoing admission of very young children to infant homes, working with the Ministry of Health to develop alternatives to residential care for children aged three and under.

Continue also awareness-raising activities on a wider scale, to change perceptions among the general public, to ensure that the understanding of alternative services is not confined to a limited number of professionals who may be replaced.

Consider how to link the child rights agenda into poverty reduction policies, particularly through the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and UNDP, and through the EU's technical assistance on cash benefits and social safety nets.

- **Monitoring and review.** There is an urgent need for improvements in the quality and quantity of data collection and analysis across government, and this is an area where UNICEF could have a useful input. UNICEF already has an entry point here with the TransMONEE project and the implementation of the multiple indicator cluster survey which mean it has a relationship with the National Statistical Committee.

UNICEF could start by reviewing the information in its own publications such as those of the Innocenti Research Centre to understand what is covered by the numbers it publishes, and their reliability and accuracy.

At the same time UNICEF should improve its ability to monitor the progress of its own projects, including tracking budgets against expenditure and understanding reasons for diversion from project plans.

3 Tajikistan

The high rate of poverty in Tajikistan and the widespread external migration of adults seeking work abroad offer a challenging environment for child welfare, with many children living in difficult economic circumstances or in families where one or both parents are away from home¹⁶. The gradually improving macroeconomic situation, and the political stability over the last 10 years since the end of the civil war, provide some prospects for positive change. The government's National Development Strategy for 2006 to 2015 and the second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP 2) for 2007 to 2009 both consider the reform of the social protection sector, and an improvement in social welfare, to be a priority. Both documents recognise that support services for vulnerable people are limited and not in line with international standards.

Tajikistan retains a tradition of large families, particularly in rural areas, which can have an adverse impact on families' economic wellbeing and their ability to cater fully for the needs of children. Traditional values encourage families to take responsibility for children left without parental care and not put children into institutions, but economic hardship and widespread poverty have a strong opposite effect. Additionally, alternative family placement is practised for children who have biological relatives. Disabled children are often cared for at home and sometimes may have little contact with other community members. The issue of stigmatisation of disabled children is actual for Tajikistan, as for other countries in the region, and means that the full number of disabled children is unknown.

3.1 Achievements and gaps in child care reform¹⁷

3.1.1 Governance structures

Governance structures in the child care system in Tajikistan can be divided into bodies at the national level and *raion* level. The intermediate level of government, the *oblast*, collates information from *raions* and provides summaries to the national government. At the national level the most important stakeholder is the National Commission on Child Rights (NCCR), established in 2003, which sits at the highest level of government, in the office of the presidential administration and under the leadership of the deputy prime minister. Members of the NCCR include deputy ministers and deputy heads of sectoral ministries and departments dealing with children's issues, as well as some local NGO leaders. It is formally responsible for the implementation of the CRC, a role which includes ensuring that national legislation complies with international norms and conducting analysis on child rights issues. Its sphere of influence is due to cover largely the same areas as UNICEF's own work in child protection, including deinstitutionalisation, juvenile justice, the rights of children with disabilities, child labour and abuse, and social work. It is expected to coordinate the efforts of all relevant partners including line ministries, local government and institutions.

¹⁶ According to the Government of Tajikistan's National Development Strategy 2006–15, some 64% of the population lives below the poverty line; and the second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP 2) estimates that over 400,000 people migrated abroad in 2004.

¹⁷ See Figure 3.1 below for summary.

Figure 3.1 Status of child care system reform, Tajikistan

Aspects of the reform process	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
Policy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No policy defines the overall governance structure of the child care system ❖ National conference on child protection, 2001, led to establishment of interministerial body, now NCCR ❖ National Plan of Action for interests of the child for 2003-2010 (NPA) plans creation of CRDs under city and regional <i>khukumats</i>. No budget provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Signatory to CRC since 1993 ❖ NPA plans (but no budget): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preventive social services (none described); - social support to parents of disabled children. - Parents Education Centres ❖ Stockholm Declaration on Children and Residential Care (2003) notes principle of preventive social services (Tajikistan is signatory) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ NPA proposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - family-oriented guardianship system - development of standards on adoption and guardianship - family-type homes ❖ But no budget or follow-up policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No national strategy for coordination and development of policy on residential care ❖ PRSP 2007-09: 'Rehabilitate and further develop the system of social institutions for the disabled and elderly; develop performance standards for social institutions' ❖ NPA proposes monitoring of children at state and non-state institutions
Legislation and standards¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Legislation on establishment of NCCR ❖ Draft regulation on full-time NCCR secretariat now under consideration ❖ Regulation on Department for Social Protection of Family and Child approved (2007). Requires department to develop and implement family policy, encourage interministerial coordination ❖ Draft regulation on CRD under consideration. Requires CRD to play coordination role. Government delegated drafting entirely to UNICEF, so government's interest and ownership not certain ❖ Family Code (1998) gives functions of guardianship to public education offices, public health offices, social welfare offices at <i>khukumat</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No legal recognition yet of social work as a profession ❖ Draft regulation for PMPC under consideration ❖ Temporary Isolation Centre has new regulations, but no budget to implement them (e.g. for home visits) ❖ Draft charter for multi-purpose centre, replacing specialist vocational school (2007) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No legislation or standards on foster care. This needs attention. ❖ National standards on adoption and guardianship not developed. This needs attention. ❖ Responsibilities of guardians governed by Family Code (1998) and Civil Code. Guardians obliged to live with ward. No financial support provided. ❖ Adoption governed by Family Code (1998). Adoption agreed by court of law, and must be secret. Amendment (2006) restricts international adoption. ❖ No regulations on family-type homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Family Code (1998) says children should be referred to institutions as last resort ❖ Legislation includes regulation on internats (1996)
Administrative and financial systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Funding arrangements for governance structures are extremely weak (a lot of donor funding with no exit strategy) and administrative systems are duplicated ❖ NCCR is established and is due to be merged with National Commission on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In general alternative services are not well developed, and there is no formal provision for national coverage of such services in the state or local budget ❖ CRDs (where exist) responsible for developing family support services, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No consideration yet of funding to families for foster care or guardianship. ❖ Guardianship department at <i>khukumat</i> responsible for identifying guardians, keeping records, monitoring living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Residential institutions are under the administration of numerous ministries with no overall coordination (Education, Health, Labour and Social Protection, Interior) ❖ Financed through either the central or <i>khukumat</i> budget. Budget is input-

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Aspects of the reform process	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
	<p>Minors with establishment of Secretariat. Long-term funding for secretariat is not determined (UNICEF is funding the first two years).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Nine CRDs exist but guardianship department and commission on minors have not yet been amalgamated. Services are duplicated. CRDs still defer to Commission on Minors for gatekeeping. ❖ No public funding yet for CRDs (fully supported by UNICEF), and no mechanism devised for this to occur ❖ Guardianship department and commission on minors are financed through <i>khukumat</i> budget 	<p>coordinating activities of rehabilitation centres etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Two PMPCs established, and others are being developed in UNICEF pilot regions. Financed through <i>Khukumat</i> but with additional salary support and equipment from UNICEF. ❖ One Parents Education Centre developed in one kindergarten (and supported by UNICEF) ❖ Some services provided privately ❖ EU budget support programme expected to fund family support services 	<p>conditions</p>	<p>based, not results-based</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Salaries of teachers in internats are based on hours taught, not number of children; child care budget is <i>per capita</i>. ❖ Savings from reduction of numbers in residential care is not necessarily ploughed back into alternative services ❖ Entry to institutions is via gatekeeping authority (Commission for Minors)
<p>Human resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ NCCR staff have multiple roles ❖ CRDs have two specialists who combine their work in department and commission on minors. Responsibilities overlap. ❖ Few ministry staff are trained in social work. UNICEF conducts courses for some representatives of different ministries ❖ Social work resource centre available in MLSP (UNICEF-funded) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Some social workers employed at CRDs (UNICEF-funded) but no permanent budget and few in non-pilot areas. ❖ ORA and UNICEF have trained professionals in social work techniques ❖ 14 graduates of social work MA now working in various related fields ❖ PMPC includes specialists e.g. psychologists, speech therapists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Almost no foster parents exist at present. Prevailing opinion is that they will be difficult to recruit owing to the expense and the temporary nature of the child's stay. ❖ No information obtained on the number of people waiting to adopt. Anecdotally, many wish to adopt but prefer small children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ High ratio of staff to children in some residential institutions. In Ministry of Health infant homes in 2005 there were 171 staff for 174 children (in 2003-04 the number of staff exceeded the number of children)² ❖ Some training in modern social work methods, including support for reintegration, provided to staff in residential institutions
<p>Representation and participation, rights-based approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ It is not apparent whether it is possible for civil society representatives to contribute to e.g. gatekeeping panels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Not all children who have been reintegrated into families have received sufficient social work support. Some have been placed at increased risk. ❖ Some families do not receive appropriate services because they are afraid to reveal they have a child with a disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Seeking and obtaining consent to adoption from children aged 10+ is obligatory. ❖ Adoptions remain secret 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Nearly all children in institutions have at least one parent (e.g. 94% of children in Ministry of Education institutions for disabled, 99% in Ministry of Labour institution for disabled in 2005) ❖ Decree of 2005 formally bans NGOs and private individuals from entering Ministry of Education institutions

Country report: Tajikistan

Aspects of the reform process	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Children with disabilities are integrated into ordinary schools and kindergartens via Parents Education Centre. ❖ Some NGOs offer family support services. 		<p>without authorisation, though in practice UNICEF says that it is permitted access to institutions without difficulty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Children not always consulted about what happens to them ❖ Some focus group discussions with children have taken place
Monitoring mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There is an absence of an effective mechanism for monitoring child care. This needs urgent attention ❖ No demand to use data for analytical purposes, hence no incentive to provide accurate information. ❖ No overall monitoring of inputs into child care system (i.e. collation of budget figures for central and local government and private providers) ❖ State Committee on Statistics relies on figures from line ministries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No data are available on total number of children with disabilities. UNICEF is supporting establishment of database on children with disabilities in regions with pilot CRDs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No systematic monitoring of impact, i.e. identification of improvements in child welfare after family placement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Key ministries (health, education, labour and social protection) have their own systems of administrative statistics for output and outcome data (number of institutions and staff, number of children served). But figures are not collated and are unreliable: there is no system of assuring the quality of the data. ❖ There are no accurate figures on the number of children at institutions. ❖ CRDs keep records of children at institutions. ❖ It seems that there is no review of children's cases on a constant basis at institutions, especially in areas that have no CRD.

Source: OPM. Notes (1) Experts from the UK Children's Legal Centre are working on the analysis of legislation and current practice of work in the system of child protection. (2) State Committee for Statistics (2006) 'Analytical report: mechanisms for rendering assistance to children left without parental care'

Until now the effectiveness of the NCCR has been constrained by the fact that it does not have a full-time staff. Regulations that are under consideration as of October 2007 propose the establishment of a full-time secretariat, as an executive permanent body. The consent of the key ministries on the establishment of the Secretariat has already been obtained. UNICEF is intending to fund four posts for two years under this new arrangement, and to provide technical assistance.

Another important stakeholder at the central level which was just recently created (2007) is the Department for Social Protection of Family and Child under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The purpose of this body is to unify the systems of social protection including for children. This department, too, is charged with coordinating activities for the social protection of children. It is not yet clear how its functions in this area will be distinguished from those under the NCCR. In addition it will have a role of developing an 'optimal network' of residential institutions across all ministries and elaborating alternative forms of social support. The means of funding by which it will achieve this are not specified.

At local government level the bodies which have traditionally held most responsibility for the protection of children and for juvenile justice issues are the guardianship authority and the Commission on Minors which are financed through the *Khukumats* and function in line with specific regulations and the Family Code. However, owing to financial constraints and lack of capacity these bodies have ceased to function in some regions or just work to place children to institutions.

An important step in the reform process since 2003, which has been part of UNICEF's interventions, has been the creation of a new department in some pilot *oblasts* and *raions*, the Child Rights Department (CRD), which is intended to combine the functions of the two existing organs and fulfil additional duties in preparing alternative support services at community level for vulnerable children¹⁸. However, as the regulations and government funding for this new structure are not yet established, all three bodies exist and their services are duplicated. CRDs still refer to the Commission on Minors for gate-keeping and fully depend on financing from UNICEF. Additionally, the successful work of CRDs depend very much on the availability and capacity of social workers which again raises the issue of the sustainability of financial and human resources.

As policy development and decision-making in the government structures are not based on statistical data and there are few incentives to provide accurate information, an effective mechanism for monitoring child care is absent. The data from different ministries contradict each other and the State Committee on Statistics has to rely on these data. Attempts to collect data on disabled children in pilot areas by the staff of the CRD can contribute to improving the situation, but greater advocacy and resources are required to change this practice.

3.1.2 Residential institutions

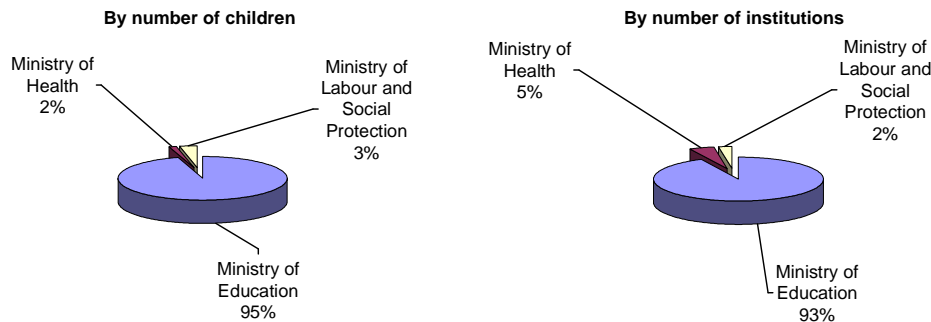
In Tajikistan, as in other countries of central Asia, the placing of a child in institutional care has been the predominant response by the government to child protection problems since the Soviet period. Residential institutions are under the supervision of different line ministries at the central level, while others operate under local authorities. At the republican level they are run by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior as well as the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Most institutions, including for young children up to the age of seven, some general boarding schools and some special schools for children with disabilities, are located under the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Health runs infant homes for very young children, mostly aged three and under; some of these children are eventually taken back by their families but many are adopted. The Ministry of Justice has a 'colony'

¹⁸ CRDs are discussed further throughout this report.

for young offenders, while the Ministry of Interior runs the Temporary Isolation Centre for street children and others at risk.

The analysis of the number of state-run residential institutions and the number of children served by them based on the data from the State Statistical Committee shows that by far the main stakeholder is the Ministry of Education which supervises most of the institutions and some 95% of children (out of a total of over 11,500 in 2005) (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Share in total number of institutions and children at institutions by supervisory agency in Tajikistan, 2005



Source: State Statistical Committee (2006)

The work of residential institutions is based on the Family Code (1998) and different regulations for different type of institutions. Unfortunately, it is not possible to get information on financing and staffing of residential institutions. The Ministry of Finance collects data only on institutions working at the *oblast* level, but many others function at the local level. There is some evidence that the ratio of staff to children is quite high in some residential institutions: according to the State Committee for Statistics (2006), in Ministry of Health infant homes in 2005 there were 171 staff for 174 children. This tendency is not unusual for residential institutions in former Soviet countries. A high number of these staff are often involved in technical work and the maintenance of facilities rather than in providing professional services for children.

In recent years the attitude among policy-makers towards institutionalisation has shifted considerably, starting with Tajikistan's ratification of the CRC in 1993. The Family Code of 1998 stipulates that only in cases when there is no opportunity for placing children in a family environment should they be transferred to institutions. The publication in 2000 of the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child, which reviewed Tajikistan's progress in implementing the CRC, contained numerous recommendations for improvement to the country's application of child rights and acted as a catalyst for change in the reliance on residential care. The subsequent national conference on child protection in 2001 led to the establishment of an inter-ministerial body for child protection, now the NCCR.

In 2003 Tajikistan participated in the second international conference on Children and Residential Care in Sweden, which reiterated the obligations of signatories to the CRC to prevent children from being deprived of family care, minimise the use of residential institutions and develop alternative services to support children to the greatest extent possible in a family environment. It also produced its National Plan of Action for the protection of the rights and interests of the child for 2003–10 for the purpose of implementing the CRC and recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. This plan contains both preventive and responsive measures for family and child support, including the setting up of support services at local government level and the

establishment of national standards with respect to guardianship and adoption¹⁹. The drive for deinstitutionalisation gained considerable momentum and, in spite of the fact that there was (and remains) no clear national strategy for the development or transformation of residential institutions, active work on deinstitutionalisation was conducted in pilot areas in the framework of UNICEF's SIDA and HSTF projects.

The results of deinstitutionalisation are described in more detail in section 3.4.2 below. In general, the transformation process started with the training of staff, and children in the institutions were then assessed for possible reintegration either with biological parents or relatives in the form of trusteeship or guardianship. Several hundred children have been reintegrated, several institutions have been closed and some have been transformed into regular schools²⁰. The rate of deinstitutionalisation has been impressive, thanks to political support at the top level; but the speed of this process, the lack of capacity and alternative services, and the absence of a monitoring agency have created risks for the successful reintegration of children, and the readiness of society to support these reforms is questionable. The situation is exacerbated by the lack of a monitoring system in general, and an accurate picture on children in residential institutions in particular, which makes even the magnitude of change in institutionalisation difficult to measure. An additional gap is that it is not clear how the money saved from deinstitutionalisation has been directed, either to support alternative services or to improve conditions (such as norms for nutrition) for the remaining children.

3.1.3 Family support services

Progress has been made in recent years in establishing both a body with oversight over family support services (the pilot CRDs), and the actual services themselves. Much of this has been as a result of UNICEF intervention, such as the successful initiatives in alternative sentencing and diversion which have demonstrated ways to prevent the unnecessary institutionalisation of children in closed institutions; the transformation of the medical-psychological commission (MPC) into the Psychological-medico-pedagogical Consultation (PMPC) under the authority of the Ministries of Education and Health, responsible for diagnosing and treating problems related to disabled children at local level; the establishment of the Parents Education Centre; and the support to the Social Work Resource Centre²¹. However, the limitation is that the main implementers of the services—social workers—and all the costs of the pilot projects depend fully on external financing which is not yet sustainable. Another problem is that these successful pilots are organised in relatively rich regions in urban areas where the local capacity is the highest, while poor rural areas with acute need for such services do not receive them.

