
TERMS OF REFERENCE

INVESTMENT CASE FOR CASH AND CARE¹ FOR CHILDREN

RFPS/LRPS-2020-9162482-Investment Case Analysis

Summary

- Purpose: investment case analysis and policy recommendations for best investments for children
- Location: Bucharest
- Duration: 6 months
- Reporting to: Child Protection Specialist

Background

The conceptual foundations of UNICEF's approach to social protection remain unwavering: a rights-based approach towards universal social protection as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In line with UNICEF's work supporting progressive realization of universal coverage, the priority goes to the poorest and most vulnerable children and families, with the objective of breaking the cycle of disadvantage across generations and ultimately transforming the lives of children and families.² The recent EU policies' provisions promotes as well the breaking the cycle of disadvantage in early years through investing in children and promotion of a preventative approach that reduces the risk of poverty and social exclusion.³

In Romania, the National Strategy on the promotion and protection of children's rights (2014-2020) and the National Strategy on poverty reduction and social inclusion (2015-2020) are setting up a number of measures and actions targeting particularly most vulnerable children and their families in order to reduce poverty and inequities and to promote social inclusion. Several initiatives were implemented in the last couple of years, but still today there is one in every 3 children who is at risk of poverty in Romania⁴. Even if AROP and AROPE indicators register a slightly decreasing trend in the last couple of years, still Romania lags in the EU ranking.

In the current context influenced by COVID-19 pandemic, it is expected that even small progress achieved lately, will display its fragility and nowadays' recession will push more people into poverty, and will further affect those already at risk. Studies have demonstrated also that child poverty is multidimensional and that issues of education, health, leisure, clothing, food, health and housing (among others) are involved along with income. Therefore, a response to address child poverty and to reduce also consequences of the intergenerational poverty cycle requires a timely evidence-

¹ Cash **and** Care for children represents a balance of social protection measures combining social benefits with social services for reaching best outcomes in vulnerable children. This is not to be confused with Cash **for** Care which implies allowances instead of services provided to vulnerable population (usually with children) and represent a policy option aimed at ensuring choice, fostering family care, developing care markets, and containing costs.

² UNICEF's Global Social Protection Programme Framework, 2019

³ EC Recommendation for Investing in Children, 2013 and EU Parliament call on ensuring a Child Guarantee for free healthcare, free education, free early childhood education and care, decent housing and adequate nutrition.

⁴ AROP 30.8% in 2019

based planning for priority actions that go beyond ensuring children's material security and promote equal opportunities so that all children can realize their full potential.

Current context

Currently Romania is in the process of developing new National Strategies including on child rights (by the NARPDCA) and on poverty reduction and social inclusion (by the Ministry of Labour) which will also input the elaboration of new Operational Programms for EU structural funds 2021-2027, matching the state budget for continuing various reforms and contributing to achievements of SDGs and EU targets for 2030. Much evidence was already collected including from evaluations of previous strategies, models implemented at local level aiming to offer country-wide solutions, current situation analyses on various topics, including the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on children's wellbeing, etc.

Nonetheless, there is also evidence that shows that in Romania most anti-poverty and social inclusion policies are focused on providing for the financial needs of households, granting access to resources for families mainly through social benefits.^{5,6} Although there are clear proofs of anti-child poverty effect of cash transfers and tax benefits, they are not designed or equipped to provide for a full range of children's development needs, including adequate access and quality of basic social services, such as health, education, protection, etc., as mentioned also repetitively in the Country Specific Recommendations. On the other hand, with rather a traditionalist approach for investment in social services (revolving around child abandonment and alternative care), development of social services at local, decentralized level, with main resources coming from local budgets, led to regionally uneven and inconsistent development of social services.

The government has favored the use of social benefits as a poverty reduction tool, and in the last 5 years, the universal child allowance was doubled 3 times: in 2015, 2019 and another law is to be implemented progressively starting with 2020. Due to the low transfer value for social transfers, studies show that impact of social benefits after transfers (excluding pensions) is rather low (15.30% in 2019, Eurostat data). However, evidence also demonstrates that the universal child allowance, among all social assistance benefits, has the highest capacity to reduce absolute poverty, to close the poverty gap, as well as to reduce inequality.⁷

Throughout the last years, the public expenditure on social protection although slightly increasing, remained still a very low level compared with EU averages. Spending on social services is particularly low, which contributes to slow progress in decreasing the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion. While the main financial transfers including social benefits are covered from the state budget, social assistance services are supported mostly from local budgets, which in the particular case of the worse off and marginalized municipalities, is mostly very low to ensure the minimum required for the creation of a public services for social assistance.

