

The MONEE Project
CEE/CIS/Baltics

AFTER THE FALL

*The human impact
of ten years
of transition*



United Nations Children's Fund
International Child Development Centre
Florence - Italy



THE UNICEF INNOCENTI RESEARCH CENTRE

The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, based in Florence, Italy, helps to identify and research areas vital to the current and future work of UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. As UNICEF's main research arm, the Centre, formally known as the International Child Development Centre, has helped to shape the organization's human rights agenda for children.

Through its two core activities – research and capacity-building – the Centre aims to increase international understanding of issues relating to children's rights and to facilitate the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

For more than ten years, since its establishment in 1988, the Centre has focused on two main areas: socio-economic research to produce authoritative findings on the situation of children, and the promotion of children's rights. It aims to promote a culture of research, learning and reflection within UNICEF as a whole, as a vital step to furthering the cause of children.

The Government of Italy provides core funding for the Centre. Additional funds for specific projects are received from other governments, international institutions and private organizations.

The Regional Monitoring Report (MONEE) produced by the Centre, is a unique source of information on the social side of the transition taking place in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Each year's Report contains an update on the social and economic trends affecting children and families in the region, in-depth analysis of a particular theme and a detailed Statistical Annex. TransMONEE, a menu-driven database that includes more than 130 indicators on social and economic trends, can be viewed and downloaded from the UNICEF ICDC website: www.unicef-icdc.org.

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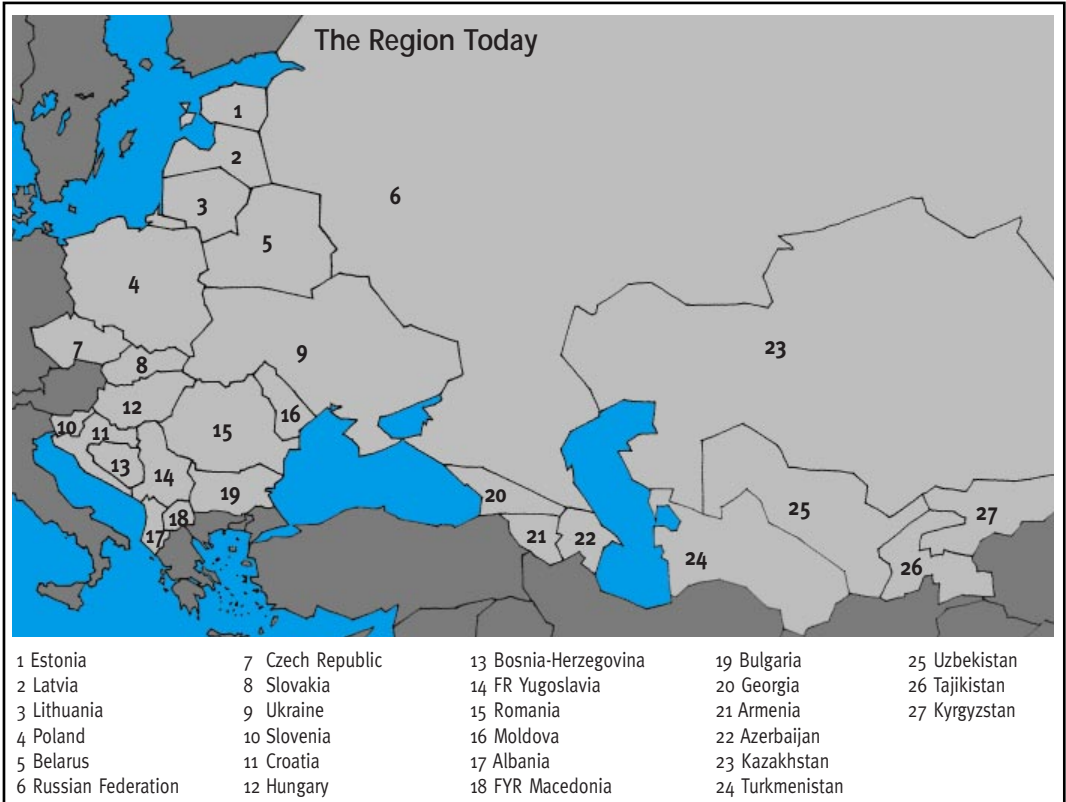
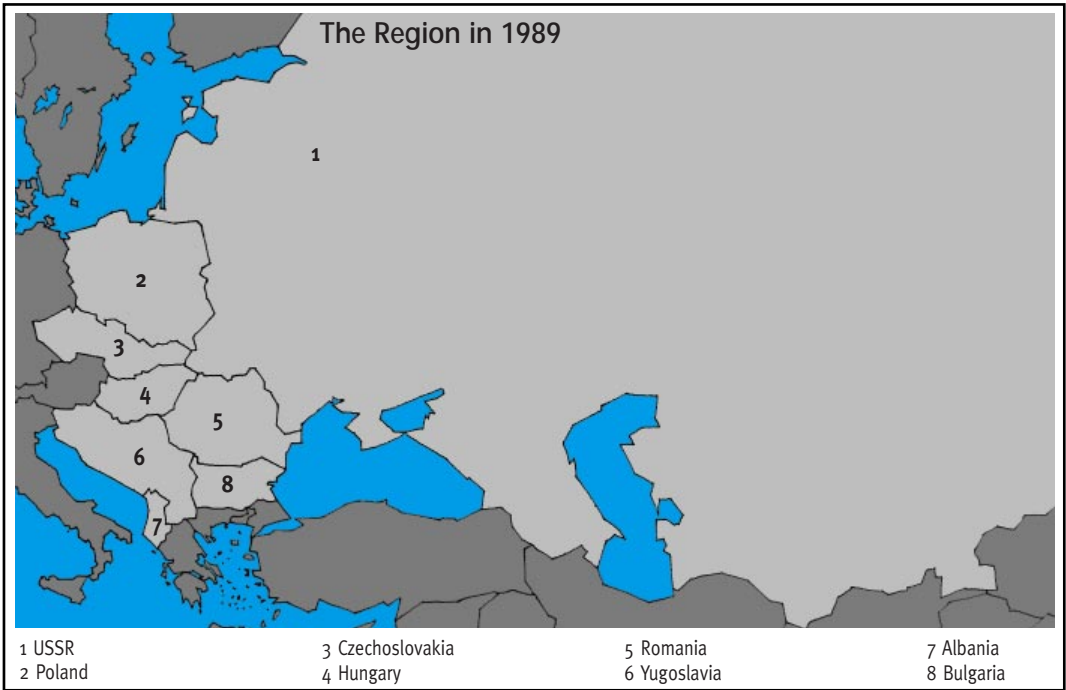
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NOVEMBER 9, 1989