3.1.4 Family substitute services

Guardianship is a traditional form of alternative care in Tajikistan. There have been no changes regarding the current practice of guardianship / trusteeship during the period under evaluation. This alternative form of care is regulated by the Family and Civil Codes, and a regulation on guardianship and trusteeship authorities. There are no regulation on standards for guardianship or trusteeship. In 2005, according to the data from State Statistical Committee, there were 4,180

¹⁹ The National Plan of Action seems to have since declined in importance with the introduction of the National Development Strategy and PRSP 2.

²⁰ By UNICEF estimates the number of children in residential care has declined by nearly 1,500 (see e.g. UNICEF (2007)). However, this figure does not include all public and private institutions at all levels in the country so the actual total is not certain.

²¹ See section 3.4.2 below on the effectiveness of these centres.

children registered under this type of care; the actual figure may be higher. No payments are stipulated for guardians and trustees. Almost all guardians are relatives of placed children. Guardianship authorities at local level are responsible for related activities including identifying guardians, keeping records and monitoring.

Adoption of a child is also widespread as a form of providing a substitute family. Adoption is regulated by the Family Code, with no special additional regulations. Until 1999 the decision on adoption was under the responsibility of *Khukumats*, but later it was transferred to the courts. Since 2000 the average number of children adopted each year has been about 300–400 per year, and in 2005 the total number of adopted children in Tajikistan amounted to over 3,000 (State Committee for Statistics, 2006). Adherence to child rights in the adoption process is mixed: on the one hand, in order to adopt a child older than 10 years his or her consent is necessary; but on the other, adoption is kept a secret and children do not have the right to know who their parents are. A recent amendment to the Family Code bans the international adoption of Tajik citizens. In general, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed its concern about lack of standards for adoption.

In contrast to guardianship and adoption, foster care is not part of the traditional system of substitute family services, and remains in a rudimentary state of development. It has neither a legislative nor a financial basis, and it is widely considered by child protection professionals in the country that the economic burden is too great and the social rewards not lasting enough for fostering to become widely attractive in the immediate future.

The development and replication of non-traditional family substitute services such as foster care, as with the family support services outlined above, will remain questionable as long as they remain at the pilot stage and are not financed through the budget.

3.2 Activities of development partners and NGOs

Relatively few major development partners are operating in the area of child protection in Tajikistan other than UNICEF. The European Union has a large programme of budget support to the social sector. SIDA has been a significant partner in the area of child protection and has agreed a programme of continuing support to the work of UNICEF and the Government of Tajikistan until 2009, but it is thought that Tajikistan will not continue to be a priority country for SIDA after that date and its further involvement is not certain.

Among NGOs, the most active in the areas in which UNICEF works is ORA International. ORA has a particular focus on children with disabilities. It has also been involved from an early stage in the deinstitutionalisation process and the establishment of CRDs, and has been an implementing partner for UNICEF in carrying out social work training. Another NGO, the Children's Legal Centre, has a long history of involvement in the development of legislation and regulations on family and child issues in Tajikistan and has collaborated with UNICEF on many of its projects.

3.3 UNICEF's activities

In Tajikistan UNICEF's global focus on child protection is reflected in its CPAP for 2005–09, which includes a major component on social policy reform and child protection. Under the CPAP UNICEF aims to support the development and implementation of norms and standards for child protection and promote the establishment of CRDs to assess and monitor children at risk. A particular feature of UNICEF's work in child protection in Tajikistan has been the blending of the child care reform agenda with the closely related field of juvenile justice, such as in the programmes of family

support to first-time young offenders, and in its support to the Temporary Isolation Centre in Dushanbe²².

UNICEF Tajikistan has received more funding for child care reform activities than other country offices in the region. The HSTF project, which has provided most of UNICEF's funds for child care reform in countries elsewhere in Central Asia, contributed \$345,000 to Tajikistan; but that figure is dwarfed by the \$691,000 contribution from SIDA under the project 'Promoting the deinstitutionalisation process in the republic of Tajikistan' which overlapped with it. This has given UNICEF the opportunity to carry out a large volume of activities in several pilot areas simultaneously, including support to nine CRDs and widespread training (see Table 3.1).

In practice the different funding streams are merged, so that although reporting and accounting to HSTF and SIDA are mostly undertaken separately, the activities themselves are not distinguished by their source of funding²³. For example, the training of social workers through collaboration with Stockholm University is described as an activity of both projects. The types of intervention (advocacy, training etc.) and the areas in which they are applied (legislative reform, piloting of alternatives to institutional care etc.) are similar for each project, as noted below.

On the whole the merging of the projects is beneficial since the concentration of funding gives UNICEF a stronger voice in the areas where it operates. Occasionally the two projects have been found to have conflicting targets. Most notably, the SIDA proposal aimed to reduce the number of children in institutions by 20% in its pilot sites only, while the HSTF proposal aimed to achieve this reduction across the whole country. This suggests that the selection of targets was perhaps arbitrary rather than based on the country reality²⁴. As it turns out this has not been an impediment to the speed of reform in Tajikistan since deinstitutionalisation has taken place at a pace far greater than might have been expected.

The proposal for the implementation of the HSTF in Tajikistan encompassed the same five sets of activities as in other countries of the region (situation analyses, advocacy, capacity-building, pilots of community-based services and foster care). The remit of the SIDA-funded project was similar: it combined the first three of the HSTF activities with the development of a gatekeeping mechanism through the CRDs, the transformation of institutions, and a component on family empowerment, community awareness-raising and mobilisation. As part of the last component UNICEF and SIDA collaborated with MercyCorps and the National Association of Business Women to offer vocational training and microcredit to families involved in the deinstitutionalisation programme. However, this activity experienced difficulties as the families whose children were in institutions tended to be unwilling to take on the risk of borrowing funds to establish a business. It was therefore not repeated in the HSTF.

²² The present study does not focus on juvenile justice issues but the 'crossover' projects are referred to in relation to their child care components.

²³ Some description of SIDA-funded activities is included in the HSTF annual report.

²⁴ For discussion of targets and indicators, and management for results, see section 3.4.7 below.

Table 3.1 Summary of relevant UNICEF activities, Tajikistan

Area	Analysis and assessment	Advocacy	Capacity-building	Pilots
Legislative and administrative frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysis of regulations on the Special Vocational School, and recommendations on its transformation into a multi-purpose centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advocacy in favour of establishment of CRDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support to draft regulations for CRDs support to draft decree on NCCR secretariat support to draft regulations on transformation of medico-pedagogical commissions into PMPCs, with the NCCR Expert Group support to draft regulations on Department for Social Protection of Family and Child in Ministry of Labour and Social Protection regulations for Temporary Isolation Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support to development of nine pilot CRDs at <i>oblast</i> and <i>raion</i> level in Dushanbe, Khatlon and Soghd temporary supplement to salaries of social workers in pilot PMPCs salary support (output-based incentives) to staff of pilot CRDs
Deinstitutionalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluation of deinstitutionalisation project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> study tours on alternatives to institutionalisation two month-long public campaigns on the rights of children with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> training of staff in institutions in social work methods for improved residential care and to support reintegration of children to their families, with ORA vocational training and microcredit programme to families with children in institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> deinstitutionalisation of about 800 children in pilot regions reform of pilot institutions into regular schools with prolonged classes for children from poor families support to gatekeeping activities of pilot CRDs
Community-based services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development of database on children with disabilities in pilot districts (in progress) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advocacy for development of national policy guidelines for children deprived of family care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masters-level training in social work, in collaboration with Stockholm University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishment of diversion projects for young offenders in Sino, Firdavsi, Gafurov and Khudjand, with family support from social workers development of Parents Education Centre support to development of PMPCs
Foster care	No programme of foster care			

Source: OPM / CASE.

In each year during the period under evaluation UNICEF has also contributed its own funds to child care reform, particularly for family support services such as the diversion projects, the conversion of MPCs into PMPCs and the establishment of Parent Education Centres, but also for the creation of the database for children with disabilities.

3.4 Evaluation of UNICEF's contribution

3.4.1 Relevance

In Tajikistan the declared priorities of the government in child care reform reflect those of UNICEF in many aspects. The UNICEF office has both benefited from, and contributed to, this alignment, which has ensured that its programme of work in this area remains relevant for influencing legislative and administrative reform and introducing new practices at community level.

The basis for the government's approach to deinstitutionalisation and child care reform, as mentioned in section 3.1.2 above, is the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2000. This recommended that measures be taken to improve the government's response to child rights issues in five general areas and also in relation to the welfare of children deprived of a family environment (see Box 3.1 below). These observations have fed into Tajikistan's National Plan of Action for the Interests of the Child 2003–10 and the PRSP.

Box 3.1 Concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2000

Five broad areas for improvement are:

1. **Coordination.** Better coordination of policy at national and local government level is required.
2. **Resources.** The state should ensure an adequate distribution of resources for child rights.
3. **Participation.** There should be greater involvement of civil society in policy-making and implementation.
4. **Monitoring.** Mechanisms should be established for monitoring and implementation, including collection and analysis of data with the State Statistical Agency.
5. **Training.** There should be widespread training and awareness-raising in child rights.

The Committee also expressed its concern about the welfare of children living in poor or rural areas, and the rights of children with disabilities. It recommended the strengthening of family-based care including the use of foster parents and family-type homes, and recommended the improvement of infrastructure and training of personnel, the establishment of a system for responding to complaints from children in care, and the development of standards for adoption.

The timing of publication of the national and international documents mentioned above, and the subsequent pace of the government's deinstitutionalisation programme, show that many of UNICEF's interventions were offered at an appropriate time and were relevant to government policy.

- **Coordination.** At national level the concentration of efforts on supporting the development of the NCCR at the highest level of government, in the president's office, has proven itself to be an effective means of securing a strong coordinating body with the potential to advocate for real change. At local government level the creation of regional CRDs is a sound attempt to

respond to the need expressed by the Committee for the Rights of the Child for better coordination of child care systems within *khukumats* and to improve the gatekeeping function.

- **Training.** UNICEF's training of personnel in residential institutions and working in child care in other capacities, a key recommendation of the concluding observations on the implementation of the CRC, also addresses a critical need. The Masters-level training of 20 social work students and the agreement on the establishment of a social work department at the National State University are important steps for the long-term improvement of the social work profession.

These, along with the establishment of education centres for parents, and the provision of targeted social assistance to orphans, disabled children, children of migrant families and the homeless are all activities listed in the National Plan of Action and are areas in which the government requested the support of UNICEF for development and implementation. In these instances UNICEF has adapted its proposed activities well to the country priorities.

In some other key areas UNICEF has been less active during the period under evaluation. These areas remain relevant and represent opportunities to contribute more fully to the government's policy reform:

- **Supporting resource redistribution.** It is understood from discussions with government sources that there has been a trend of increasing expenditure on *internats*²⁵. This is borne out by figures for Gafurov *internat* which, prior to its conversion to a day school, reported a doubling of expenditure between 2003 and 2005. Changes in the distribution of resources, which are crucial for diverting funds from institutions into community-level services, require detailed and persuasive analysis of the relative costs of residential and non-residential care as well as sustained advocacy to the parts of national and local government responsible for the budget. Until now UNICEF has not had a close relationship with the Ministry of Finance, nor has it carried out an analysis of costs. UNICEF reports that a costing study is now in progress, and the team is encouraged by this development;
- **Monitoring.** The lack of support for monitoring activities is disappointing. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended in 2000 that UNICEF should assist the government in this area. While UNICEF has had some involvement with the State Statistical Committee through the TransMONEE project this has not been accompanied by a drive to improve the accuracy of statistics or to support the use of data by ministries in policy-making²⁶; and
- **Foster care and adoption.** The promotion and piloting of foster care is one of the core components of the HSTF proposal, and relevant to the priorities of the government. Activities in this area have been rather limited and it is worth reflecting on the reasons for this. If it is considered that obstacles to fostering are cultural it would be appropriate to pursue a more widespread and intensive campaign of awareness-raising among the public to achieve a change of attitude towards foster care; and if obstacles are financial—with families feeling they cannot afford to support an extra child—then the advocacy to the government about resource distribution, mentioned above, might yield an effective result. As for adoption, interventions in this area are not highlighted in the HSTF proposal and have been addressed only marginally by UNICEF, despite being a major concern of the policy documents mentioned above.

²⁵ The evaluation team was not able to obtain details figures of total government spending on residential care.

²⁶ See also section 3.4.7 below.

Targeting the right people

UNICEF's close collaboration with the NCCR and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and its support of the CRDs, show that it is targeting some of the key players to achieve greatest influence. Being able to strengthen the government's voice in child care reform is an important asset which has helped to support the alignment of national priorities with those of the CRC.

It is not clear that UNICEF has yet managed to achieve the same level of influence with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, who have control over many institutions and a considerable portion of the budget for social services. Without a concerted effort in advocacy and technical assistance across all ministries there is a risk that coordination of all government policy will be limited, and that gains in one part will be offset by fewer successes in another. It is recommended that if UNICEF can widen its sphere of influence without spreading its resources too thinly, or can link up with other partners, it should attempt to broaden its coverage.

Fitting in

Given that few other development partners are operating in child care reform, UNICEF has succeeded in responding to a gap in support. The programme of deinstitutionalisation and the development of community-based services are in line with international agreements so it is evident that they are consistent with the objectives of support that might be offered by other organisations.

With such a small number of actors it is important that UNICEF carries out its activities in a way that does not conflict with others, and that it takes into account the differences in approach of the people with whom it works. For example, while the central government has embraced UNICEF's rather rapid style of deinstitutionalisation, the speed of reform has been less comfortable for those implementing it at the level of local government and the institutions. In such a situation UNICEF might achieve more traction by continuing to work in close partnership with an organisation such as ORA, with whom it collaborated early on in its training of social workers, and whose more gradual approach to the reform and closure of residential institutions is favoured by many.

The other partner through whom UNICEF might achieve greater influence is the EU and its budget support programme. With more support to the development of the EU's matrix of conditionality UNICEF might have had an opportunity to exert more leverage.

3.4.2 Effectiveness

Governance structures

UNICEF has achieved several important results in supporting the reform of legal and administrative frameworks that comprise the governance structures. These include the following:

- the draft decree on the establishment of the NCCR Secretariat should, if approved, improve prospects for closer coordination of child care and child rights issues across ministries. UNICEF's support to salaries in the secretariat may—at first—facilitate the recruitment of suitably qualified experts (though there remain considerable concerns as to the sustainability of these funding arrangements. See section 3.4.5 below). UNICEF's consistent support to the NCCR has enabled UNICEF to achieve a very strong position of influence at the highest level of government which facilitates its ability to advocate for child care reform;
- the draft regulations on CRDs should, if agreed, represent a step towards achieving the spread of such departments to non-pilot raions. If the financing mechanism can be agreed and the role

of the new department harmonised with the functions of the guardianship authority and Commission for Minors, this has the potential to improve gatekeeping practices and reduce the flow of children into residential care;

- the regulations on the establishment of PMPCs have already demonstrated their effect in pilot consultations such as the PMPC in Dushanbe, where the rate of disabled children being placed in permanent residential care is now substantially lower than was the case under its predecessor, the medico-pedagogical commission; and
- new regulations have been drawn up (together with the support of the Children's Legal Centre) for the Temporary Isolation Centre in Dushanbe.

In order for these to achieve maximum effect UNICEF should not only continue to advocate for the approval of regulations that have been drafted, but also must take measures to support their ability to be implemented.

Two major gaps at the moment are the **lack of national or local government funding and the limited human resource capacity** to put into practice the changes foreseen by the regulations. One CRD interviewed illustrates this point. It acknowledged that it had no plans to take over the funding of the social workers currently provided by UNICEF in its *raion* although it considered that it would not be able to do its job properly if the funding ceased and the social workers were left without a salary. Moreover, the CRD was unclear how its functions were expected to differ from those carried out already by the Commission for Minors and the guardianship authority and even hastened to reassure the evaluation team that the eventual merger would have absolutely no effect on the personnel to be employed, the duties they would fulfil and the budget that would be provided to them.

Deinstitutionalisation²⁷

The deinstitutionalisation programme in Tajikistan is widely considered to have been effective, and is found to have resulted in more children being returned to their families than is apparent anywhere else. UNICEF is acknowledged by partners at all levels of government, as well as by NGOs and social care staff, to have made a substantial contribution to this success. Estimates vary hugely but there is a general consensus that more than 1,000 children have been reintegrated into families since 2003 and several hundred more have avoided institutionalisation. Much of this has been achieved in the *raions* with which UNICEF has worked, and particularly in its pilot institutions in those areas. Some *internats* have closed, and others transformed into regular schools with extended opening hours (e.g. Gafurov). In Kurgan-Tube the *internat* is now a private school with additional facilities after school for all children, not just the regular pupils. The success seems to have occurred even though the country is affected by issues of poverty and high external migration that might contribute to the opposite effect

In general the establishment of the CRDs and the implementation of the deinstitutionalisation policy has considerably reduced the number of children being referred to the local authority for commitment to an institution, even though the gatekeeping function is not yet fully assimilated everywhere into the CRD²⁸. (In Isfara, for example, as in Dushanbe, the Commission for Minors remains the arbiter of institutionalisation.)

The pilot CRDs now have a lot of experience in best practice in deinstitutionalisation, which they should be encouraged to disseminate to, and replicate in, other areas. What have been the factors

²⁷ For a fuller evaluation of UNICEF's deinstitutionalisation project see Children's Legal Centre (2006) '.

²⁸ The CRD in Gafurov reports that the number of referrals declined from 90 in 2003 to 7 in 2005.

of success? Certainly they have been helped by political willingness, and by the availability of social workers—generally funded by UNICEF—to support reintegration. At the same time success has partly depended on economic and geographical factors which may be less easy to reproduce elsewhere. Interventions have not yet taken place in the poorest region, Gorno-Badakhshan, or in the most remote rural areas. The *internat* in Kurgan-Tube has a very central location, in the town, which made it easier to find alternative employment for its staff.

Reintegration and its risks

A consequence of the effective absorption of the deinstitutionalisation policy is that CRDs are now extending the requirement for a reduction in residential places to institutions that are not receiving support from UNICEF. There is a concern that these institutions are having to respond to a demand for which they are unprepared. As a result they are returning children to their families without being able to follow their progress or be sure that the child is not at risk²⁹. One contributing factor to this is the speed of change. Another may be the limited human resource capacity in the CRD, as mentioned above, which cannot yet provide the technical advice and support that is needed to be certain of successful outcomes. The CRDs must be supported to understand the risk of hasty reintegration and urged to prioritise the welfare of each individual child.