Nonetheless, the model of the minimum package of services (MPS)⁸ for children (2015-2018) that delivers coordinated cross-sectoral preventive services covering social and child protection, health and education at local and county levels showed social services are critical for increasing

⁵ Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage, A Study of National Policies - Romania, EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion

⁶ UNICEF Situation analysis of children and women, 2017

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ MPS main objective is to promote social inclusion and contribute to the reduction of multiple deprivations faced by children and their families in an integrated manner. The model is based on the hypothesis that by delivering a universal and integrated package of preventive social services at community level (health, education, and child and social protection) to children and their families, equity gaps and child deprivations are being reduced while at the same time lowering medium- and long-term costs in social sectors.

effectiveness of the social benefits schemes and therefore contributing to significant reduction of poverty rates. The evaluation performed in 2019⁹ show that the number of children living in households affected by income poverty dropped from 29.30% to 0.68%, although the project didn't provide cash transfers. This demonstrates that identification of most vulnerable, adequate referral and accompanying beneficiaries for receiving their entitlements is utmost important. The model therefore demonstrated that only by eliminating errors of exclusion of the social protection system, monetary poverty can be reduced significantly.

In the context described above, UNICEF in partnership with the National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Children and Adoption (NARPDCA)/Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP) aims for gathering adequate evidence for ensuring the families have access to an adequate mix of *cash and care* (cash transfers or social benefits and social services for support, protection and care of children and their families) and also increased investment in measures aiming to reduce poverty and social exclusion especially most vulnerable children and their families within new strategies, policies and programmes for 2021-2027.

Purpose of the analysis

UNICEF and the NARPDCA/MoLSP considers supporting an investment case analysis to advocate increasing investment for children, using evidence to prioritize adequate allocations for cash and care, respectively for social benefits and social services, option(s) that would lead to narrowing gaps in (at least some) social exclusion related outcomes for children (ie. separation of children from their families and protection in public care system).

This investment case is expected to help policymakers make sound decisions about to ensure adequate investments in financial and social support for children and their families – such as the scale-up of the minimum package of services for children and their families – and present a range of options for increasing the impact of these services.

Objectives

The objective is to develop **AN INVESTMENT CASE FOR CASH AND CARE FOR CHILDREN** for understanding the value for money of different outcomes and impacts for children (depending on possible costed solutions) and contribute to sound, child rights-based decision making on the use of public and other resources for implementing upcoming strategies and programmes.

Methodological approach

The analysis needs to be based on the development of a **METHODOLOGY FOR MEASURING AND MONETIZING THE BENEFITS**, so that they can be aggregated and compared with costs and with different types of investments and their effects, to consider their long-term indirect effects, as well as long-term costs.

Having in mind these requirements, the development of the methodology would imply

- i) Deciding upon the specific actions/interventions/solutions and their benefits to be measured, such as reduced child poverty, hospitalization of children, increased immunization rate, decreased drop-out, family separation, etc.

⁹ Summative evaluation of the Minimum Package of Services component of the “Social inclusion through the provision of integrated social services at community level”,

<https://www.unicef.org/romania/reports/minimum-package-services-evaluation>

- ii) Using existing costing of various proposals/scale-up schemes and/or budget expenditures for various actions/interventions/solutions, determining the needed cost for at least 2 or 3 possible responses for reducing poverty and social exclusion;
- iii) Measuring these benefits on shorter and longer term, using available but reliable data and information;
- iv) Monetizing the benefits, including based on assumptions that may have to be made about the monetary value if benefits are impossible to quantify or, even if quantifiable, impossible to monetize;
- v) Analyzing various combinations of investments of cash and care and expected benefits at short and long terms and recommending or prioritizing scenarios.

For the above-mentioned steps several **DATA AND INFO CAN BE USED OR DEVELOPED**:

- Administrative data – where available;
- Quantitative data from various sources, including modelling projects (such as the MPS and data from Aurora, an on-line case management tool, containing dynamic data and vulnerabilities of children benefiting of the minimum package of services);
- Qualitative data which can be collected from various key informants, from children and their families at local level (from various project sites) and from professionals (representatives of local and national authorities, civil society organizations, researchers, etc.). Qualitative data can be obtained through in-depth interviewed and/or focus groups.