“East Berliners scaled metal fences and forced their way into the no man’s land that had been closed to the public for decades. West Berliners clambered over the 10-foot wall and dropped into the arms of those below. A dozen Western TV crews besieged a group of East German policemen. “Are you happy?” shouted a reporter. A young guard broke into an enormous grin then turned his back to hide it. Nearby, a young man beat on the wall with a hammer and handed out fragments to the crowd. “The wall is gone!” the people chanted deliriously. “The wall is gone”

Extract from “Is it possible?”, Newsweek, November 20, 1989.

The 27 Transition Countries are:

Albania
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Czech Republic
Estonia
FR Yugoslavia
FYR Macedonia
Georgia
Hungary
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Latvia
Lithuania
Moldova
Poland
Romania
Russian Federation
Slovakia
Slovenia
Tajikistan
Turkmenistan
Ukraine
Uzbekistan

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1 INTRODUCTION

On November 9, 1989, thousands of protestors broke through the most potent symbol of the cold war in Europe – the Berlin Wall.

Few of those present on that momentous occasion could have predicted the scale of the changes that would sweep through the former Soviet bloc over the next decade. No other region on earth has seen such a root and branch transformation of its social structure, its societies, infrastructure or borders. Eight countries splintered into 27. Seemingly indestructible regimes and ideologies were swept away – often in the space of a few weeks.

Over the next few years each of these countries experienced an economic crisis of some dimension. And in too many countries the end of communism blew the lid off tensions that had been simmering for decades, if not centuries. Since the late 1980s, armed conflict has broken out in around one third of the countries in the region.

The human impact of such changes has been immense. Those born into authoritarian regimes now have the freedom to elect their representatives, to voice their opinions, to chart the course for their own lives. But they find that they must compete for their slice of the pie in the new economic climate. Others have lost their homes, schools, communities and countries as a result of armed conflict.

It is easy to lose sight of the main goals of the transition taking place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union: to raise the standard of living of the more than 400 million people in the region – 150 million of them children – and to develop societies that are both humane and democratic. While the economic aspects are crucial, including the liberalization of market forces and the reduced role of the State, they should be seen as tools to help the region towards these greater goals.