Addressing the causes of institutionalisation

Much has already been written about the component of UNICEF's deinstitutionalisation project which aimed to provide microcredit facilities and vocational training to families with children in residential care³⁰. The full findings will not be repeated here. It is important that UNICEF recognised early on the very limited effect of these interventions on improving child welfare and acknowledged that the families not only were unwilling to take on loans that they felt they might be unable to repay, but also often had motivations other than purely economic ones for committing their children to residential care which were not resolved by the microcredit and training programme.

Family substitute services

It was mentioned above (p. 63) that UNICEF has had little effect in promoting foster care in Tajikistan. There is a perception that the reasons may be cultural and economic, i.e. that people are resistant to taking in what they view as 'problem' children, and that families cannot afford to take on an additional child. Foster care services therefore cannot be further developed until these issues have been resolved, perhaps by widespread awareness campaigns and advocacy to government. Under these circumstances UNICEF should not only support the promotion of attitudinal change but meanwhile also look to alternative community-level services to provide a non-institutional solution for children without parental care. Family-type homes might be more achievable in the short term if people could be paid as carers, although it is necessary also to weigh up the effectiveness of this solution against the investment costs.

²⁹ One institution said it had had to send all children in class 5–class 9 back to their families without carrying out individual needs assessments, and had received little support from social workers. The director was aware of one child whose reintegration had failed and who had ended up homeless.

³⁰ See the Children's Legal Centre (2006).

Family support services

The essential counterpart of the closure of institutions is the development of alternative services, especially those that are community-based and respond to local need. In general those that have been developed by UNICEF have been well received and levels of satisfaction are high among staff, parents and users. UNICEF has been most effective in its provision of three types of service:

- the **diversion projects** for first-time young offenders. The projects at Sino and Firdavsi, which support young people who have committed minor crimes by providing day-time activities along with social work support to their families, have succeeded in almost eliminating reoffending: only four of the 200 children served at these facilities are reported to have reoffended since the project began. The success is ascribed to the close support for parents and the expert individual attention of psychologists, art therapists and others;
- the **PMPCs** assess children with disabilities and refer them to suitable services which now include the Parents Education Centre (see below) and specialist support from experts in their own consultation service as well as to institutions. The number of children assessed has increased considerably: in Dushanbe the assessment of over 2,000 children in 2005 represents a large rise on the fewer than 400 children who were assessed under the old MPC in 2003. Although the proportion of children who are recommended for institutional care remains high—some 40% of those assessed between July and September 2007 in the PMPC in Dushanbe, for instance—this is a substantial improvement on previous rates; and
- the **Parents Education Centre** for children with disabilities. The centre in Dushanbe, attached to Kindergarten no. 151, is sought after by parents of children both with and without disabilities. It works towards the mainstreaming of disabled children into regular schools, and several children are now integrated into school no. 3.

To ensure continued good results from facilities and to extend them successfully to other regions it is necessary to focus on three areas:

1. **Financial support.** Many centres at the moment feel unable to operate without the financial support of UNICEF. In some cases the salary supplements offered by UNICEF to attract good professionals are having a huge distortionary effect, as in the PMPC in Dushanbe where a 150% premium is added to the regular government salary, raising it from \$20 to \$50 per month. The PMPC cannot afford this rate and expects to lose these experts once UNICEF's support ceases. The proposed PMPC in Kurgan-Tube has no provision yet for absorbing the funding of experts into the government budget. While the proposal is still under development UNICEF must use the opportunity to identify a sustainable and effective solution to the funding problem. One solution being considered by the PMPC and Parents Education Centre in Dushanbe is the introduction of user charges for those that can afford it.
2. **Providing the right materials.** Much of the equipment that UNICEF has purchased on behalf of facilities is useful and appropriate. In some cases the facilities themselves have proposed what equipment they need. Sometimes, however, there is a risk that equipment is of poor quality and liable to break (sewing machines in one case); is not supported (e.g. computers provided without maintenance, and advance technical equipment provided in Chorbog without training); or cannot be used (one facility could not use all the ovens UNICEF had donated because the use of more than one at once caused the electricity supply to cut out). Addressing these inconsistencies will greatly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of UNICEF's funding.
3. **Capacity-building.** Staff in residential and non-residential facilities should continue to be supported to develop social work skills including those that enable them to monitor the

reintegration of children into the family³¹. Also, as with CRDs, information about successful reforms should be documented and shared so that prospective facilities such as the PMPCs in Isfara and Kurgan-Tube can easily learn from the practices of others that have already been in operation for some time³².

UNICEF's overall programme of training, not just for staff of residential and community-based facilities, is regarded by many as being among its most successful interventions. The Social Work Resource Centre established at the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is expected to offer a positive contribution to the development of social workers. The Masters course in social work is a vital component of a long-term strategy to support community-based services and is generally considered to have been effective, particularly for the 14 who have passed so far. The low pass rate may be a positive indication of the high standard required to obtain the degree, though it may also indicate difficulties in selection and retention of students. The establishment of a degree course in social work at the National State University is a valuable next step towards the long-term resolution of the problem of professional capacity provided that students can be encouraged to remain in the profession once they have completed the course. It is recommended that UNICEF supports the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in exploring possibilities for committing students to working in social work for a set period after graduation.

3.4.3 Efficiency

The budget for reform in Tajikistan, at almost \$1 million since 2003, has been far higher than the amounts available to UNICEF in other central Asian countries. This has enabled UNICEF to conduct a much more comprehensive programme of activities than elsewhere, including across nine pilot sites. The fact that the proportion of children who have been reintegrated from residential care is also high here suggests that there may be an association between high spending and impact. It is not possible to establish the direct causal link.

The conflation of the two major projects, HSTF and SIDA—which has had a positive effect on day-to-day programme implementation, avoiding duplication and permitting economies of scale—has made it rather difficult to account for expenditure, to the extent that it is not clear that either donor can be certain how expenditure under their project matches the proposed budget. Expenditure is carefully recorded, but using UNICEF's regular Programme Management System (PromSys) which classifies the amounts under headings referring to components of their five-year programme, not to the components of the donor project. Line items are extracted from the PromSys and retrospectively fitted to whatever project headings seem appropriate or where there is budget left over for the purposes of reporting back to the donor. No two expenditure reports, even for the same donor for the same year, are the same. Even the overall budget of the HSTF project is not consistently reported³³.

This confusion has allowed UNICEF to make the distribution of its expenditure among different activities under HSTF seem somewhat closer to the original proposal than is the case. There is certainly no suggestion that the funds have been spent inappropriately: all the activities listed in the

³¹ The five-month training course for institution staff in Soghd is generally considered effective although some training was provided to staff in institutions which were subsequently closed.

³² Informal exchanges of ideas are already taking place independently of UNICEF: the polyclinic in Kurgan-Tube is in contact with the PMPC in Dushanbe.

³³ Administration costs are, however, identified separately. In Tajikistan, as in almost all countries, the administration costs of the HSTF project were slightly higher than planned, resulting in a small efficiency loss.

third HSTF progress report of December 2006 relate generally to the project's objectives and often indicate that the country team has responded flexibly to opportunities arising in the national context, which is to be applauded. But a more careful matching of actual and intended activities might have revealed gaps in expenditure which might be useful for further planning. For example, only \$3,442 (8%) of the budgeted \$41,000 for foster care activities has actually been spent on foster care: all other expenditure ascribed to this subheading is unrelated. It is not surprising, then, that there has been little advancement in foster care during the project.

As for the effect of UNICEF's funding on its beneficiaries, the result is variable. For many it is a lifeline without which services simply could not be delivered. In one or two places it was reported to have crowded out other sources. It has been difficult to quantify the savings from deinstitutionalisation or to determine what services have been provided with those savings. In some instances savings have been lower than might have been expected and unit costs of residential care have increased, because the number of staff and their salary remains the same even when the number of children in an *internat* has been reduced. Again, supporting local authorities to identify where they are spending their money will help with the future prioritisation of resources.

3.4.4 Impact

By many measures the impact of UNICEF's interventions in Tajikistan has been impressive. The strong commitment of the government to reform, the reported reduction in the number of children in state-run residential institutions, the strengthening of the gatekeeping system in some areas, the development of new community services, the integration of some disabled children into mainstream schools, the reduction in reoffending by children in the diversion projects and the establishment of social work as a profession recognised by a degree course are all considerable achievements. Several hundred children have been returned from long-term residential care to their families, while several hundred more have avoided institutionalisation at all. If the quantitative indicators cited in the HSTF proposal are viewed by the donor as revealing the impact of the project, UNICEF can point to positive stories in all cases³⁴.

The well-being of the child

An assessment of the *real* impact of the reform should reflect on the improved well-being of the child. Deinstitutionalisation alone is not sufficient as a goal, since a focus on a quantitative reduction in the number of children in *internats* risks overlooking the potential negative impact on some children if they are returned to their family environment, as was reported on p.66 above (footnote 29). When over 600 children were returned to their families in 2004 the positive effect was noted in terms of the increased availability of food for those left behind, not the effect on the lives of the children concerned (UNICEF, 2004). It is, understandably, difficult to measure this ultimate impact. It may be useful to develop a proxy such as the proportion of children who are regularly monitored after reintegration. Several organisations expressed regret that they were unable to follow up cases as much as they would like on account of funding constraints and a shortage of qualified social workers. It is imperative that long-term solutions are found to resolve these constraints.

³⁴ The indicators are the number of children in all forms of residential care; the number of cases of children in institutions effectively reviewed by competent authorities and the number subsequently released to a family environment; the number of trained social workers; and the number of community-based child/family social work services.

Impact on the poorest families

There is general agreement that poverty can be a prime motivation for parents to give up care of their children. An improvement in economic circumstances (including also employment and a reduced need for external migration to work) may therefore have a positive impact on the overall rates of institutionalisation and the welfare of the child. UNICEF might usefully consider how to develop closer links with partners who have a comparative advantage in economic development to explore opportunities for incorporating a consideration of child welfare into project planning.

At the same time UNICEF can, if desired, choose to support the targeting of its own pilot projects at the poorest section of the population. Anecdotal evidence suggests that its interventions have not been strongly pro-poor although they have undoubtedly reached many poor families. The PMPC in Dushanbe considers few of its clients to be well-off, while the Parents Education Centre says that non-poor families are increasingly attracted to their facilities. The internat in Kurgan-Tube previously served vulnerable children but is now a fee-paying school; it still receives funding from the local administration. Meanwhile many of the poorest people in remote and often rural areas are not yet receiving the same level of support as is found in urban areas.

3.4.5 Sustainability

The mid-term review of UNICEF's child protection activities in May 2007 highlighted sustainability issues as a critical area for UNICEF to focus on, and the evaluation team endorses that recommendation.

Financial sustainability

UNICEF has already demonstrated many successful practices in the development of community-based services in its pilot regions. However, it cannot continue to support these services and also to replicate the services in new areas in the long term³⁵. It is absolutely essential that the Tajik government weans itself off its dependency on UNICEF for the funding of these services if they are to be sustained. The need to improve the financial sustainability of its interventions is well recognised and acknowledged by UNICEF, but the message is so crucial that it is worth repeating.

Local authorities have little discretionary space in their budget to request resources for new items, even for essential components such as salaries for social workers. Institutions submit budget requests to the local government (if they are locally run) on an input basis and are issued funds accordingly. There is not much opportunity for the local government to choose to divert these funds from institutional care into alternative services. If UNICEF wishes to get agreement on the public funding of CRDs, social workers, day-care centres etc. it is a good first step to talk to local governments about funding options, but it must be accompanied by engagement at the central level where funding decisions are made.

This means that UNICEF must begin to interact with the Ministry of Finance, or certainly to provide visible support to other development partners—especially the EU and the World Bank—who have already developed a credible relationship with the ministry and can exercise more influence. Until recently the Ministry of Finance has not been heavily involved in discussions about the major reform of funding for social services. But the introduction of the EU's budget support programme

³⁵ Apart from the fact that it is good practice to work alongside governments rather than operate in parallel structures, there is a risk that key donors such as SIDA may withdraw from funding child protection issues, or that UNICEF's global priorities may change.

for the social protection sector is obliging the ministry to consider the inclusion of alternative services such as day-care centres into the government budget. **UNICEF must seize this opportunity for real change** by working with the EU to learn from their experiences and to find a way of institutionalising the funding requirements for the piloted services in the state budget. Achieving a successful outcome may require UNICEF to bring in high-level expertise in public finance.

The systematic analysis of finances appears to be largely absent in Tajikistan. The prevailing opinion among many professionals is that 'if something is important, money will be found for it'. This optimism overlooks the genuinely resource-constrained environment within which services are provided. A case should be presented for why one type of social service should be provided in preference to another. Again, the cost-benefit analysis that UNICEF is undertaking will be a useful contribution.

Institutional structures

It has already been noted (p.64) that UNICEF should continue to support the promotion and implementation of regulations to enable the further development of CRDs, the strengthening of the gatekeeping system and the development of alternative community-based services. Legislative reform should also lead to improved coordination among the fragmented bodies responsible for implementation of child care policy. One other area that is lacking at the moment is a unified strategy for child care reform, particularly now that the National Plan of Action is considered by many to have lapsed. The revival of a unified strategy may allow donors to coordinate their inputs more efficiently as well as encouraging interministerial cooperation.

The shortage of trained social workers is a major barrier to the sustainability of child care reform in the immediate future. The establishment of the university-level social work department may contribute in the long run to the resolution of this difficulty, but in the meantime there is a role for UNICEF in continuing to support in-service training of social care professionals. UNICEF has an agreement with the Social Work Resource Centre of the MLSP to provide such training for the graduates of its social work masters course.

Changing attitudes

Families in Tajikistan are often considered to have so-called 'traditional' attitudes towards support for vulnerable children. Some families, for instance, conceal disabled children for fear that knowledge of their disability will affect the marriage prospects of their siblings. UNICEF's recent efforts to create a database of disabled children by means of house-to-house visits in pilot areas have uncovered many such hidden children. Bringing these cases to light and offering support to the families is a crucial step in starting to bring about attitudinal change. Continued widespread support for non-residential facilities in pilot sites offers another way for UNICEF to encourage more positive attitudes. The Parents Education Centre reports that parents of non-disabled children, initially wary about the opening of the centre, now request the participation of their own children in activities alongside disabled children. The PMPC in Dushanbe has a parents' association which has some input into its development.

UNICEF's information campaigns are widely respected. The organisation is considered by partners to be a leader in the effective dissemination of information to the public including through leaflets and brochures, in Tajik as well as Russian. It should capitalise on these advantages and consider how best to improve public awareness of child care issues especially in rural areas where written documents and radio or television campaigns may not reach the broadest audience. One

possibility may be to encourage further discussion with rural community leaders, as was done when information was being collected for the database on disabled children.

3.4.6 Rights-based approaches

In many ways UNICEF's projects in child protection, and the direction of government reform, are promoting the realisation of human rights. The policies adopted by the Government of Tajikistan with the support of UNICEF are intended to support the implementation of the CRC and its recognition of the need for children to grow up in a family environment where possible. The objectives of the HSTF- and SIDA-funded projects and other interventions are aligned with this agenda. Children in some UNICEF-funded *internats* are aware of their rights.

UNICEF has an opportunity to improve the fulfilment of the rights of the child both in its pilot sites and by extending the reach of the activities it supports to areas which have not yet received assistance:

- in **pilot sites** the critical issue to be addressed is the consideration of the individual needs of the child rather than the mechanical application of decisions about children's placement according to fixed criteria such as the child's age or the locality where they are registered. This means also that children's views should be taken into account when there is a proposal for them to be removed from *internats*, which is not currently always the case; and
- by supporting the development of interventions in **new areas** UNICEF can ensure that disadvantaged children throughout the country gain access to the services they need. Note, as also mentioned above, that this does not mean that UNICEF should necessarily implement these new activities itself since this is not sustainable in the long run. It can advocate for change at the government level and support the development of the legal and administrative framework required to deliver the services.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the rights of disabled children. In all parts of the country, improved public awareness about the rights of the disabled might increase the possibility of the realisation of those rights and enhance the level of their participation in society.

3.4.7 Results-based management

The discussions earlier have indicated that the use of results-based management processes is as yet underdeveloped in UNICEF and also at local and national level. Management and budgeting in government tends to be based on inputs rather than outputs. Funds cannot easily be transferred from one activity to another even if the impact of the alternative activity is expected to be greater. Reporting on activities and outcomes is often mechanistic, with the report being an end in itself rather than an analytical tool that can affect policy. There is little understanding that 'monitoring' is an essential component of the policy cycle rather than a synonym for inspection of facilities. It is for this reason, perhaps, that there is little incentive to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of data collection and analysis.

UNICEF can help generate a demand for data, demonstrate its practical benefits for policy-making and support the improvement of the quality of the information received. At the most basic level it should do this by requesting information, working with the data provider to clarify responses and considering the implications of the findings for its own policy. UNICEF must necessarily rely on government figures to understand the impact of its own policies, so it has an interest in ensuring their accuracy.

One example highlights the difficulty of obtaining accurate information, and therefore of managing by results. Even the most fundamental measure of the success of deinstitutionalisation, the total number of children in residential institutions in a given year, conflicts in every data source. The total number reported by the State Committee on Statistics in one source in 2006, at 1,200 children, is some 10 times lower than the figure it provides in its own analytical report of the same year (11,500)³⁶. Other secondary sources quote the number of children in residential institutions in 2005 as ranging from around 10,000³⁷ to 12,900³⁸. The differences may be determined by varying definitions of a residential institution; but in any case they make it difficult for a policy-maker to understand the true magnitude of the change brought about by the deinstitutionalisation policy.

UNICEF's own contribution to the monitoring and evaluation of child care activities has, to date, been rather limited. It has carried out very few pieces of analytical work under the HSTF and SIDA projects to assess the current situation or propose baselines, and none was referred to by interviewees. In this context the development of the database on children with disabilities that is now being undertaken is a great step forward and very welcomed. It offers an opportunity for UNICEF, the CRDs and social workers to interact and collaborate to improve understanding of the status of disabled children in the country. Equally importantly, the very fact of collecting the data has enabled social workers to identify dozens of disabled children who would benefit from further support, and to raise awareness among their parents and in the local community of the rights of the disabled children and their potential to achieve fulfilling lives, as well as to inform the families of the practical support available to them.

