TERMS OF REFERENCE

Technical Assistance for the Revision and Development of Comprehensive Social Work Standards for Centers for Social Work

1. Background Information

Over the past few years the country has taken a number of steps to reform and upgrade its child care services, focusing particularly on the promotion of de-institutionalization practices. Some good progress has been made but much remains still to be done, and, there is a need to further improve the quality of child care services for children, both at the normative level (legislation, policies, standards, etc.) and at the service delivery level.

The key Government institutions that are responsible for the child protection system are the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Institute for Social Activity and the Centers for Social Work.

Policy development and budget planning related to child protection is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MoLSP). Each year, the MoLSP prepares annual programmes for social protection activities. Within these programmes, the MoLSP identifies the priorities of its work, the specific needs of the population in the identified priorities, the modalities for its implementation and the required budget.

The Institute for Social Activities (ISA), under the MoLSP, is responsible for monitoring the provision of social work services, setting standards and providing training for professionals in the social work sector. It also has the responsibility for collecting data and carrying out analysis of the social work sector to advise the MoLSP on policy development and planning. Its capacity to undertake all the tasks mentioned above is extremely limited because of insufficient human resources, material and financial resources. In the last five years, UNICEF has actively supported the ISA to perform one of its key functions: to enhance technical knowledge and competences in order to improve the quality of social work services delivered to children in need of special protection. It involved support to organize and deliver training of CSW staff, staff working in public institutions for children at risk, staff from MoLSP and ISA. The trainings varied from training on street children, domestic violence, children with disabilities to children in conflict with the law, children without parental care, etc.

Child protection services are administered at municipal level by a total of 30 Centers for Social Work (CSWs). The CSWs are located in 30 municipalities (according to the administrative division, there are 84 municipalities in the whole national territory, which means that each CSW has territorial responsibility over more than one municipality). The key functions of the CSW are: i) provision of social work services and ii) administration of social benefits (financial assistance/allowances).

By and large, social work services, delivered through the existing network of 30 CSWs, are still not effective in ensuring that the best interest of the child is always protected. The shortcomings of human recourses in the social sector (both in terms of number of professional staff employed in the various services at national and local levels and their education and skills) is largely recognized as a key impediment for ensuring effective protection and care of children. The total number of recipients of different social benefits, including social allowances, administrated by the CSW per year is approximately 150,000 cases. In addition, there are approximately 100,000 services that are being delivered to various
types of categories on annual basis\(^1\). A social worker in the recent past might have been tasked with one or two specialist areas, and is now expected to deal with a wide variety of cases (violence, human trafficking, sexual abuse, children in conflict with the law, children with disabilities, street children, etc.), all of which require specific knowledge, skills and training. Investment in upgrading the professional skills of social workers is currently insufficient and still heavily dependent on external assistance. Systems to monitor quality of social work services delivered to children and families need further improvement.

In accordance with its mandate, the ISA has developed a series of standards with the goal to provide information and guidance to professional staff from the CSWs when dealing with various types of social work beneficiaries. Most often, these standards are issued in the form of Methodological Guidelines and/or Guidebooks that provide a theoretical interpretation of legal requirements when dealing with specific cases. Currently, there are guidelines in place that regulate the following child protection areas: Adoption; Foster Families; Juvenile Justice; Street Children; Domestic Violence; and Marriage and Family.

In their effort to further standardize the provision of social work services to children in need of special protection and their families by the CSWs, ISA has developed a number of draft standards that would contribute to this goal. These drafts include: the Steps for CSWs in their work when dealing with street children and their families; the Standard Procedures for CSWs in their work in marriage and family relations; the Guidelines and Standards for Family Violence Cases; the Guidelines and Standards for Street Children and their family members; the Guidelines and Standards for Children-at-Risk and Juvenile Offenders; Guidelines and Standards for Foster Families. These standards were drafted in late 2009, but, were still not adopted by the MoLSP. Additional standards are still required, especially in the field of adoption and sexual abuse of children.

Although the current guidelines provide extensive presentations of the phenomenon in question, most often, they lack practical instructions for the social workers in the field. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are often not foreseen, and in cases when such mechanisms are in place, they are not effective. Furthermore, present standards lack inter-connection and thus the main purpose of this consultancy is to provide the systematic and holistic approach to social work standards for children in need of special protection and their families.

2. Scope of the Work

The main purpose of this consultancy is to provide technical support to the Institute for Social Activities, operating under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, to upgrade the national social work policy framework for children in special need of protection, focusing on the revision and development of a comprehensive package of standards (methodological guidelines, steps, standards) for delivery of child protection services by the CSWs. The basic objective of this activity is to assist the ISA and the MoLSP in upgrading the national child protection system to ensure increased access to and quality of child protection for all children.