There is, quite simply, too little focus on the social impact of change. The public policies needed to advance social conditions and human rights are too often treated as ‘optional extras’ to be dealt with when economic conditions allow. In reality, social conditions and human rights, and the policies relating to them, are central to the movement from one system of economic and social organization to another.

The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre is part of the United Nations Children’s Fund, and has been charting the situation of children and women in the region since the fall of communism. The Centre’s MONEE project, created in 1992, analyses social conditions and public

policy affecting children and their families across this very diverse region. Its Regional Monitoring Report, published each year, is regarded as the most authoritative source on the human side of the transition, focusing on key issues such as poverty, health, education, children at risk and progress for women.

The Report has highlighted the many positive aspects of the transition, including the immense opportunities offered by greater democracy and freedom of choice. It tries to avoid sweeping generalizations, stressing that conditions vary across the 27 countries and can be illuminating, even shocking, in their contrasts.

It would be wrong, for example, to create a picture of overall regional gloom. While output is still lower in most countries than it was in 1989, economic growth is now underway in most countries, particularly in Eastern Europe, and there are signs that the worst of the economic crisis may be over in other parts of the region. New freedoms, coupled with the growth of grassroots activism and civil society, allow the discussion of issues that were once stifled. Every country in the region has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, acknowledging that children have an absolute right to the best that society has to offer. Several countries have gone further, creating national programmes to implement the goals set at the World Summit for Children in 1990. Genuine problems do exist, but the new climate offers the chance to address them.

The transition itself has not been solely responsible for the social and economic crises of the last ten years. Many of today's burning issues have their roots very firmly in the old communist regimes and in their authoritarian, anti-democratic mindset. The first signs of a complex social crisis were apparent as early as the mid-1970s as the Soviet system began to collapse under its own internal pressures. Life expectancy began to fall in many countries. In some, deteriorating health services and environmental disasters such as the Chernobyl tragedy in 1986, threatened the health of children long before transition. The lack of targeted and effective investment in good quality education resulted in schools that were "running on empty". The gender equality thought to exist under the old regimes proved to be a thin veneer hiding deep-rooted gender discrimination. And many of the new governments found that the absence of war had not meant genuine peace.

This publication, created to mark the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, looks back at the impact of ten years of transition. It argues for a new focus on the human aspect of transition, and a rededication to its original goals – a better quality of life for every citizen in a humane and democratic society.

UNICEF argues that these original goals are dependent on the fulfilment of child rights and women's rights. Without this fulfilment, backed by concrete policies and adequate resources, true regional progress is an impossibility.

2 THE ECONOMIC PICTURE

The economic impact of the transition was immediate. Its effects are being felt to this day, particularly by children – the most vulnerable members of society. While there are signs of some economic recovery, the regional economic ‘cake’ remains far smaller than it was in 1989. It is being shared less equally and, what is worse, the slice of the cake for children is in danger of getting smaller.

The shrinking economic cake

The general picture has been one of lower output and a more unequal distribution of resources. In over one third of the 27 countries in transition, measured output in 1998 was still 40 per cent or more below the 1989 figure (Figure 1). Output plunged by two-thirds between 1989 and 1998 in Moldova and Georgia, and by nearly that amount in Ukraine, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Over one third of the countries in transition had output levels in 1998 that were at least 40 per cent lower than in 1989

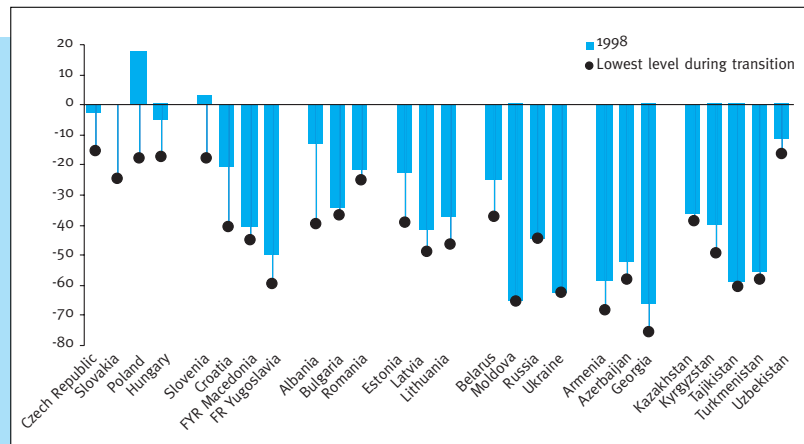


Figure 1 – GDP in 1998 and at its lowest level during transition (1989=100)

Source: EBRD and UNECE.