3.5 Conclusions

3.5.1 The status of reform in Tajikistan

The economic environment, the shortage of job opportunities and the trend of high external migration for work still have major consequences for child welfare in Tajikistan as they do also in some of its neighbours, especially the Kyrgyz Republic. Public opinion is not unfavourable to the use of residential institutions, and people with disabilities are often considered to be a cause of stigma to their families. Yet the evaluation has shown that the Government of Tajikistan has made considerable progress in improving the prospects for children to live in a family environment during the last four years, and that some deinstitutionalisation is an achievable prospect. Deinstitutionalisation has been comparatively fast, and several institutions have been closed down or reformed, which shows a willingness on the part of the government and to meet its obligations under the UN CRC, but this speed has meant that in some cases there has been a risk that the best interests of the child are not able to be satisfied.

The process of deinstitutionalisation has come about with the aid of widespread in-service training in social work skills for staff of residential institutions and other social care professionals working at the CRD. The shortage of professional social workers is a challenge that will take many years to

³⁶ Compare the data provided in Table 6.1 of the Social Monitor report published by the Innocenti Research Centre in 2006, which states that the total number of children in residential institutions (in 2004) is 1,200, compared with the State Committee of Statistics' 'Analytical report: mechanisms for rendering assistance to children left without parental care' which estimates the number at about 11,500 (for 2005). One possible explanation is that the Social Monitor data inadvertently shows new entrants, not total numbers.

³⁷ SIDA (2006), 'Promoting the deinstitutionalisation process in the Republic of Tajikistan', citing the NCCR's Expert Group for Children Deprived of Family Care.

³⁸ Unnamed author (2007), UNICEF child protection mid-term review report.

resolve, but the establishment of the university social work department may be one possible contribution. Another key component of the reform has been the establishment of the governance structures such as the NCCR and CRDs which offer the prospect for improved coordination once the duplication of their functions with other national and local structures has been resolved, and once their financial sustainability is assured.

3.5.2 UNICEF's contribution to reform

UNICEF Tajikistan has been able to position itself as the leading source of technical assistance to policy-makers in the sphere of child care reform. This is recognised both by government and by other partners. Three factors here are important:

1. It has developed good relations with people at the highest level of government, in the President's administration, which has strengthened its voice;
2. It has demonstrated the potential for success by implementing pilot projects which have made a visible difference to the number of children being looked after in a family environment; and
3. Its resource envelope for addressing child care issues is much larger than that available from other sources so it can exert greater financial leverage in this particular area than others can.

UNICEF recognises that the factors that affect decisions of families to leave their children without parental care cannot be resolved by social service reform alone. UNICEF attempted to address this itself with the microcredit component of the SIDA project but this proved unsuccessful since the parents that were targeted for support were not best suited to take advantage of the microcredit and vocational scheme. Two conclusions may usefully be drawn from this:

1. UNICEF does not have a comparative advantage in addressing macroeconomic policy issues although these do, of course, have a considerable impact on the objectives it is aiming to achieve. It therefore needs to look broadly at opportunities to have an input into relevant discussions without necessarily taking the lead.
2. UNICEF can nonetheless influence outcomes by mounting public awareness campaigns to change behaviour when difficult economic circumstances arise.

UNICEF has had success in family support services by dealing with issues in the whole 'ring' of the policy cycle, from development of regulations through to implementation of alternative services and some monitoring of rehabilitated children. The impact is difficult to measure, particularly with reference to the improved well-being of the child. The lack of effectiveness in family substitute services is more disappointing. The sustainability of the services provided by UNICEF depends on the identification of funding which requires closer cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and the EU, among others. There has been some attention to rights-based approaches, but results-based management systems have been rather more limited.

3.6 Lessons learned

It is useful to draw some lessons from some of the successes in Tajikistan and to reflect on opportunities for improvement and change.

- With influence comes responsibility. It is important for organisations that have a strong voice to be sure that the strategies they advocate are fully understood and supported by the people that are expected to implement them, so that negative impacts (such as the abandonment of children through over-zealous deinstitutionalisation) are not obtained.

- Where deinstitutionalisation is feared to have had adverse results it is generally the case that there are too few trained workers to provide effective follow-up support to reintegrated children or to make sufficient assessment of their cases in advance in order not to put the child at risk.

3.7 Recommendations for UNICEF

- **Problem identification.** Complete and disseminate the analysis of relative costs of residential and non-residential care and support local authorities in understanding the distribution of their expenditure on different service types (pp.63, 71).

Provide technical assistance to local authorities and facilities in investigating the possible introduction of user charges for those that can afford it (p. 67).

- **Policy development.** Carry out a widespread public awareness campaign to improve understanding of the rights of children without parental care and those with disabilities, as well as to improve attitudes towards foster care (p. 63).

Support CRDs in placing an absolute priority on the individual needs of the child rather than on reaching quotas for deinstitutionalisation. This is likely to include also greater support for monitoring children at home after reintegration (pp. 66, 69, 72).

Support local authorities in integrating the essential costs of care services, including salaries of social workers, into the budget to improve financial sustainability, and develop a plan for achieving this integration in future interventions where UNICEF is supporting recurrent costs. This is likely also to require extensive engagement with the Ministry of Finance and with other development partners (pp. 65, 67, 70).

UNICEF can usefully learn from its experiences of winning influence in some agencies in order to gain more traction where its influence is not yet as strong. If it wishes to improve its relationship with the Ministry of Finance as mentioned above it should: identify key people within the ministry with whom to establish a dialogue; provide evidence of the benefits of the strategies it advocates, based on an understanding of their benefit to the ministry; and improve its links with the partner with the greatest leverage, in this case the EU. It is understood that the country office is beginning to take some steps in this regard.

Establish closer relations with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health in order to achieve greater influence over these ministries which control the flow of children through internats and infant homes (p. 64);

Forge closer links with development partners, including by inviting others to join UNICEF's planning processes and by offering support to others in theirs (p. 64).

- **Policy implementation.** Continue support for university-level social work training to improve long-term outcomes, and training in social work techniques for staff in residential and non-residential facilities (p.68). Team up with other organisations such as the national Social Work Resource Centre and ORA to deliver the skills required to achieve the long-term goal of improving the supply of skilled social workers.

Encourage the identification of ways to ensure that university-trained social workers remain in the field of social work for a certain period after graduation (p.68);

Consult with facilities to ensure that any equipment provided is appropriate and sufficiently supported (p. 67).

Identify specialists in key areas including public finance to support programme implementation.

- **Monitoring and review.** Play an active role in supporting national and local governments in improving data collection and analysis for improved policy-making.

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Collate best-practice experience from pilot CRDs and disseminate to improve understanding in pilots and non-pilot raions. This includes learning arising from experience in consolidating the roles of the guardianship authority and Commission for Minors into the CRDs (pp.65, 65).

Enhance own contribution to monitoring processes by producing and disseminating analytical information where appropriate.

Track carefully UNICEF project expenditure against the budget and consider whether large variations are justifiable (they may be) (p. 69).

4 Turkmenistan

The characteristics of Turkmenistan present a challenging environment for external donors to support interventions in the politically sensitive arena of social sector reform and child protection. The government is not yet open to discussions about poverty, and while the country has abundant natural resources, the export of which provides it with large revenues, the living standards of the 5.2 million population are not considered to be high and certainly do not yet match those of Kazakhstan, the richest country of the region. Part of the revenues from the export of natural gas is set aside for social and economic programmes and allows for the subsidisation of staple food, utilities in towns and some other services. Until recently almost any political, economic and social reform was impossible; but the change of president a year ago has resulted in the implementation of some changes that compensate somewhat for the losses to education and other segments of the social sector which had seen a reduction in spending during the previous decade. The president controls all aspects of public life; civil society is the least developed of all the countries of central Asia, and the NGO sector is very weak. The governance system in the country is strictly vertical with all important decisions made only at the very top of the government. The willingness of the leadership to implement far-reaching social and economic reforms still remains to be seen, but the recent positive moves suggest that a window of opportunity may now be opening for international organisations including UNICEF.

4.1 Achievements and gaps in child care reform³⁹

Being a signatory to the CRC the Government of Turkmenistan has signalled that it may be prepared to consider the reform of the child care system in favour of promoting the right of the child to live in a family environment, although until now progress in this direction has been very limited. The system of child protection consists mainly of government benefits and residential care. Children with disabilities, and families with children below the age of three, count among the recipients of cash benefits, along with disabled adults, pensioners and families who have lost their breadwinners. Child care is not specified as a government priority, but the government's 'Strategy of Socioeconomic Development for the Period Up to 2010' lists social protection among four priority areas (together with economic independence, food security, and ecological safety) so the issue can be regarded as corresponding to broadly understood government priorities.

4.1.1 Governance structures

The child care system in Turkmenistan (as in other countries of the region) is spread across several agencies. The Ministry of Education supervises orphanages and institutions for children with disabilities, the Ministry of Health is responsible for baby homes and the facility for children with severe disabilities, the Ministry of Social Welfare is responsible for the policy development in the area of social protection of motherhood and childhood, the Ministry of Interior is responsible for inspections on minors dealing with children in conflict with the law, and local government bodies (*khyakimliks*) have guardianship departments in their structure. According to interviewees, coordination between different government bodies is not strongly established. The agencies are not open to being contacted; even UNICEF has difficulties in maintaining contacts with them.

³⁹ See also summary in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Status of child care system reform, Turkmenistan

Aspects of the reform process	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
Policy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The Strategy of Socioeconomic Development for the Period Up to 2010 list social protection (including child protection) as one of the government policy priorities ❖ No child protection policy as such and no specialized government body responsible for child protection issues ❖ There is a parliamentary commission on human rights (including child and women rights) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are several benefit schemes to support families: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Below 3-year childcare allowances - Benefits for children with disabilities - Loss-of-breadwinner allowances ❖ UNICEF pilots are the only attempt to establish modern-type family support services ❖ No attempts to provide services for children with disabilities outside institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Government and public opinion encourage relatives to become guardians for children left without parental care ❖ High adoption rate for small children ❖ No international adoption ❖ Foster care not yet established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Number of institutions for children deprived of parental care had been reduced by the country leadership decision in 1999 ❖ One of two remaining institutions (Palace of Childhood) is a well-funded and non-transparent institution, which intends to be a showcase of government's care on orphans ❖ The other institution is for children from socially vulnerable families, where conditions for children are less well provided
Legislation and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Practically all legislation remains unchanged since Soviet time (with minor adjustments) ❖ New Marriage and Family Code is being prepared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Social Code has been recently updated in regards to social benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Practically all legislation remains unchanged since Soviet time (with minor adjustments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Practically all legislation remains unchanged since Soviet time (with minor adjustments) ❖ Internal regulation in the Ministry of Education on the placement of children into institutions
Administrative and financial systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Administrative responsibilities for child care are spread among several bodies ❖ All government bodies are funded from the budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Existing facilities for off-school education of children may be (and, in pilots, already are) used as sustainable partners to establish the services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No financial support to guardians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The Ministry of Education supervises orphanages and institutions for children with disabilities ❖ The Ministry of Health is responsible for baby homes and the facility for children with severe disabilities ❖ The Ministry of Social Welfare is responsible for the policy development in the area of social protection of motherhood and childhood ❖ The Ministry of Interior is responsible for inspections on minors dealing with children in conflict with the law ❖ Regular and sufficient government funding of institutions

Country report: Turkmenistan

Aspects of the reform process	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Substantial sponsor resources, which sometimes result in under-spending of government funds for nutrition of children
Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No profession of social worker in the country; the last university psychology department in the country had been eliminated several years ago ❖ Government officials are practically cut off possibility to learn about new concepts and methods of social work with UNICEF being virtually the only window of information on social work organization and practices in other countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No regular system of (re)training professionals in the sector ❖ UNICEF provides some training to a limited number of people involved in child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No systematic training/counselling services for parents and guardians ❖ Trainings on family substitute services have been planned, but never implemented by UNICEF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ High ratio of staff to children in residential institutions, especially in Palace of Childhood ❖ Some training in modern social work methods provided to staff in residential institutions by UNICEF
Representation and participation, rights-based approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Vertical decision-making system in the government precludes from any participation of beneficiaries and any systematic introduction of rights-based approaches in practical work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No participation of beneficiaries and/or local NGOs in service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No public consultation or discussion of problems of orphans and/or vulnerable categories of children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Children have little knowledge of their rights ❖ The distribution of children among the two residential institutions is determined by their social background rather than by the assessment of individual need which one might expect under a rights-based approach ❖ Children kept in the Palace have limited possibilities to communicate with relatives and children outside the institution
Monitoring mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ A culture of demand for effective monitoring mechanisms to collect data for analysis and policy-making is not yet established in Turkmenistan ❖ UNICEF publications together with the national statistical agency are the publicly available source of information on the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Routine reporting system for government benefits with no regular access to data of people outside relevant government bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ No monitoring activities regarding guardianship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Every Ministry regularly collects reports on situation in institutions and makes site visits

Source: OPM.

Social work as a profession is not recognised in the country; there is no education / training system in this area. The last department of psychology in Turkmen universities was closed several years ago.

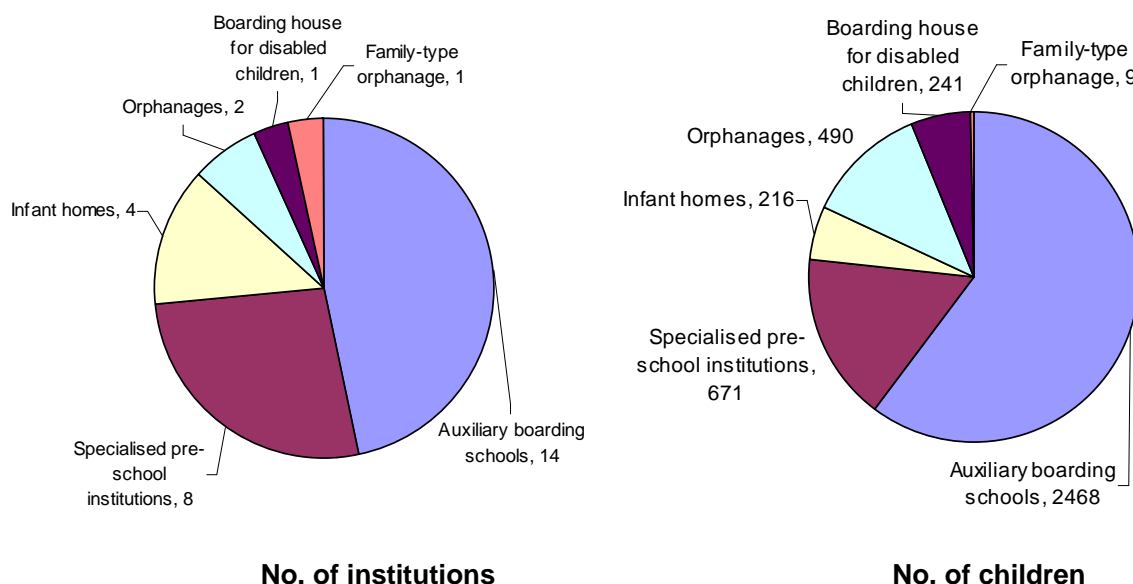
There are no other international actors in the sector apart from UNICEF. As for NGOs, there are a few government-affiliated structures, which are formally outside the government (Union of Women, Children’s Fund), which are best placed to maintain contacts with the authorities. Almost no grass-root NGOs are present in the sector.

4.1.2 Residential institutions

Institutionalisation of children is not viewed as a pressing issue in Turkmenistan compared with other countries of Central Asia. Several factors influence this situation, such as strong family traditions and expanded family ties in Turkmenistan, the attitude of the government, and the apparent low rate of extreme poverty. Nevertheless, institutions do exist and the problems of the children in them (especially disabled children and social orphans) cannot be ignored. Moreover, support to vulnerable families is very much relevant for the country.

Residential institutions include baby homes, two large and one family-type orphanages, a facility for children with severe mental disabilities, eight pre-school institutions and 14 boarding schools for children with disabilities (Figure 4.2). In 1999, boarding schools for children deprived of parental care were closed by the order of the president and, according to anecdotal evidence of local specialists, children from them were returned to their relatives. The number of children in institutions, however, is not reported to have changed. Institutions are well funded and also receive considerable support from private sponsors, though they do not operate at full capacity. For this reason they sometimes underspend and return back government funding.

Figure 4.2 Number of institutions and approximate number of children, 2003–04



Source: National Institute of the State Statistics and Information of Turkmenistan (2004). Note: The number of children is indicative only as the latest official data available date back to 2003 and 2004.

Of the two existing orphanages, one—the Palace of Childhood in Ashgabat—is a very well funded institution built and supported by the Abu Dhabi government; it is considered an elite boarding school guaranteeing enrolment to universities to its graduates. It also has its own secondary school. The institution is absolutely closed to any outsider. The other, in Balkanabat, is a more modest and more traditional Soviet-type facility. Decision on the placement of a child into one orphanage or the other is made by the Ministry of Education on the basis of a special regulation. Only biological orphans are eligible to be placed in the Palace, which is seen by the government as a tool to demonstrate its care on children. Children from families with an “imperfect” biography, or social orphans (with parents who are alcoholics, drug users etc.) are sent to the second orphanage in Balkanabat. The capacity of the Palace is sufficient to keep children from the other institution; however, this has never been done. This indicates that placement of the child is not currently being effected on the basis of what is in the best interests of the child, but rather on an arbitrary judgment of their parental circumstances. Public perception of institutions is positive as people mainly see well-fed and fit children from the Ashgabat institution. The institution in Balkanabat is not in the focus of public attention.

4.1.3 Family support and family substitute services

Virtually all healthy children in baby homes are adopted; the adoption rate exceeds 50%. Majority (95%) of children left without parents live with their relatives under guardianship arrangements.

Alternative care services are not yet developed in Turkmenistan outside the pilots supported by the UNICEF in the framework of HSTF project, so in many cases children who stay in their families but who experience problems do not receive any specialised assistance.

4.2 UNICEF's activities

The CPAP of the UNICEF office in Turkmenistan stipulates that child protection is a cross-cutting issue for its three main programmes, namely (i) Policy Advocacy and Development Planning for Children, (ii) Institutional Capacity Development, and (iii) Velayats’ Programme for Children. These are expected to contribute to the achievement of the first three of the target UNDAF outcomes for 2005-09, which refer to the strengthening of policies to promote social well-being and human security, and to improvements in health and education.

In Turkmenistan, as was noted by the terms of reference for the present evaluation, many of the child care reform activities intended under the HSTF were not able to be implemented owing to the constrained political environment. The project instead focused on two elements: building the capacity of professionals, and piloting family support centres. Capacity-building was allocated a large part of the initial budget and also was undertaken using the budget for the foster care component as there are no regular or pilot foster care activities in the country.