In order to achieve the goals of this consultancy, first, a thorough review of the existing policy framework needs to be conducted to identify its gaps (in addition to what has already been identified by the ISA and the MoLSP), and make recommendations to make the framework compatible with international human rights standards. Second, a field visit aimed at gathering input from practitioners in the field must be

\(^{1}\) Institute for Social Activities, 2008
carried out. The field visit shall be organized with national stakeholders, specifically the ISA and the CSWs, in order to gather appropriate input and resources. Third, and based on the findings of the gap analysis and field visit, existing standards need to be reviewed and updated and new standards must be developed. Finally, the revised and newly developed standards must be finalized in coordination with local stakeholders.

Standards for social work for children that need special protection and their families (methodological guidelines, standards, steps) for CSWs must contain precise criteria, guidelines and definitions that will be employed in order to assure that provided services suite their purpose. Standards must be functional, i.e. to define the criteria for measurement of activities aimed at providing a certain service. In other words, standards should cover the entire process – from identification of the case, to its assessment, planning, service delivery, periodic review and follow up, to termination. They also need to be realistic (in terms of available resources) and measurable (and foresee oversight mechanisms).

In the period between April and June 2011, the ISA will carry out a pilot validation of existing standards into three pilot CSWs, in the cities of Kriva Palanka, Veles and Gostivar. Based on their work on the ground, ISA will compile a report that will contain their findings and recommendations for improvement. The consultant(s) shall take this report and its findings in consideration when preparing the desk review and gap analysis.

This consultancy will entail both home-based work (desk-review of relevant material, pre-mission preparatory work, report writing) and in-country missions for delivering the technical assistance services requested by the national counterparts as defined in details in section 3 below.

3. Major tasks to be accomplished:

The selected consultant(s) or consulting institution will undertake the following tasks:

i) Conduct a desk review of relevant legislation and already developed standards and protocols – by the end of May 2011;

ii) Revise and develop Social Work Standards – by the end of November 2011;

iii) Submit a final report on key achievements and recommendations – by the end of December 2011.

All the above tasks shall be carried, both out and in the country, working closely with key partners from the ISA and the MoLSP. In addition, the consultant(s) will be responsible for facilitating a field validation of the newly developed normative framework with a group of selected national stakeholders (including staff from social protection institutions, CSW and day-care centers). The details of this specific assignment shall be defined in consultation with the MoLSP/ISA experts based on developments in the field during the consultancy mission.

4. End products/Deliverables

1) Carry out a field visit to all relevant institutions (ISA, MoLSP, CSWs, Social Care Institutions) and agree upon standards of priority for revision and development, by the end of May 2011;
2) Submit a gap analysis report summarizing key findings, situation analysis and priority standards, by the end of June 2011;
3) Submit revised and developed standards in accordance with agreed upon priorities, by the end of October 2011;
4) Discuss the new standards with local stakeholders and incorporate any comments, by the end of November 2011;
5) Submit a final report summarizing key achievement, obstacles, and recommendations for the future, by the end of December 2011.

5. Estimated duration of contract:
Eight months (May – December 2011).

6. Official travel involved (itinerary and duration):
Field visits to be carried out mainly in Skopje, with some travels to other locations inside Macedonia (to visit selected social protection institutions, CSWs and day-care centers)

7. Qualifications/specialized knowledge/experience required:
- Advanced degree in Social Work, Social Sciences, Social Policy or related field;
- Minimum 8 years of professional experience as development practitioner and/or in a social policy/social development advisory function;
- At least 8 years of experience in the field of social welfare and social work for children in need of special protection. Previous experience in the CEE/CIS region is a strong asset;
- Additional competencies: analytical thinking and strategic planning skills, abilities for facilitation, consultation and negotiation, ability to communicating and influencing others through constructive contributions and drawing on social development expertise and practices.
- Previous experience working for the UN agencies is an asset
- Excellent written and spoken English;
- Excellent report writing and human relation skills.

Potential candidates may apply, both, individually or as members of consulting teams.

9. List of relevant background materials to be provided by the UNICEF office:
- Adopted Methodological Guidelines and/or Guidebooks on Adoption, Foster Families, Juvenile Justice, Street Children, Domestic Violence, and Marriage and Family;
- Draft Steps for CSWs in their work when dealing with street children and their families;
- Draft Standard Procedures for CSWs in their work in marriage and family relations;
- Draft Guidelines and Standards for Family Violence Cases;
- Draft Guidelines and Standards for Street Children and their family members;
- Draft Guidelines and Standards for Children-at-Risk and Juvenile Offenders;
- Draft Guidelines and Standards for Foster Families;
- Relevant action plans and strategies.