While developing the methodology, contractor(s) is required to clearly identify any potential **ETHICAL ISSUES**, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the research/data collection process in their proposal. UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis can be found at: https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF.

The development and implementation of the methodology may be challenged by various limitations, from ones linked to data availability and/or assumptions for defining monetary values to current epidemiological context influenced by COVID-19 which may require mostly use of e-tools for data collection as well as for various consultation meetings.

Major duties and responsibilities

Working under the supervision of the Child Protection Specialist and closely with other UNICEF Specialists and NARPDCA/MoLSP and as well with the Steering Committee to be set up for this particular exercise, the contractor(s) will need to accomplish following responsibilities:

- a) **INCEPTION REPORT DEVELOPED**. This phase will include the development of the methodology for the analysis with all steps mentioned above (including instruments to be used in the data collection phase) and will outline limitations and propose process for ethical review;
- b) **DATA COLLECTION**. Based on requirements mentioned above and approved tools, data will be collected and stored in e-data base GDPR compliant. Quality assurance processes will need to accompany data collection.
- c) **REPORTING** will comprise the draft report which will be reviewed by partners and members of the Steering Committee and the final report which will need to include executive summary, short ppt of main results and recommendations, proposal for dissemination and use of results, etc.

Timeline and deliverables

Considering all the above, the following timetable and deliverables need to be observed:

DELIVERABLES	DEADLINES
Draft methodology and tools proposed for the analysis	1 months after kick-off
Inception report, including proposed methodology for data collection and analysis, tool for data collection, outline of limitations, ethical review.	2 months after kick-off
Data collection report, including limitations and mitigation strategies	2 months after approval of inception report
Draft analysis report	1 months after data collection report
Final report, including executive summary, short presentation of results and recommendation, containing also proposal for dissemination and use of the report	1 months after approval of draft analysis report

All reports need to be submitted in Romanian and English version.

Required credential and experience for contractor(s):

The contractor(s) can be a team of individual consultants and/or research organization – which can be national and/or international. Combinations of individual consultants and research agency is also possible. The required credential and experience need to be representative for the following:

- Advanced university degree in economics or university degree in public administration, finance, social sciences, law, political science, public policy with advance knowledge and experience in costing, budgeting and public financing;
- Knowledge in Public Finance Management, covering budget preparation and budgetary processes, prioritization and costing and closer linkages between budget and policy, costing and standard costs for social services, etc.;
- Very good knowledge about child protection system and social protection schemes and services in Romania with demonstrated experience in conducting studies and research in these areas;
- Understanding of child rights, social protection, social policies and systems designs and reforms;
- Strong analytical and conceptual thinking and proven experience in report writing;
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills; excellent organizational skills and be able to cope with various feedback from several stakeholders; ability to cooperate with several specialists and working groups;
- Previous similar experience in this area is an asset;
- Good speaking and writing skills in English;
- Availability for work within the proposed time frame.

Others' role and accountabilities

The current exercise is initiated by UNICEF Romanian in partnership with the NARPDCA/MoLSP, which will be the main interlocutors for the contractor(s).

A Steering Committee is currently going to be set up which will have a peer review function. Therefore, members of the Steering Committee will be representatives from other local and national authorities, other Ministries (such as Education, Health, Public Administration and Finance),

University, civil society organizations and colleagues from other international organizations – limited to 10 participants.

The members of the Steering Committee are expected to have a consistent and proactive engagement and commitment. All outputs of the current exercise, including these Terms of Reference, are to be reviewed by members of the Steering Committee which will also meet (virtually most probably) once a month for discussing feedback, reaching consensus and making concrete recommendations to the contractor(s).

UNICEF and NARPDCA/MoLSP will organize meeting with the Steering Committee members and contractor(s) and will ensure all resources needed for the peer review.

General conditions

THE PAYMENTS for the contract can include several installments – preferable two (2) with a first installment with no more than 30% of the entire budget. Budget will need to include a breakdown of all costs – fees, travel related, translation, etc., with the exception of costs related to the Steering Committee.

Note: in case of individual consultants, these will sign health statement prior to taking the assignment and the designation form will be completed. The Consultant will be responsible for paying income taxes and any other due taxes as per applicable national legislation.

UNICEF and NARPDCA/MoLSP will have sole **OWNERSHIP** of all final deliverables; no parts of the deliverables will be reproduced without the permission of owners.