The family support centres have been established in Abadan, Balkanabat, and, most recently, in Mary. The centres have been created as an adjunct to existing facilities for additional (out-of-school) education for regular schoolchildren. They are expected to provide psycho-social support to parents as well as legal and professional education for children, especially children without one or two parents. In practice they provide increased access for vulnerable groups of children to computer classes, sporting and creative activities. UNICEF has provided resources for the repair of facilities, the purchase of equipment and the selection and training of personnel.

The country office carried out a lot of analytical work before the project; perhaps for this reason few analytical activities were undertaken during the project implementation period (just one

assessment of the situation of different categories of children in need of special protection). There was not much attention to advocacy and mobilisation activities: in part this may be because the political environment is not yet strongly amenable to such activities, and in part the country office notes that it was unable to carry out as much advocacy as it would have liked because of constraints in the project design.

4.3 Evaluation of UNICEF's contribution

4.3.1 Relevance

Taking into account the lack of professionals (in the contemporary sense of this word) in the area of child care, the core activity of the project—capacity building—is undoubtedly relevant to the agenda of both the government and UNICEF. In the majority of cases training activities played a role not only (and maybe not so much) for the skill development of participants, but also for advocacy. This is especially important in view of the fact that training events were among the few occasions when UNICEF had a chance to influence the mindset of government officials in a systematic manner.

Similarly, the establishment of family support centres as a pilot model of community-based services for vulnerable families is to be seen as a relevant attempt to demonstrate how such services could, in principle, operate in the country.

Analytical efforts of UNICEF in the framework of the project would have been very much relevant in the country, where available statistics on all dimensions of economic and social life including child care are very scarce. As mentioned in section 4.2 above, UNICEF prepared several assessments (e.g., situation analyses of children in institutions, of children in substitute families, review of legislation on children with disabilities) before the beginning of the project. Some information in these reports is already outdated, so it would have been very much relevant to prepare updates, moreover that so far this is the only real chance to get this task done; the government itself would hardly have intention and capacity to implement this activity on its own. However, it is understood that UNICEF's lack of attention to this area may have been an appropriate response to the political context.

Of course, there are also other critically important issues in the child care system which require attention of UNICEF and would be directly relevant to the project agenda—development of government policy in the sector, overcoming fragmentation of the sector, development of gatekeeping mechanisms, preventive services for vulnerable families, services for children with disabilities etc. Substantial work on these issues requires corresponding commitment of the government, so these topics may be considered for the future, when a window of opportunity opens.

4.3.2 Effectiveness

Capacity building and advocacy

During the project implementation period UNICEF conducted a series of different training events for different audiences: high- and mid-level government officials, staff of institutions, children in institutions. Topics of training were diverse covering the UN CRC, methods of social work, multi-agency coordination, gatekeeping, life skills and many more. It is not always clear, what determined selection of topics and audience for training courses, why some topics (life skills) were included into the programme, and other (substitute families) have never been taught despite of

initial intentions of doing that. It is also not obvious whether training to children in institutions had any long-lasting effect; it seems to be more a task of the institutions' staff than UNICEF, which is rather expected to provide training of trainers.

Interviewees who had participated in training sessions always indicated their satisfaction with the contents and quality of the training provided. For many workers of the child care system in the country these training courses were the only opportunity to hear about new approaches in their profession, and they appreciated this opportunity very much.

In general, the planned outputs (the number of trainings and trainees, publications) have been produced according to a plan with few exemptions: the Turkmen delegation could not attend the first Central Asian forum on child protection for internal government reasons; the same relates to the planned study tour on implementation of policy for the prevention of institutionalisation / deinstitutionalisation.

As for the outcomes of capacity building efforts, these are difficult to measure, as it would require the implementation of special evaluation activities (e.g., running a survey of professionals, who participated in training activities, and assessment of their progress in professional development), which are out of the scope of current evaluation and hardly possible in the currently existing environment. However, taking into account that many trainees had little chances to apply this knowledge in their everyday work and lack of access to further reading on the topic, it is difficult to expect that these trainings really resulted in substantial skill development of the majority of participants. So, an outcome of these trainings was rather better awareness on the contemporary approaches to child care and alternatives to existing system. Therefore, to a large extent, this project component has more to do with advocacy (which is also useful and is in full compliance with the project objectives), than with capacity building as such.

Capacity building efforts could become more systematic by, for example, establishing a resource centre, where training materials and publications on child care problems would become available for all interested parties.

Community-based services

The establishment of family support centres on the basis of existing educational institutions that promote children's creative activities (arts, handicrafts, sports etc.) has simplified the process of opening the centres, whilst leading to a blending of regular activities of the host institutions with the new activities. In practice, it is very difficult to distinguish similar services provided by the same people in the same facilities for the same groups of children. Orphans (and other vulnerable categories of children) are said to have easier access to highly-demanded services (e.g., computer classes), but other children from regular families also have access to these facilities and, of course, orphans have regular access to the services established earlier without any UNICEF intervention. Therefore, it is difficult to measure effectiveness of the specific UNICEF intervention in this area.

Site visits to the centres in Abadan and Mary show that the centre facilities are very heavily utilised; this sometimes reduces quality of education received by children; for example, there are only two computers for about 20 children in class. This sometimes discourages children to visit the centres. The centres mainly serve children who live in close vicinity of the facility, because public transportation could be expensive for children from vulnerable families.

The effectiveness of these centres is very much dependent on the staff. The director of the centre in Abadan has managed to effectively supplement regular activities of her institution by UNICEF resources. She serves now as a resource person for UNICEF and is supporting the establishment of a similar centre in Mary and in other places.

No evidence was found that personnel of the centres has the capacity and time to provide any counselling services for parents and children (the director of the centre in Abadan is an exemption—she is a lawyer and provides legal consultations to those parents who need them). It would be useful to start providing such consultations for parents; there seems to be a big demand for that service, while of course this is subject to availability of personnel capable to provide such consultations and to the permission of government for the operation of such a service.

Thus, these new centres seem to provide useful services for children, although the scope of these services is narrower than it was initially planned. The centres can therefore be seen as being at **an early stage of development** of community-based services.

4.3.3 Efficiency

It was clear from the very beginning of the HSTF project that the political and institutional environment in Turkmenistan would present a challenge for the achievement of significant results in child care reform. In such conditions it is surprising that the same amount of money was allocated to Turkmenistan as to Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, where the political environment is much more open to change. The expenditure of such large resources (\$369,000) on the project seems therefore not to be a very efficient use of money.

Moreover, as has already been mentioned, the resources of the project were mainly spent on activities where outcomes and impact are difficult to measure. This also complicates discussion of efficiency of UNICEF interventions.

The division of resources between the project components seems to be rather arbitrary; and actual expenditures are sometimes attributed to the budget items in an artificial way. For example, activities funded under the heading “Promotion and piloting of foster care at the community level” are usual training activities related to the capacity building and/or advocacy components of the project and unrelated to foster care, which has not been developed in the country.

Another point on efficiency is the notable overspending of the project resources on administrative costs (about 10% of overall expenditure by the end of 2006, compared with the planned 7%) and underspending of resources on monitoring and evaluation—only \$634 of the \$37,000 budget for monitoring and evaluation had been spent by the end of 2006. This situation is typical for all countries of the region and may indicate either a problem in initial resource planning, or inefficient administration practices widespread in the country offices, as well as a lack of familiarity with the potential, practice and importance of monitoring.

4.3.4 Impact

As was mentioned in section 4.3.2, many outcomes of UNICEF activities under the project, especially those in the area of capacity building and advocacy are difficult to identify so far. Correspondingly, the impact of these activities on ultimate beneficiaries, i.e., vulnerable categories of children, is yet to materialize.

Interviews with different stakeholders suggest that participation in the project activities expanded their vision of child care problems and refreshed their understanding of possible ways to address these problems. As these stakeholders are in different positions in the sector and participate in the delivery of services to children, this may have a positive impact on children. Government officials are reported to use UNICEF services in supplying them with data on the international best practices in the area of legislation and service delivery. This is also a channel of impact of the project activities on the situation in the system.

Focus group discussions with children indicate that they mainly enjoy attending the pilot family support centres; this also indicates a positive impact of the project.

However, in the situation of Turkmenistan a significant impact on the system of child care could be achieved only if a high-level policy dialogue is established with the government. This was not possible to achieve in the framework of this project.

4.3.5 Sustainability

Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability considerations are applicable to family support centres only. These centres are designed to be low-budget services, so UNICEF could (and intends to) support them for some period of time from its regular funding after the project completion. This reduces immediate risks for sustainability of these centres. However, UNICEF has not yet managed to get the commitment of local governments to support these centres financially, although they have provided rooms. This rather neutral attitude of local governments to new services is a risk factor for the centres, which is to be addressed in the nearest future. Perhaps, the plans to open new centres in other velayats should be linked to a commitment of local authorities to co-finance these centres.

Institutional structures

Consideration of institutional structures also relates only to the established family support centres. Their affiliation with existing educational institutions certainly improves the sustainability of these new services, as the risk of losing the facilities and staff of these centres is small, although it reduces the possibility of targeting resources to those most in need.

Attitudes

The project did not have many chances to influence attitudes of different groups of stakeholders; this was done mainly through different training activities. The generally positive attitude of training participants, which was revealed during interviews, indicates that there is some limited progress of the people employed in the sector towards better understanding of the need for deinstitutionalisation and development of alternative forms of child care.

4.3.6 Rights-based approaches

A child rights approach has been both implicit and explicit in the UNICEF interventions. Child rights were one of the main topics of training provided in the framework of the project to both specialists and to children in institutions.

While the government recognises its responsibility for observation of child rights and is now preparing its report to the Commission on the Rights of the Child, it does not seem always to be paying attention to them in practice. The orphans' segregation by family of origin on the stage of placement them into one of two existing institutions (see section 4.1.2) obviously contradicts the principle of action in the best interest of a child.

Focus group discussion with children revealed their poor knowledge of their rights, which they saw limited to right to education only. Their perception is that they will acquire fully fledged rights only when become adults. This example indicates that it may be useful to explore the feasibility of

running a mass campaign in order to inform both children and adults about children's rights. This may be the first thing to do, if the environment in the country would improve enough to allow for such campaigning.

4.3.7 Results-based management

UNICEF's support to government-level monitoring

The Turkmen government is known to be very restrictive in terms of providing any information on important aspects of social and economic situation in the country. So, information on the child care system is limited, while some information flows, of course, circulate within the government. From this point of view, the publicly available situation analyses prepared by government agencies and local and international experts with support of UNICEF are valuable sources of quantitative and qualitative data on the situation of children in Turkmenistan. As was already mentioned, some of these analyses already require updating. Preparation of such reports could be useful also from the point of view of building government's monitoring capacity.

Monitoring of child care reform in the UNICEF project

Similarly to the government, UNICEF in its own activities also applies only very basic monitoring tools. Key planning documents of UNICEF—UNDAF, CPAP, annual work plans—are not specific and either contain no indicators for child care (UNDAF and CPAP), or have only output indicators (AWP) for the child care system. If UNICEF is interested in managing for results and becoming a 'knowledge centre' for other development partners and the government it is advisable that it addresses the shortcomings in monitoring and develops an approach in which policy development takes into account the available evidence.

UNICEF staff region-wide might benefit from additional training in the use of M&E techniques: this is a task which might usefully be undertaken by the regional office for CEE/CIS. UNICEF could then support the government in developing formal monitoring systems if it can advocate for the establishment of such systems.

4.4 Conclusions

Interventions in child care reform in Turkmenistan have necessarily been limited, but with the change in presidency and a change in approach by the country's leadership a window of opportunity may now be open. In any case the rate of institutionalisation in the country seems quite low relative to other central Asian states. The opening of some family support centres is an indication of a step forward and it is to be hoped that this may lead eventually to the possibility of developing a wider social work system (including enhancing professional social work skills) and extending the range of family substitute services.

UNICEF's unique position as the only international development partner in the child care sector makes it well placed to respond to future opportunities to support the Government of Turkmenistan in implementing its obligations under the UN CRC. For UNICEF, implementation of pilot projects and training activities have so far proven to be a useful way of raising awareness of child care issues and maintaining dialogue and can therefore continue to be a useful component of UNICEF's interventions in the country. However, the effectiveness of these activities is less immediately apparent than might be the case in other countries of the region. The tradition of managing for results is not yet firmly established in UNICEF in Turkmenistan.

4.5 Lessons learned

Lessons have been learned from the Turkmen experience that may be useful not only to UNICEF but also to other stakeholders in child care reform:

- Establishing family support units at existing facilities of government-funded organisations allows for substantial reduction of risks for sustainability of these units.
- Even in a difficult environment, UNICEF could contribute to development of analytical capacity in the country by supporting situation analyses prepared jointly by international and local experts and government organisations.

4.6 Recommendations for UNICEF

Expanding the range of interventions in the country. UNICEF has the opportunity to expand its interventions considerably and to address issues which have until now not been open for discussion. UNICEF should be prepared for this and have a clear strategy of reforms in the sector (work on that has already started). Experience of other countries of the region (especially of another resource-rich country, Kazakhstan) should be analyzed in order to provide the best possible advice to the government when it is ready to hear it.

Capacity building. Capacity building efforts need to become more systematic. This could be achieved, for example, through establishing of a resource centre, where training materials and publications on child care problems would become available for all interested parties.

Development of family support services. In order to increase the effectiveness of its interventions in the area of family support centres UNICEF might consider the introduction of completely new types of services, which could be easily traceable. It would be useful to start providing consultations for parents; there seems to be a big demand for that service, while of course this is subject to availability of personnel capable to provide such consultations and to the permission of government for the operation of such a service.

Results-based management. Processes for government monitoring and review are largely closed to UNICEF but it can improve its own understanding of results-based management internally. Increased expertise in-house may then contribute eventually to a comparative advantage in enabling the government to develop this capacity. The regional office of UNICEF might consider the possibility of running a series of training programmes and increasing the level of reporting requirements for UNICEF country offices based on contemporary M&E methodology. UNICEF should also support the government in developing this capacity.

5 Uzbekistan

The importance of reforms necessary to secure a better future for children, and therefore also of reforms to the child care system, is underlined in Uzbekistan by the high proportion of children in the population: some 44% of its population of 26 million consists of children aged 14 years or under. The government recognises that any neglect of the best interests of children would be a loss to society, and that consideration of child welfare is therefore an entry point to achieving wider progress. Learning from good international practice can be a contribution to that progress.

In contrast to some other countries of the region, Uzbekistan has had no major change in political leadership since independence. As for the economy, it initially underwent the transitional challenges common to all the former Soviet states: some parts of the country have been significantly affected by deindustrialisation where large factories have closed, particularly in the populous region east of Tashkent, or by environmental difficulties such as the desertification of the Aral Sea. These have inevitably had consequences for rural livelihoods and health and an impact on poverty, not least among children. Nonetheless, there has now been an expansion of the cotton industry, and some investment in gas and oil as well as other minerals.

5.1 Achievements and gaps in child care reform

Cultural traditions in Uzbekistan encourage the upbringing of children in a family environment: relatives generally take care of orphans, while a high number of other children left without parental care are either placed with guardians or adopted. At the same time there remains a strong belief in the benefits of state care for children and a strong emphasis on improvement of the conditions in state institutions.

A recent positive development in the reform of child care is the approval of the National Plan of Actions on Securing Child Welfare which plans comprehensive reforms on the legal protection of children, family support, health of mothers and children, education and support of children in special circumstances. Although it does not specify a vision for child protection it states the intention to integrate children with their biological parents, develop alternative services, rehabilitate and integrate children with disabilities, improve conditions at institutions, and enhance capacity of the staff. The sources of funding have not been made explicit.

The current situation and the reforms that have been carried out in the child care system are considered below.

5.1.1 Governance structures

The main governance structures involved in child protection issues at the central level are the Cabinet of Ministers and Republican Centre for Social Adaptation of Children (RCSAC)⁴⁰. The main interventions of the Cabinet of Ministers take place in the area of policy development, and also in awareness-raising. It issues decrees and decides on legislation to be put to the *Oliy Majlis*, or parliament. It has responsibility for presidential initiatives such as the Year of Mercy and Kindness (2004) which included programmes which drew attention to children at risk, and the Year of Social Protection in 2007 which includes provision for a new law on guarantees of the rights of the child.

⁴⁰ Line ministries and supervised institutions are described in the section devoted to residential institutions.

The RCSAC is an organisation that is nominated by government to coordinate policy and intervention on behalf of children in need and those with disabilities. The creation of the centre in 2004, following a decree of the Cabinet of Ministers, represents one of the main initiatives taken by the state to respond to the recommendations of the report from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2001) on actions still required to implement the CRC. The RCSAC has four departments, for social adaptation of children without parental care, children with special needs, juvenile justice and legislative issues; so far it has only a director and a small cadre of professional staff, mainly researchers with little experience of practical social work, but it has established a pivotal role.

The centre is viewed as a catalyst for change, and several factors support the prospect that it can continue to deliver successful or influential outcomes: in particular it is a relatively well endowed resource, and it has a strong voice with access to the Cabinet of Ministers since the director of the centre, the president's daughter, is an influential player in the field. More importantly it is already working at several stages of the policy cycle which is a positive example of the 'joined-up thinking' that is seen to improve the effectiveness of interventions. At the 'problem identification' stage, for instance, it has published a widely referred-to 'Analysis of the System of Social Protection and of the Situation of Children with Disability'; its good relationship with the Cabinet of Ministers adds strength at the policy development stage; and in policy implementation it is working with the social work trainers in the Tashkent Institute of Culture, and coordinates and manages the Family and Child Support Unit (FCSU) pilots in two city districts in Tashkent and one in Samarkand.

These three pilot FCSUs, which started functioning in summer 2007, work at local government level in parallel with the two bodies which have traditionally held most responsibility for the protection of children and for juvenile justice issues, namely the guardianship departments and Commissions on Minors:

- Public education departments are responsible for guardianship, trusteeship and other family substitute services, and gate-keeping functions. Only they are authorised to identify and place children to institutions. This local body functions on the basis of the Family Code (1998) and supplementary legislation on guardianship and trusteeship authorities (1999). It is financed through the local budget of *Khukumats* and mainly consists of one, or in some places of two specialists.
- The 218 Commissions on Minors across the country have locally delegated rights to decide on placement of children without parents or deemed to be at risk and in need of protection. The head of the commission, the *khokim*, is the final arbiter on gatekeeping issues. The commissions are under the supervision of the Prosecutor General's office which is a particularly significant actor in child care reform in Uzbekistan. The body functions on a free basis, except for the executive secretary whose work is financed through the local budget.

