



# **Children's Experiences with Poverty and Social Exclusion**




## Child Poverty Conception

- “Situation, in which the child lives in conditions, which do not contribute to its physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development”;
- Children can be affected by the poverty in a very different way in comparison with the adults;
- Children poverty reflects in a negative way not only their present days, but also their future;
- Children are more dependent on provision of the needed services; that is why well planned and adequate interventions are needed;



# Children's Poverty in Bulgaria

- The general level of child's poverty is 8 %, in comparison with the 4 % of the whole population (UNICEF research);
- Children's population has decreased – for the period 1989-2004 it has diminished with 900 000 children/ as of 2004. The percentage of children in the country is 18 % of the whole population.
- The poverty of children is concentrated in the minority regions and rural areas / 60% of the poor children are Roma children/;

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- Approximately 16% is the mortality rate of children as of 2003 year;
  - 3% /20 000/ of all children drop out from school, about 40 % of Roma families have children, who have not completed their basic education;
  - 8 653 children are living in institutions /their number during the last three years has decreased with 12 %/;
  - Children with disabilities– 20 100, as of May 2007 ;



# Measures for combating the poverty in the field of social policy

## ■ Guaranteeing permanent income:

- Law on Social Assistance – provision of monthly benefits for socially poor families and children;
- Law on Family Benefits for Children – given assistance to children in families with an income up to 200 BGN of a member of the family; 18 BGN monthly for the first child and 20 BGN for second child;
- As of 1 January 2007 the period for receiving the maternity benefits has been increased from 135 days to 315 days for the working mothers;
- Law on Integration of People with Disabilities – the children receive doubled integration allowance - 126 BGN monthly;



□ **Child Protection Act:**

- Aid for children, accommodated in families of relatives – monthly benefit between 165 and 220 BGN, dependent on the age of the child;
- Aid for children, accommodated in foster families– monthly benefit between 165 and 220 BGN, dependent on the age of the child;
- Salary for professional foster care – from 130 % to 150 % of the minimum working salary, dependent on the number of the accommodated children in the foster family;
- /as of 1 January 2007 in Bulgaria has been introduced the professional foster care and more than 900 children have been assessed to be eligible to be accommodated in foster families/



## ■ *Promotion of employment in the families*

- Including the unemployed parents, who receive social benefits in programmes for employment and re-qualification /till the moment the number of these people is 40 000/;
- Project “Family centers” – it has been realized in 8 cities; the project ensures employment to unemployed women in the family centers for upbringing children /at the moment 14 such centers are functioning and they are financed by the state budget/;
- National Programme “Support of maternity” 2007 – gives possibility for labour employment of young mothers and unemployed persons with the appropriate qualification to provide care for little children /till the moment 205 persons are employed on labour contracts/ .



## ■ *Development of social services*

- For the period 2003- 2007 the following services have been disclosed:
  - 42 Day Care Centers for children and youths with disabilities;
  - 35 Centers for rehabilitation and social integration;
  - 4 Asylums for children without supervision;
  - 7 Centers for work with children on street;
  - 10 Units “Mother and Baby” – there are accommodated pregnant women and mothers in risk of abandoning their child;
  - 8 Centers for community support – provision of complex of social services for prevention of abandonment, violence, dropping out from school and re-integration of children in a family environment;
  - 5 Centers for work with children, living on street;
  - Forthcoming is the disclosure of the first center for accommodation of children of family type.



□ National Programme “Personal Assistant” :

- It gives an opportunity for parents, taking care of their children with disabilities to receive a salary for this and the relevant rights for social insurances, as well as an additional qualification;
- Till the moment 2021 children in the country have been assisted by personal assistants;

□ Social Investments in Children:

- Possibility to be provided social assistance through buying of food, clothes and medicines, necessary for the upbringing of children in the families in cases of improper use of the resources, provided to parents /from the beginning of the year till the moment 467 children have received this kind of support/.



## **National Programme “Ensuring a breakfast and milk for each pupil from 1 to 4 degree of educational level”**

- It has been realised as a module of the National programme for more deep and full coverage of pupils at the compulsory educational age;
- The children, included in the programme are 292 000 at the moment, 26 000 of them are at preschool age;
  
- Impacts:
  - Social – relief of the family budget;
  - Health – children receive various and nourishing food;
  - Educational – children set up a culture of nutrition and hygiene also;



## **Development of measures for protection of children in risk, data for 2004 – 2007 period:**

- Work on prevention of abandonment of children 2006 –may 2007 the abandonment of **1 531** children has been prevented;
- Reintegrated in a family environment are **1 461** children / 2006 –may 2007/;
- Accommodated in families of relatives are **7 156** children;
- Accommodated in foster families – **76**
- Adopted children – **2 187**