Since the FCSU services are new the way in which their functions will be separated from, or replace, the existing structures is yet to be determined. Other future challenges for reform include the development of a system to prioritise who should benefit from the new pilot services, and the identification of the legislative and financial basis to sustain the units. In this initial stage the units are being fully financed by UNICEF. However, this external financing has enabled the units to attract experienced and skilled specialists who can provide families and children in need with high quality services.

Gatekeeping for disabled children is based on the work of Medico-Psychological-Pedagogical commission (MPPC) under the public education bodies at the local level. These commissions have not been reformed and function on the basis of the legislation enacted in 1995. Analysis conducted by the RCSAC (2006) identified issues to be addressed regarding the gatekeeping functions of the MPPCs.

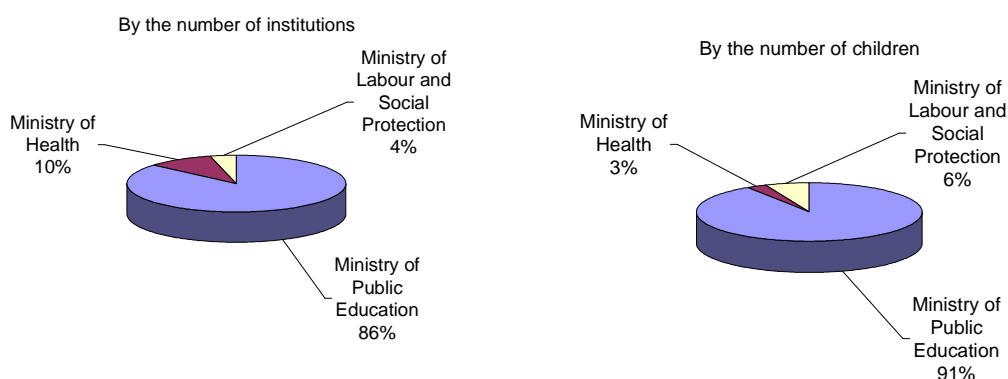
The *Mahallas* are the traditional form of organisation in neighbourhoods, of no more than a few thousand people in urban areas and often considerably less in rural parts. The main goal of *mahallas* is to serve as a local body to target government social assistance in local communities. There is currently a direction in government policy to encourage *mahalla* commissions to take more decisions and strengthen their roles. In this respect their potential for advocating family and community support for children in difficulty is considerable. They are able to supplement family finances where they consider there is need. In the pilot districts for family and child support they are proving a key existing mechanism for the incorporation of new ways of working, and are potential allies in deinstitutionalisation.

While the RCSAC publishes material on child protection there is not yet a comprehensive monitoring system in place for all aspects of child care. It has been seen that this lack of reliable and accurate statistical data is common to all countries in the region, not just Uzbekistan. In the case of Uzbekistan, according to the analysis of the RCSAC, one factor that contributes to contradictions in data supplied by different ministries is the absence of an effective coordination mechanism on child protection. An additional difficulty is the restricted accessibility of budget data.

5.1.2 Residential institutions

The proportion of children in institutional care is not reported to be high for the region, although the absolute figure is quite substantial. According to the State Statistical Committee in 2005, some 20,800 children were in all types of state institutions (approximately one in every 500 children under 18). The reported trend is of a moderate decrease in the number of children in residential institutions. However, as just noted, figures from different ministries vary and neither the accuracy of the data nor the reasons for any change are clear. As in other countries of the region, state responsibility for residential institutions is divided mainly among three ministries. By far the largest share of responsibility falls to the Ministry of Public Education, which supervises some 86% of institutions and 91% of children in the state's residential child care system (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Share in total number of institutions and children at institutions by supervisory agency in Uzbekistan, 2005



Source: RCSAC.

It oversees the 28 'Mehribonlik' orphanages, serving over 3,000 children, and 82 residential schools that cater for approximately 19,000 children classified as having limited abilities. The Ministry of Health supervises 13 infant homes. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection supervises children who are categorised as mentally disabled and who cannot study, in five

'Muruvvat' children's homes accommodating nearly 1,400 children. The ministry estimates that the number of children with disabilities in the country is closer to 120,000 and is alert to creating opportunities for children with learning disabilities who need not be 'lost to society'. Other types of residential institution include special schools for children from poor families and sanatoria. Some alternative forms of residential institution have now begun to be put in place in Uzbekistan, including family-type homes and SOS children's villages. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has secured a building for a centre for children who reach 18 years and would otherwise be faced with adult residential care, so that they may be given skills for a more independent life; this is likely to require donor support if it is to come to fruition.

Institutions are financed through the republican budget on a *per capita* basis but the information on the level of funding is not publicly available.

5.1.3 Family substitute services

The Ministry of Public Education has promoted alternative forms of child care, including family type homes for small groups, and foster care, and contributed to the simplification of the regulations for adoption and for patronage (a form of guardianship). In fact, figures provided by the State Statistical Committee suggest that family substitute services are already far more common than residential care in Uzbekistan, with nearly 34,000 children adopted and some 26,500 under guardianship / trusteeship in 2005. This suggests that the successful introduction of the newer form of family substitute service, foster care, may be more feasible (from the point of view of public acceptability) in Uzbekistan than is the case in other countries. As yet the number of children who are fostered does not exceed 200, and the number of foster families is under 100.

The emergence of foster care is a recent development that has only been activated and support gained in the past two years. It was introduced through pilot activity and is now recognised in law: legislation was brought up to date to encourage foster family funding and support in 2007. In 2007 the standard contract between the local authority and the foster family was approved. The service is now being piloted in Tashkent and Samarkand; Bukhara is the only region to have more foster families run by the government. In Bukhara foster parents receive benefits and clothes for children (usually with delays).

A key challenge here in the further development of foster care will be to provide technical assistance to ensure that the distinction between that service and guardianship is clearly defined and understood. Guardians are not paid, while foster parents have the right to receive benefits in cash and in kind. In some instances guardians are beginning to demand financial support similar to that received by foster parents (this issue is not confined to Uzbekistan). The evaluation team does not make any judgments on how this dispute should be resolved but it is important to take into consideration the potential financial implications of introducing payments to foster carers and the way in which the funding may influence the behaviour of guardians.

As for adoption, although it is a long established and very widespread practice there remain some policy issues to be addressed, especially in relation to alignment with the CRC. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has urged greater inclusion of child rights in the legislation on adoption; seeking and obtaining consent to adoption from children above the age of 10 is obligatory, but children do not have the right to know who their parents are and adoption is kept a secret. Decisions on adoption are the responsibility of the courts.

5.1.4 Family support services

Family support services are being developed, both through externally funded pilots and through the government budget. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection runs 12 centres that provide rehabilitation and professional orientation for disabled people. These are funded through the budget. They have not been reformed since their creation and there is a need to address the shortage of social and other specialist services for their beneficiaries.

Women's resource centres have been transformed with the help of UNICEF into family resource centres which mainly provide a means for needy families to improve their economic wellbeing; this can serve as a measure to reduce the institutionalisation of children where economic hardship is the source of difficulty. The staff in these bodies are trained to provide psychological and social support.

The successful experience and example of the Angren Sunday School for disabled children has been documented and disseminated, though not yet replicated throughout the country.

5.2 Activities of development partners and NGOs

UNICEF is the only donor with substantial interventions in child protection in Uzbekistan and in that respect has a vitally influential role in helping the government's agenda in implementing the CRC, and in bringing risks to children to the attention of the authorities. In general the main mechanism for donors to support improvements in child welfare and increased resource allocation for children in need is through partnership agreements with the government on the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), with the implementation of programmes in poverty alleviation, health and education policy. The UNDAF programmes embrace this approach of achieving change through an improvement in living standards, and UNICEF's workplans reflect this. Child protection initiatives were incorporated within the UN programme aim of 'quality basic services accessible to all'. UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank together coordinate donor activities in education.

There is a relative absence of other donors and other NGOs with child care as their main goal; Save the Children (UK) which previously had an active programme, has reduced its interventions considerably, and other potential donors have not yet negotiated a presence with government. At the policy development level the EC is in the process of establishing social sector support, after some time.

Some NGOs are operating at the level of policy implementation. SOS Kinderdorf is in partnership with government in providing a children's village in Tashkent and Samarkand for homeless or orphaned children, though this is not a family living experience. World Vision is one international NGO which has project intervention on a fairly small scale, where it is engaged in restoring children to family living, and with whom UNICEF has good relations. National NGOs such as SABR in Samarkand, 'You Are Not Alone', the Kamalat youth movement and public associations such as Womens Committees are mobilised to undertake much of the alternative support to institutional care which is available for children at risk, and UNICEF has good relations with the NGO Coalition on Children's Issues.

Figure 5.2 Status of child care system reform, Uzbekistan

	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
Policy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The Plan of Actions on Securing Child Welfare in Uzbekistan contains detailed plan of actions for ensuring child welfare. Identification of who will coordinate the process, and of sources of funding, are not made explicit. Plan of Actions was not widely cited by interviewees. ❖ Plan of actions does not define the overall governance structure of the child care system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In the Plan of Actions on Securing Child Welfare it is planned to develop services providing medical-social-mental assistance to families and to establish rehabilitation centres for children left without parental care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In the Plan of Actions on Securing Child Welfare it is planned to learn and introduce the best foreign practices in patronage, guardianship. ❖ In addition, it is planned to learn the conditions of patronage families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In the Plan of Actions on Securing Child Welfare it is planned to deinstitutionalize, support families with disabled children, improve conditions at residential institutions. ❖ No separate national strategy for coordination and development of policy on residential care
Legislation and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There is a law on the RCSAC (2004). Goals: analysis of issues of social adaptation of disabled children and children at risk, development of curriculum, manuals monitoring of existing government programs, etc. ❖ A law on "Guarantees of the rights of the child" has been drafted and submitted to the Parliament. ❖ There is a law on guardianship and trusteeship (1999) as secondary legislation for the implementation of Family Code (1998). Responsible for guardianship, gate-keeping are guardianship bodies of public education departments for children under 18 and social departments for disabled children. Nobody, except them, can identify and place children to institutions. ❖ There is a law on Commission on Minors (2000) which works on non-paid basis (except executive secretary) with the head khokim. It has right to monitor conditions in residential institutions. ❖ Law on PMPC (1995) establishes this commission responsible for gate-keeping for disabled children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are 12 rehabilitation centres under the Ministry of Labor and Social protection (2001). Main goal -social rehabilitation and professional orientation for disabled people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There is a law on adoption and foster care (1998). in 2007 and the standard contract between the local authority and the foster family was approved. ❖ De facto foster care is practised in several regions (mainly in Bukhara). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are laws and regulations on different types of children homes. Regulation on home-Mehribonlik (1995) states that these homes should create conditions close to family environment. Homes Muruvvat are regulated by the law on "Children homes for mentally disabled children" (1993). ❖ In 2007 the regulation on family type children homes was approved. They are established based on the decree of the Hakim and aims at creating favourable conditions close to family environment for health, study, physical development of children left without parental care .

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	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
Administrative and financial systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The RCSAC is established under the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan and financed through the budget. ❖ There are guardianship departments and Commissions on Minors functioning in the Republic. The work of guardianship body is financed through the local budget. Commission works on non-paid basis, except executive secretary. ❖ Currently there are three pilot FCSUs in the Republic. They work in parallel with existing structures: guardianship departments and Commissions on Minors. These FCSU are fully financed by UNICEF rather than through the local budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Sunday School provides services for disabled children. It has been supported by UNICEF and at the same time receives budget support. ❖ Family resource centres are functioning in 12 regions fully financed from the budget. Seem to provide more economic assistance. ❖ MPPCs are financed through the budget. ❖ There are 12 rehabilitation centres under the Ministry of Labor and Social protection providing social rehabilitation and professional orientation for disabled people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ A small number of children in foster care and family type orphanages (328 in 2006), but a high number of children under guardianship (36741) ❖ Guardianship department deals with guardianship, foster care and adoption. In pilot places these activities are also performed by FCSU. ❖ Guardians do not receive money, while foster parent receive benefits on children. This is practised mainly in Bukhara and with a delay. Parents also receive clothes once per year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The system of child protection is fragmented. ❖ Some institutions are under the Ministry of Education ("Mehribonlik"), some under the Ministry of labour and social protection (Muruvvat) and Infant homes are under the Ministry of Health. ❖ Institutions are financed through the republican budget according to norms per one child. ❖ There is strong support of institutions from the private sector.
Human resources (recruitment and training of personnel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The staff of RCSAC, FCSUs, guardianship departments, Commissions on Minors received training through UNICEF. ❖ UNICEF introduced social work as an academic unit at three universities, but the issues of curriculum approval and accreditation of the programmes are still under discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The staff from Sunday school and family resource centres were trained. ❖ Students from Woman vocational school were trained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There is training for staff of guardianship departments and FCSU on foster care. ❖ Several foster families were also trained, though many existing foster parents have not yet received training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The staff from institutions is trained and several of them will be provided with diploma of professional social workers. ❖ According to expert assessments, the ration of children to the staff at institutions is high. For instance, 47 children to 70 workers.
Representation and participation, rights-based approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ UNICEF supports working groups involving representatives of different ministers working on drafting laws and policy development. ❖ It is not apparent whether it is possible for civil society representatives to contribute to e.g. gate-keeping panels ❖ Children parliament participates in the development of laws and regulation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Some families do not receive appropriate services because they are afraid to reveal they have a child with a disability. ❖ Specialists claim that weak points of rehabilitation centres are lack of social and psychological services. ❖ Benefits for disabled children are paid for children up to, but not above, the age of 16. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Adoption agreed by court of law, and must be secret. ❖ Seeking and obtaining consent to adoption from children aged 10+ is obligatory. ❖ There are not special conditions for putting children with disabilities under guardianship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ RCSAC conducts survey of children opinion at the residential institutions. ❖ Children with motor disabilities after 7 years are transferred to Muruvvats where children with mental disabilities are placed.

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	Governance structures	Family support services	Family substitute services	Residential institutions
Monitoring mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Key ministries (health, education, labour and social protection) have their own systems of administrative statistics. Data is not used for analytical purposes. Figures from different ministries may vary. ▸ In general, there are some figures on children at different type of care, but their accuracy was not able to be verified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The data on children with disabilities vary across Ministries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ For the development of foster care a pilot computer program (supported by UNICEF) incorporating data on children from 6 orphanages in Tashkent is under development. ❖ Guardianship bodies control the situation with a child, but no strict time framework is defined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ There are no accurate figures on the number of children at institutions. ❖ FCSU keeps records of children at institutions ❖ There is a pilot programme (supported by UNICEF) incorporating data on children from 6 orphanages in Tashkent.

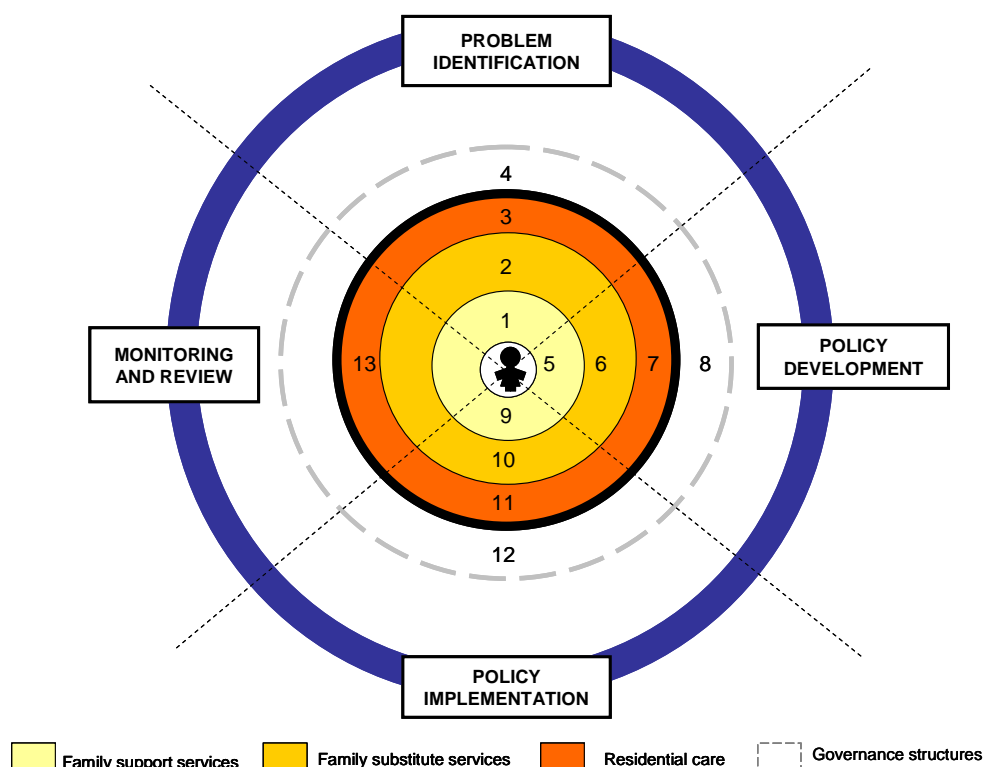
Source: OPM / CASE.

5.3 UNICEF's activities

The HSTF project fits into the previous and current areas of priority for UNICEF in Uzbekistan: at the time the project started its priorities included children's rights, support for families and communities and child protection, and child protection is retained in current priorities alongside family and community empowerment, among others. The high importance given to child protection in Uzbekistan matches the status of this issue as a focus area for UNICEF's global medium-term plan for 2002–05 and for 2006–09.

Figure 5.3 below notes the areas of activity of the UNICEF office in Uzbekistan in relation to the four stages of the policy cycle and the four components of the child care system. (Activities are listed in a little more detail in Table 5.1 that follows).

Figure 5.3 Areas of UNICEF's intervention in child care policy, Uzbekistan



Source: OPM. Notes: Areas of intervention are as follows: (1) Assessment of social work curriculum (2) Foster care model (3) Assessment of system of child protection, and of policy for disabled children (4) Evaluation of Commission on Minors, Law on Guarantee of Child Rights (5) Curriculum and model for social work (6) Foster care legislation (7) Advocacy on child's right to family environment (8) FCSUs; Ombudsman for children (9) Introduction of social work, training of social work students, in-service training for professionals; pilot of Angren Sunday School; support to women's resource centres (10) Training of families in foster care, publication of relevant materials (11) Training of residential care staff (12) Support to pilot FCSUs; training of FCSU staff, RCSAC, Commission on Minors, guardianship authority (13) Database on children in orphanages.

Table 5.1 Summary of relevant UNICEF activities, Uzbekistan

Area	Analysis and assessment	Advocacy	Capacity-building	Pilots
Governance structures (Legislative and administrative framework)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of Commission on Minors Law on Guarantees of Children Rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy in favour of the establishment of pilot FCSUs Forum on Child Protection Ombudsman for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to development of legislation by supporting working groups (adoption, family villages, Guarantees of Children Rights) Training for the staff of RCSAC Training of the staff of pilot FCSUs Training of Commission on Minors, Guardianship Departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of three pilot FCSUs Temporary supplement to salaries of the FCSU staff
Deinstitutionalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General analysis and assessment of the system of child protection in Uzbekistan Social policy assessment for disabled children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy on child's right to family environment, reforms in child care, practices of working with children, contribution to change of attitudes International conferences and Forums to promote child care reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training for the staff from institutions Training for students from Women's College following their practical placement in Tashkent state orphanages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Database for children from 6 orphanages in Tashkent was developed (not data in it yet), to be linked with FCSUs
Family substitute services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amendment in legislation on foster care Development of the model for foster care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printing informational materials on foster care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several families are trained to use the model for foster care 	
Family support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment by International consultant of existing social work curriculum and education plan Development of new social work curriculum in line with international standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International conferences and Forums (e.g. "Effective Forms and Methods of Providing Support to Socially Vulnerable Children") Advocacy in favour of developing field of social work, establishing a profession of social worker to support reforms in child care system, opening new academic units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training of the staff of Women (Family) Resource Centres, Experience of Angren Sunday School is documented Introduction of social work as a separate unit at three universities Organisation and teaching of the National team of social workers Development, introduction and piloting of practicum models for social work students; the model includes academic and field supervision of students at the places working on child protection issues. Development and inclusion of certified 10- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support of the Angren Sunday School for disabled children Women (Family) Resources Centres were supported and established

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Area	Analysis and assessment	Advocacy	Capacity-building	Pilots
			week in-service training for practitioners working in child protection field. Training programme has been recognised by the MoHEd and included in the state programme of in-service training.	

Source: OPM.

It is particularly noticeable that the UNICEF office has not limited itself to one type of intervention, or to those specified in the HSTF proposal, but has carried out a very wide range of activities across the spectrum of child care services and in all policy areas. These include the start of an activity which may be used for monitoring and review, namely the database for monitoring children in six orphanages in Tashkent (though this is at an early stage of development). Situation analyses and assessments have been more wide-ranging than in other countries and cover not only the types of services provided but also the system. Policy development has a similarly broad coverage; and here the policy development on foster care has achieved its enactment in legislation, which improves the prospects for foster care training to be useful. Policy implementation has a strong focus on training, and there has been some limited inclusion in training programmes of people who work in residential care. The social work components of the project are emphasised by the country office as being an area of intervention that is important to them.

5.4 Evaluation of UNICEF's contribution

5.4.1 Relevance

UNICEF has created an opening for the child care agenda by aligning its interventions with government priorities—in accordance with the Paris Declaration of 2005—and expressing a strong identification with addressing health and nutrition needs and with early years development. Partly as a result of its advocacy efforts the government willingly agrees to seek expert support from UNICEF and wishes to match international standards in child protection.

Assessment and analysis of the current situation and designing of a concept for piloting community based social/family work services

The acceptance of institutional care by policy makers and society at large, particularly for disabled children as well as those without parents, has begun to be challenged by demonstration of good practice in other countries. This has meant that the launching of an analysis of the situation of the most vulnerable children in the country—and also of disabled children specifically—has been both timely and relevant. These analytical functions were formally legitimated within the new RCSAC, endorsed by the Cabinet in 2004, and which has been establishing itself and its analytical capacity since.

Some related analytical work is seen in the database of children in orphanages which is under development. It is intended as a reference so that certain children's needs can be assessed and tracked, and the potential for a family home for some of those in an institution can be demonstrated.

The late disbursement of HSTF funds meant that UNICEF could allocate time to conceptual clarification and awareness-raising with policy makers on the importance of deinstitutionalisation; the three districts which emerged as pilot sites for the FCSUs had ample time for selection and team preparation, although at the cost of only starting into operation in 2007. In the short period that the pilots have been operating they have begun to demonstrate their relevance to the deinstitutionalisation agenda and their ability to provide practical support to families; this has already convinced government to direct committed child protection resources towards family and community support, with three more sites being considered for incorporation into the state budget over the coming year.

Advocacy and sensitisation and mobilisation of professionals / experts

UNICEF's promotion of the concept of full rights for all children—especially its attempts to resolve the stigma attached to a child with disability—and the production of advocacy materials with practical examples from the country are directly relevant for changing the attitudes of senior policy makers, ministry staff and families. UNICEF has used its 'good offices' with the government to generate events such as the International Forum on Children which assembles the relevant actors from ministries and other agencies, and now meets annually, with a main theme on child protection reform for intended government action. This has been coupled with considerable media exposure, and continuing publication and awareness-raising with counterparts accessible to the child protection team. The strength of these advocacy efforts is considered by the country office to be a crucial step towards the improvement of the child protection system. A change in attitudes and mindsets is observed, which has created space for UNICEF to achieve further progress in developing a protective environment for children.

Capacity building of professionals dealing with children and families in need and at risk

Social work remained absent as a discipline, and knowledge of social work practice untapped in Uzbekistan, up to the starting point of the HSTF in 2003. The recognition by UNICEF of this gap in social service provision, and the introduction of practices from best international experience, can therefore be considered to be relevant for proceeding with the child care reform agenda and for building capacity in the long term. UNICEF lists its interventions in this area as including:

- advocacy in favour of social work being recognised as a profession, and for state budget allocation;
- support to the establishment of social work as an academic course in three universities, with child protection issues as a priority, including training of teaching staff;
- introduction of short training on social work concepts for some students in vocational training, and 10-week in-service training for practitioners in pilot districts; and
- showing the application through the example of practical placements in residential care.

Establishing pilot community based social / family work centres

The initial support of Family Resource Centres set up by the Uzbek Children's Fund, a government backed public association, during 2004 aimed to help enhance community-based facilities and help for children and families in difficulties as well as street children. In 12 regions there are now functioning centres offering activities, skills and support at community level as a direct alternative to institutional care, but providing temporary residential care as required. As noted in section 5.1.4 above these are relevant to the deinstitutionalisation agenda since the aim is to prevent poverty being a cause of institutionalisation of children.

With the further establishment of FCSU pilots with multi-disciplinary teams which receive professional social work training input, at the end of the HSTF programme in 2007, UNICEF has found a method of involving local authority providers with alternatives to institutional admissions. These initiatives have nurtured good relations with existing local powers and devised methods of operating which adapt well to the working experience and disposition of employed personnel so that although they are still embryonic in development they cannot be considered alien or inappropriate to the environment. They are also relevant for pursuing the advocacy agenda: the

support to social workers and public authorities in the FCSUs has contributed to a shift in attitudes towards deinstitutionalisation.

Promotion and piloting of foster care at the community level

The promotion of fostering has taken longer than other activities; this may partly arise because the guardianship system in place in the country is relatively secure and national authorities tended to see fostering as not relevant to their situation or culture. UNICEF has persevered in demonstrating that fostering can be an important resource for some children without parents or other relatives to act as carers; it has convinced some counterparts that the system can be piloted, and it is also now legitimised by a recent decree of the government.

5.4.2 Effectiveness

Problem identification

The early analytical work of UNICEF and drawing to the attention of government of the unmet needs of disabled children progressed well between 2003 and 2005, so that an important outcome was the conference and agreement by government to set up the RCSAC in 2005. This has resulted in the publication and distribution of the 'Analysis of Social Protection in Uzbekistan with Respect to Children with Disabilities', and a recognition in the division of functions within this centre that there are both generally vulnerable children, particularly with economic and health deprivations, and disabled children who require national attention and intervention, and that institutionalisation should not necessarily be considered the expected route of state support.

Policy development

UNICEF in Uzbekistan has taken a broad-based approach through each component of its work to demonstrating the feasibility and desirability of family living as a preference for all children. Guardianship support and the beginning of fostering has been established, with the latter now being recognised in law. Advocacy through workshops and seminars, and convening events such as the International Forum, have certainly had positive effects: the evaluation team was told by state employees and public association representatives of successfully rehabilitated children, and of the work in resource centres which was directly designed to equip parents as well as children with skills for maintaining themselves in communities. The work of UNICEF in establishing the International Forum and related working groups has undoubtedly been effective in exposing government stakeholders to the need for both policy and operational reforms.

It is not possible to quantify UNICEF's effectiveness in this regard, but evidence from state counterparts confirms that the advocacy has accelerated and given confidence to their interest in means of supporting family integrity on behalf of the child. An increasingly influential body of opinion in favour of significant child care reform which would help put in place the outstanding recommendations of the UN CRC (2006) does now exist in the country, and is organised in part through the Forum. There is, however, no evident plan or intention by UNICEF to engage with government in a specific strategy of deinstitutionalisation of disabled children. The right to assessment within institutions and a child care plan would be a precursor, but this has not yet been advocated.

Steps taken by UNICEF to raise the profile of disabled children, and the Angren Sunday School support, have encouraged the development of a policy agenda in which the Ministry of Labour and

Social Protection and the RCSAC are now active. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended in its report of 2006 that the government review its activities and initiate moves to guarantee social inclusion, and this remains to be met; but UNICEF has increased media awareness and the knowledge base of numerous senior officials through dissemination of case results, and parents and children have aided the process by demonstrating the benefits of the change in mentality towards disability. The RCSAC with its approval by Cabinet and support from UNICEF is potentially a strong advocate for the integration of disabled children and policy reform to enable this.

Support to legislative reform has taken time to show results. But at the end of three years of project work, the government now has a programme of introducing a new law on social protection of the population; a law on the guarantees of children's rights, which has been submitted to parliament and can be considered a very important achievement; and decrees on additional measures of financial and moral support of young families, the rendering of financial assistance through *mahalla* committees, and additional benefits defining the status of children without parents, those with special needs and their access to opportunities. In the area of family substitute services, family type boarding houses, adoption procedures and foster parent guarantees are also introduced. UNICEF has also led working groups revising foster care legislation and on children's villages. The activities have been effective in securing the approval of foster care legislation. The outstanding proposal to put in place a Children's Ombudsman is one area which will require attention, and to which UNICEF has already contributed.

Policy implementation

With a system of child care provision strongly dependent on institutional facilities, there is a considerable risk that efforts to improve living situations will concentrate on residential care. This is evident in Uzbekistan where the government has invested in its institutions. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006) recognises the continuing importance of institutions and makes two particular recommendations in respect of this which are outstanding and deserve more attention than has been given to date:

1. 'ensure that the decision to place children in institutions be for a certain period of time and examined periodically to evaluate the possibility that the child be reintegrated into his/her family or identifying an adoptive family'; and
2. 'take all necessary measures to ensure that children placed in institutions as a last resort, enjoy all rights of the Convention and in particular receive appropriate protection, education and health care, and that the living conditions in institutions are of highest standards and regularly monitored'.

UNICEF has had some success in redirecting this focus by moving more strongly into the support of professional development of both a new cadre of providers who will graduate as social workers, and the strengthening of the knowledge base of existing officials and social protection staff, including the RCSAC, through in-service training and short course introductions to child care principles and practice. There is little evidence yet of institutional staff themselves being re-trained to provide alternative services, although at least one residential home has been able to help facilitate rehabilitation of some children, and in 2007 the government agreed to transform two large orphanages into family group living environments. Positive interventions and rehabilitation have occurred but very much *ad hoc*. UNICEF is not in a position to be able to hold government to account on child care plans.

A knowledge base and body of experience in social work was initially introduced largely through the use of international experts. This experience has now been consolidated and three universities

are now providing courses with the first graduates due to emerge in 2008. The three university departments do not yet have equal status but with the new curriculum each university has the power to use it as is most appropriate. The Institute of Culture approves any changes or developments in the existing curriculum for other departments of social work in the country.

At the same time certified in-service training of up to 10 weeks for some key staff in family and child support, and induction sessions for other state employees has created basic awareness of social work and enhancement of child development. The social work education direction has practical placement opportunities, and has found means of relating to existing working modes and personnel which augurs well for its success. The writing of a code of ethics for social work which will apply across the country is in process, and is a good test of the maturation of social work as a new profession. It is accredited in educational but not yet in labour/occupational legitimacy within the government framework. UNICEF must take much of the credit for this achievement to date, particularly in the period, post 2005, when bilateral or other NGO support has not been possible.

With regard to pilot projects it is too soon to evaluate results of the pilot FCSUs as their operational activity has only recently commenced. The support of *khokimiyats* is in place and their methodological strength and training input suggests that they ought to prove successful in maintaining families at risk and in rehabilitation, as the ones visited were in fact well on course to be able to do this. The involvement of staff from different departments of local government in at least one of these pilots may prove critical in gaining wider acceptance. The key test is likely to be making strong working relationships with the local commissions of minors and establishing *de facto*, if not *de jure*, gatekeeping on children to prevent admission to residential care. The social work support from trained faculty is in place to help achieve results through skilled input to families.

The experience of family and community resource centres in more remote parts of the country, supported by UNICEF in the 2003-05 period, should not be lost. Without documenting and bringing together good practice experiences, these interventions could remain fragile in terms of being able to be scaled up and becoming part of national policy. UNICEF should consider how to incorporate into the FCSU pilots the learning from the experience of the resource centres, including understanding the advantages of combining professional support with resource centres for respite and day activities for the most vulnerable.

Fostering has only developed with the availability of some professional support, and after awareness training, but has now become an important adjunct to the work in the FCSUs. In Bukhara in fact the guardianship department has been able to launch fostering without UNICEF support, with the backing of the *Khokim* and has evolved a close connection between fostering and guardianship where fostering may be entitled to some financial support although it is often undertaken by a relative.

Monitoring and review

It is to the credit of the UNICEF country office in Uzbekistan that it has begun to recognise the need for support to ministries and service providers in monitoring needs and progress. UNICEF's provision of funding to the Republican Children Public Fund 'You are not Alone' in the creation of a database in six children's homes is a manifestation of this. The database development has continued in a way that can relate it to the work of the new pilot districts in Tashkent, but it is not yet at a stage where the effectiveness of the database itself can be determined. As for the effectiveness of the process, there has been a wider problem of a delay in implementation which is reported by the UNICEF office to be due to technical issues. Moreover the RCSAC, which has been nominated by government to coordinate analytical work, is developing baseline data, but it is

still some distance from being able to feed these data into ministries. There is little evidence yet of the government responding to the database development.

A different database with broader scope was proposed at the International Forum on 'Effective Forms and Methods of Providing Support to Socially Vulnerable Children', facilitated by UNICEF in 2005, with the aim of creating a unified interdepartmental database to be introduced to ministries and relevant organisations for children, but this has not been achieved. This is not necessarily a sign of ineffectiveness since the UNICEF office considers that the creation of such a database risks marginalising vulnerable groups of children so it has not been supporting progress in that direction.

5.4.3 Efficiency

Resources available to UNICEF through HSTF were not adequate in the first period as funds were not released until the second half of the programme so that it was mainly in 2005-07 that pilot interventions could be put into operation, and larger events planned. However UNICEF was able to pool its general resources to support family and community resource centres, and used staff time to advantage in the earlier period in building trust with government partners and scoping the prospects for significant developments such as the social work education support. Although there was very little expenditure in 2004 (1% of total budget), 32% of resources were spent in 2005 and 34% in 2006. By the end of the project unfunded parts of the activities in workplans had been met between HSTF and regional reserves and remaining funds disbursed. Feedback from project beneficiaries indicates that the partners supported by UNICEF were, on the whole, satisfied with the disbursement of resources in terms of timing and their ability to use the funds effectively.

The funds for data collection and analysis were cancelled in 2006, and there has not been substantial replacement of funding earmarked for data collection and improvement of systems. Latterly the allocation appears confined to the specific support of the database on children in orphanages in Tashkent. Monitoring and evaluation amounts for project activities and outputs are generally underspent. Clearly UNICEF in Uzbekistan has spent project money in areas of producing materials and publication to the extent of its budget and with flexibility according to perceived need, but it might have been more rigorous in devoting expenditure to the aim of improving the availability as well as reliability of data on children. The advocacy budget was underfunded in relation to the activities on sensitisation and mobilisation which UNICEF envisaged and may have constrained the extent of this work, but the office did utilise its regular resources in this respect to help cover advocacy work.

The budgets identified for FCSUs still substantially remain in reserve which is consonant with the pace and operationalisation of these as they are only recently fully on stream and will require continued support in the next two years at least. The financial resource from HSTF has been generally adequate given the capacity and planning purposes of UNICEF in combining its resources where required to focus on its overall priority goals. It is possible that some financial support for family and community resource centres, earlier in the programme, has been not substantial enough and has had to be dropped before replication and sustainability could be more established, although there is evidence from Uzbek partners that they can fairly quickly adopt learning from introduced good practice and seek other funding opportunities.

The scope for complementary spending in line with other donor interventions has been limited given the relative absence of these in child welfare, particularly in the last two years. UNICEF is fully aware of projects such as World Vision's Mercy House for enabling family living for children with disabilities, and has shared training events and knowledge. It is arguable that it could have

invested some more of its resource in facilitating and encouraging a viable working environment for other actual and potential providers from NGO and international agency context.

Expenditures have been generally justifiable, including those using significant funding to attract international academic and professional expertise and study tours to counteract the risk of exclusion from best practice for children which has been particularly present in Uzbekistan.

One area of concern with regard to programme expenditure is that only 12% of the planned budget for monitoring and evaluation is reported as having been spent by the end of 2006. According to UNICEF monitoring and evaluation activities on the project have been usually combined with monitoring on other UNICEF activities and have been mostly funded from office regular resources. The office says that it also consciously refrained from evaluation of its activities in the area of child care relying on the planned external evaluation at the end of the HSTF programme. Part of the difficulty in spending this part of the budget may be due to confusion in the country office as to what monitoring is (see section 5.4.7 below).

The evaluation team endorses the generally flexible approach as it represents an effective attempt to improve the effective use of project funds rather than be constrained by the very detailed terms of the original budget. However it highlights the potential challenge that can often arise when a single region-wide programme has to be fitted into individual country processes. It is possible that the proposal did not make sufficient allowance for country specific approaches to child care system reform. It is suggested that donors should be prepared to accept greater flexibility in the design of projects, particularly with Paris Declaration principles and increased national country ownership of development programmes in order to reduce the risk of inefficiency during implementation.

5.4.4 Impact

It is difficult to measure the quantitative impact of UNICEF's interventions on deinstitutionalisation because of the unreliability of the figures that was noted in 5.1.2 above. This means that there is no reliable way of testing decrease (or increase) in numbers, given the inadequacy of record systems and lack of comparability of quoted figures, along with particular complexities in the status of different institutions. It is known that children have been rehabilitated from various institutions, and that there is a planned approach to assessing some children currently looked after in residential care—who would otherwise reside in the local authority districts with pilot FCSUs—for family restitution and for fostering. The number of children fostered is few, but the prospect of further numbers is now established, depending on whether local authorities are interested and prepared to provide the resources which they are entitled by the state to offer. Guardianship support has been successful and undoubtedly limits the flow of children to institutions. Changes in gatekeeping for children have also been introduced in pilot districts, which is expected to have a positive impact.

With the awareness of practical means of supporting families at risk and rights of disabled children which has begun to develop within government it is reasonable to project that UNICEF's efforts on deinstitutionalisation will eventually contribute to a reduction in the number of children in all forms of residential care, both directly (in its pilot districts) and indirectly (through the spread of ideas).

It is less determinable whether UNICEF work will contribute to the number of children placed in institutions who are effectively reviewed by the competent authorities. *Ad hoc* assessments and reviews have taken place, but a systemic acknowledgement of the need for this remains outstanding. UNICEF has not visibly presented the case to government that every child has a right to a care plan and placement review.

Statutory services now present the potential for development of family living alternatives to residential care, depending largely on the willingness and knowledge base of local authorities, which did not exist four years previously. In practice there are now three viable FCSUs. There are also resource centres in at least 12 localities in the country where parents and vulnerable children receive day to day support which can keep them out of institutional care and in some circumstances help children who have been released or left such care, and where police and other agencies can refer children. These developments are not only ascribed to UNICEF support, but UNICEF's role in encouraging and demonstrating the importance of their work is significant in legitimizing them with the state. An exact figure on the number of children helped to stay out of institutional care, and out of custody, in this way is not calculable.

In Angren municipality over 50 children with disabilities get direct support but many more families in the city are now aware of the potential for their children and of the benefits of counteracting their own isolation of disabled children. The replication of this approach has been produced in handbook form and is given media attention so that the knowledge base and transfer of practical experience has been established in the country. However there are over 42,000 registered disabled children known to Ministry of Education, of whom over 22,000 are in special schools, but at least 120,000 disabled children exist across the country and according to UNICEF's figures 40% of children will receive no education (UNICEF, 2006b). There has been until very recently a neglect of children with learning disabilities in particular, and it is not yet apparent whether changing state policy will have an impact. The MPPCs which have responsibility for assessing and consigning children to set categories of disability have not been reformed, though the RCSAC is now working with these commissions with a view to their regulation.

A remaining contributor to institutionalisation is poverty within the family, which is belatedly being recognised by government (although not in the language of poverty). There is no effective targeting system to alleviate poverty, but there is a wide range of measures through material support and supplementary income as well as free access to state services which can be put in place for families identified as in need, and are within the prerogatives of local authorities. With the Year of Mercy and then the Year of Social Protection announced by the President, there are official recognitions and mandates to authorities for the first time to undertake assessments of vulnerable families and provide for alternatives to institutional care. Such initiatives are not currently measurable but family support and social work in the community has been given legitimacy. It is still the case that coordination and cooperation directly between different government agencies on child protection issues—rather than through vertical channels of communication—is limited. The imperviousness of government to legal challenge may be a constraint, however, on the acceleration of child care reform.

5.4.5 Sustainability

Attitudes

UNICEF in-country states that there has been a significant shift in government attitudes to child care reform during 2006 and 2007 so that they see the benefit of greater attention and investment being put into family support and into maximizing children's rights. The evidence from this evaluation supports this, in terms of the intentions of programmes within the Year of Social Protection, the new law on children rights being promoted, the official recognition of alternatives like fostering and small family type homes, the reforming and educating of commissions for minors, and support for pilot family and child units and some rehabilitation form institutions. Some heads of department in government ministries, notably the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the Prosecutor General's Office, are undoubtedly committed to developing services which match the

best interests of the child, and also admit that there is a long way to go in this direction. Local authority *Khokims* have been appraised of pilot work such as the Angren Sunday School, and media dissemination of UNICEF interventions is both favourable and facilitated by government.

It is less clear to determine at this point how and whether public attitudes are open to change, particularly in respect of the full rights and development needs of disabled children. The practice of keeping a disabled child at home without socialisation, and in other cases of consigning him/her to institutional care is still prevalent, and there is a strong stigma attached to disability. However, there are moves towards more inclusive education, and the example of the Angren experiment is well documented and disseminated (notably by parents themselves within the Angren municipality) so that it is possible for parents in Uzbekistan to make some demands or seek support from local authorities for ordinary living opportunities (and special needs help). This is, however, likely to require much greater mass education and awareness campaigning.

Institutional structures

The lack of interministerial coordination on children's rights initiatives remains an impediment. However, the RCSAC has been given a coordinating role by presidential decree, and it has established a coordinating council with high level representatives from each ministry and relevant department, as well as working groups, including one on deinstitutionalisation. There is as yet some fragility to the RCSAC as coordinator for all relevant agencies for although it may have official access its knowledge and skill and experience base is still in development.

The FCSUs in the three pilot districts are on course to demonstrate the benefits of a professionalised approach to keeping children with families in the community and of rehabilitating children back to families or to new foster families. The planned extension of FCSUs to three further sites is an indication that the structures have been received positively so far. The presentation to the government of information on the relative costs and benefits of FCSUs may be an effective way of strengthening the case for maintaining these structures.

The decentralisation of some social care responsibilities to *mahallas* and the *khokim* is a good example of utilisation of a traditional mechanism for a reform process which is in keeping with the values of family life within a neighbourhood, but which the state system, and people's access to it, has until very recently denied. The extent to which such family support at this most local level will be generated will depend in large measure on them having sufficient dedicated resources, and exposure to the emerging social work knowledge base through training of local officials. This in turn may depend on the capacity of UNICEF and government to scale up the learning from the existing pilots.

Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability is certainly fragile, but there is some indication that initiatives supported by UNICEF have the possibility of being incorporated into state or local authority funding. The family resource centres which were developed in the Fergana Valley and Andijan demonstrated local support without expensive new professional inputs being relied upon, optimising the use of skills and resources on-site; these services have continued to run with the support of local authorities after UNICEF ceased to fund them, albeit in a different format. The Angren Sunday School pilot, which has broadcast its methods and results, is now being run by local authorities independently of UNICEF funding.

Family support services are still at the pilot stage and their replication financed through the budget depends very much on their performance, and on work to estimate and present the transitional

costs of reproviding for care of children from institutions to family type settings. As there is now the opportunity to develop small family type living in one or more institutions, the analysis of current capital and revenue costs in institutions, of transitional costs for rehabilitating children assessed as capable of living within a family, and of the costs of supporting foster as well as guardian families should be undertaken. Local authorities can, and do, by various complex formulae make up child rearing costs to a family, so that provision does exist but it is currently more or less entirely *ad hoc* and not aggregated according to overall costs or compared with institutional costs. Encouraging practical steps are that local authorities are committed to continue, there is negotiation to redirect personnel from guardianship to FCSUs, and that unique data collection allowing for cost analysis is planned.

5.4.6 Rights-based approaches

A child rights approach has been both implicit and explicit in the UNICEF interventions, and in the lobbying of government. Part of the adopted method has been to gain the confidence of key policy makers through demonstration of different approaches to working with children and through the delivery of practical support such as the health supplements for children, rather than openly criticising government. It has then made the most of this entry into policy dialogue with government. There is evidence towards the end of the HSTF period that this approach has paid off with the interest expressed by government in pursuing the establishment of an Ombudsman for Children, as well as the presentation to parliament of the draft Law on the Guarantee of the Rights of the Child. In the sphere of disability, the Angren Sunday School was designed to highlight and help disseminate the best practice in reducing the isolation of a parent at home with a child and of bringing collaborative support for special needs together with the local authority as the prime enabler. While this is still exceptional rather than normal practice in the country, UNICEF along with the RCSAC is in a strong position to influence government.

Gender issues have not been particularly highlighted during the HSTF project: in fact, the country office stated that attention to gender is irrelevant to child care reform. The evaluation team is not in a position to comment on the likelihood of discrimination against girls either in different regions of the country, or in rural rather than urban areas, so it is not known whether the location of UNICEF's pilot activities has resulted in a gender bias. It seems that this is an issue that has not been investigated by UNICEF nationally. Given that there is evidence that there are differences in health indicators between males and females—for instance, the MICS 2006 reported that girls have higher percentages of being underweight for their age and may be more prone to malnutrition than boys—it would follow that it is at least worth considering whether there are inequalities in levels of care for girls in families, or other gender differences related to child care.

UNICEF's role as the conveyor of child protection standards to national policy makers is vital and well recognised by government. This means that UNICEF has the opportunity to support the improvement of child rights, such as by backing the recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2006 that the government should review its policies affecting children with disabilities to accord more with expected international standards. Since the government is keen to demonstrate its comparability on international terms UNICEF's advocacy here may have positive results. UNICEF's position here is unique since there are no obvious allies for UNICEF's efforts who have an independence or separation from government and are at the same time capable of leverage on it. One potential obstacle is that there is a long process involved in negotiating for change and achieving a meaningful result with government.

Part of a rights-based approach to programming entails the participation of beneficiaries in the processes of reform that affect them. An element of this participation has been present in the HSTF project: the Children's Parliament, which has had UNICEF support and was itself a creation

of the Uzbek Children's Fund, was engaged in providing inclusions for the draft law on the guarantees of the rights of the child, and disabled children have been given direct access to policymakers by UNICEF so that their views and wishes are made known.

5.4.7 Results-based management

Results-based management in UNICEF

The process of managing for results is not strongly developed in UNICEF in Uzbekistan, which also holds true for other country offices. Some targets are included in the annual workplans, but due to late release of funds, and then some redesign, these have changed, for justifiable reasons, and there is no indication that these targets are used for making programming decisions. The results of HSTF interventions are not monitored separately from the rest of UNICEF's country programme in child protection. They are monitored by expenditure, but not specifically by achievement or change on specific targets; it is not clear that this monitoring is analysed or feeds into a process of revising programme activities.

A considerable problem seems to be that the concept of what 'monitoring' is is not fully understood by country office staff: for example, it was observed that, 'there was no need to travel around the country to carry out monitoring activities' because a lot of the focus of the project was at policy development level. This misses the point that monitoring of a project relates not just to inspection of facilities, but continuous examination and review of what is achieved with the financial and human resource inputs and the activities being undertaken. The confusion between monitoring and inspection is not confined to UNICEF Uzbekistan and is an issue that needs to be addressed more widely in the region.

There is some recording of good practice from UNICEF's experience. The results from Angren by case example are undoubtedly well documented and show a method of good practice reporting which could be replicated in the FCSU work.

UNICEF's support to government in developing results-based management

It is recognised that UNICEF is operating in an environment that may be less amenable than in other countries to the gathering of data and the utilisation of reliable data in informing policymaking. Nonetheless, monitoring and evaluation tools have been engaged by the UNICEF team, and one particular initiative has been to encourage the capacity of the State Statistics Committee to monitor children in need, and link their work to that of the TRANSMonee project of UNICEF. At the same time the participation of Uzbekistan in the MICS has produced an information base on children without parents, with a disability, and vulnerable children which can be utilised in dialogue with and reporting to government on the level of incidences. This can support the arguments for pilot work, or of extending it, but is not necessarily a substitute for measuring project results. Numbers of children rehabilitated, and being fostered, are recorded.

Database development in the country at large is sporadic and unreliable, with ministries having incompatible figures and means of reporting. The International Forum on Children which now meets annually can draw government ministers to report on their activities and achievements with children at risk, but it is clear from their statements that they have no consensus on the scope and range of numbers of children in different circumstances, particularly those in institutional care, nor of how to assess the most vulnerable. The RCSAC may begin to provide a more reliable and accurate knowledge base, but its datasets are still limited and it is not yet clear how it will influence the other agency data. It is an achievement of UNICEF to have helped ground and train this

analytical capacity, and the use of international as well as nationally trained social work knowledge and skills transfer is beginning to have an influence on the creation of an evidence based approach to intervention with children at risk or in need.

5.5 Conclusions

5.5.1 The status of reform in Uzbekistan

There is evidence of some change in mindset of government actors since 2005 regarding the potential for deinstitutionalisation. The introduction of social work as a discipline in academic and operational forms in the last three to four years has been a vital catalyst to reform and practical support to child rights; it now needs to find acceptance as an occupational category and fully fledged profession across government, notably in Ministry of Labour and Social Protection norms. The FCSUs demonstrate an important new way of working for local government and show the need for professional social work. Family substitute services and capacity are very new and will be tested in their first few years, especially when foster placements do not work out. Demands for parity between guardians and foster parents are now under consideration.

Two of the areas which remain to be addressed within government if child care reform is to be accelerated are, first, the need for coordination of functions, responsibilities for children and sharing of knowledge across government; and second, the accessibility and reliability of national data on children. The establishment of the RCSAC has gone some way towards responding to these issues.

5.5.2 UNICEF's contribution to reform

UNICEF has gained credibility and acceptance of its agenda by the Government of Uzbekistan. UNICEF is subject to the constraint of the lack of coordination on child care issues, but it has identified some of the key players in the sector and can act as go-between with government stakeholders. It also has influence through its associations with international conventions such as the UN CRC. The approach to gaining interest from policy makers in reforming institutional care has been dependent on where opportunities have been presented. While good use has been made of these opportunities, such as the presence of managers sympathetic to both change and enhancing children's rights, there is lacking a concerted approach to child care planning and to the rights to assessment and review by children in institutions.

The sustainability of UNICEF's activities is in part determined by the extent to which public opinion favours family-based alternatives to residential care, and supports efforts to promote the rights of children with disabilities. The fact that disability is perceived as a debilitating stigma on children with special needs, and on the parent or parents looking after them, has been able to get a higher profile with UNICEF support, and some media interest. There remains a need for UNICEF to contribute to further advocacy activities. The financial and institutional sustainability of UNICEF's pilot activities remain fragile but it is recognised that these activities are still at a relatively early stage. Results-based management, both of its own project and in support of the government, has not been a strong feature of UNICEF's interventions during the HSTF.

5.6 Lessons learned

The experiences of the Government of Uzbekistan and UNICEF have generated some lessons which may be applicable to other countries as well as to other stakeholders in child care reform.

- In a political environment where child care reform is recognised as an issue to be addressed but where policies have not yet been explicitly vocalised it is possible to engage governments in debate and policy-making by approaching the subject from two opposing directions. On the one hand, it is possible to find an entry point into policy discussions by gaining influence in the wider arena of social sector reform, such as child health and early years education, and gradually to focus attention on implications for child care. On the other hand, the alternative approach is to highlight an individual element of the child care system, such as concern for children with disabilities, and from there to extrapolate broader policy discussions to relate to all children in need. Both approaches have been adopted effectively in Uzbekistan.
- It is possible to bring about collaboration across people of different disciplines at the same level of authority (i.e. horizontally) in countries with more vertical decision-making structures. Cooperation between social workers, statutory services, the police and others in the pilot FCSUs is an example of this. Incentives to achieve this collaboration can be both local—the support of a *khokim*—and global (the desire to match best international practice).
- Analytical work is useful not only for its content, but also for demonstrating the benefits of collecting and analysing information. This can generate a demand for data for more informed policy-making. The publication of useful analytical reports contributed to the decision to set up the RCSAC to enable further such work to be carried out.
- Good social work practice is not confined to countries with long established social work professions. It is possible and desirable to find an interim way forward, as in Uzbekistan, by providing short courses tailored to the immediate needs of practising social workers, without waiting to cover all aspects of social work at once. In this way practical experience can start to be built up in the country at the same time as academic experience.

5.7 Recommendations for UNICEF

The evaluation agrees in general with the statement in the 2006 Annual Report that UNICEF cannot address all the various needs of child protection in Uzbekistan for ‘changes in policies, systems and mindsets’ and therefore it should have a strategic focus on ‘selected issues which are also seen as a priority by the government and will have the highest impact on children’. With regard to the specific services being developed, the evaluation team notes and recommends the following:

- **Residential care.** Capitalise on the signs of the shift in attitude towards deinstitutionalisation, and seek transformation processes for institutions where there is some likely cooperation and rehabilitation support for children, within an agreed government framework.
- **Family substitute services.** Provide further support to develop a core knowledge base and training support for social workers, local officials and foster parents themselves in family substitute services. Support efforts to make adoption procedures more rigorous in law, and in keeping with both the future and the present rights of the child.
- **Family support services.** The process of establishing social work as a profession needs every encouragement and programme support to continue from UNICEF. As for the pilot projects, document their experiences carefully and monitor and analyse the results so that government can be presented with the means of scaling up across the country as it plans to do. Similarly, it would be beneficial to document the work of the resource centres supporting

children and parents. UNICEF should then share with the government the results of this learning, including the potential savings to the economy and society through less reliance on institutional care and through the improved social contribution of children and their parents who would otherwise be marginalised.

Cash benefits can be a valuable alternative type of family support service. UNICEF should consider whether it should influence other donors to provide technical assistance supporting targeted cash transfers to the most vulnerable, or the extent to which it can become directly involved in this itself.

As for specific recommendations regarding different aspects of the policy cycle, the team concludes as follows:

- **Policy development.** UNICEF should gather evidence of what works best in the national setting, increasing its own knowledge base on cost benefits of care between families, including substitute families, and institutional care (it is understood that this is planned for 2008). It can also be pro-active in finding evidence from other examples in the country, such as the Bukhara fostering and guardianship initiatives, to complement knowledge sharing where it has been directly involved.

Work needs to be done on the costs of residential care, on transitional mechanisms for developing functions such as outreach, open and respite care in residential institutions, and on the costs and timescales which would be involved in re-provision of at least part of current residential care funding to community and family type care. Both financial and human resource analysis and the costs of redeploying staff to preventive work could be undertaken, with expert input, and the creation of a piloting demonstration with either MLSP or the Ministry of Public Education. The demonstration of both more efficient and effective use of public resources should be made as a case to government. UNICEF and line ministries with which it partners should work more with the Ministry of Finance, particularly to achieve sustainability.

'Change of mindset' work is a vital route into deinstitutionalisation, and as such it is worth mounting a continuing national campaign with government partners on 'all our children'.

- **Monitoring and review.** Contribute further support to the work of the State Statistics Committee and the RCSAC in collaboration with a senior government counterpart.

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