Note: 1998 figures are projections.

Most countries hit rock bottom in the mid-1990s and have been recovering in recent years. These include the economies of Central Europe which bottomed-out in 1992-1993, and those of the Baltics and most other former Soviet Union countries which reached their nadir in 1994 and 1995. However, by 1998 only three countries in the region, Slovakia, Poland and Slovenia, had managed to exceed the GDP levels of 1989. Both the Czech Republic and Hungary were just below their 1989 levels.

Economic recovery is at very different stages in the sub-regions. Countries in Central Europe, where the falls in output have been smaller, are clawing their way back to economic health. But in parts of South-East Europe and the Caucasus the recovery is in its earliest stage or has yet to

start at all. As a result, the existing differences in economic development across the entire region have widened.

As factories and offices have closed, unemployment has risen. Overall, the number of jobs lost in the region since 1989 has been estimated at 26 million – 13 per cent of the initial level. While employment has increased in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and has remained stable in Azerbaijan, it has fallen in 23 countries often dramatically (Figure 2). The number of registered unemployed rose, in the early years of transition, soaring from around one million in 1989 (mostly in the southern states of communist Yugoslavia) to eight or nine million by 1993-94 following the first waves of economic reform. Today, an estimated ten million people are registered as unemployed across the region, about six million of them women.

The economic upheavals of the early 90s led to mass unemployment, with the number of unemployed rising from around one million in 1989 to eight or nine million by 1993-94

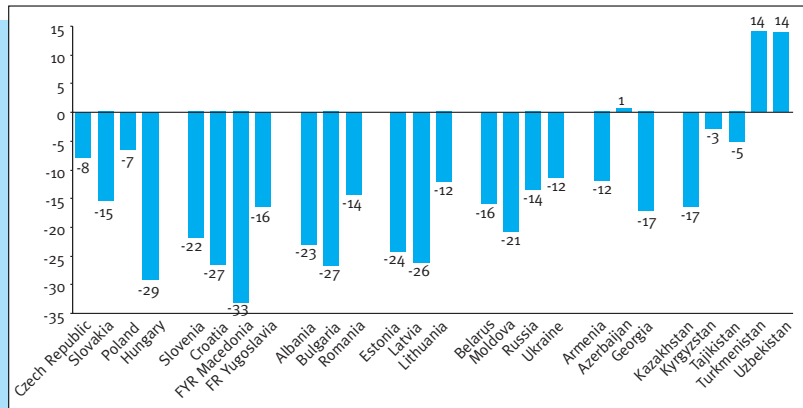


Figure 2 – Change in total number of employed persons, 1989-97 (per cent)

Source: MONEE project database and UNECE.

Note: The later year is 1996 for the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania.

Many of those still in work have seen the value of their wages slump. Real wages fell by 45 per cent in Russia between 1989 and 1997 and by more than 50 per cent in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

How the cake is divided

Using information on the inequality of earnings among employees, the MONEE Project has examined data from 16 countries, eight from Central and South East Europe and eight from the former Soviet Union. In every case, there has been a rise in measured inequality, and in most cases this has been considerable.

The Gini coefficient is a common measure of the extent of inequality, with a higher coefficient representing greater inequality and vice versa. The Centre used the Gini coefficient to obtain a 'snapshot' of two years, 1989 and 1996, finding that the coefficient for earnings rose by three-quarters in Russia and doubled in Romania. In general, it rose by one-third in the countries in Central and South East Europe and by one half in the former Soviet Union.

Information on inequality in household incomes (of which earnings

form just one part) is less widespread. However, Poland now has a level of per capita income inequality that is above the OECD average, while measured inequality in Russia is well above the top of the OECD range and on a par with that found in several Latin American countries. Several other former Soviet republics now show evidence of high income inequality.

Some would say that this rise in inequality is not a problem in itself, indicating that some people have grasped the new opportunities presented by transition to improve their income. However, extremes of income inequality undermine social cohesion. The rise in inequality means that people at the bottom of the income distribution pile are getting a smaller share of the cake. This implies that average incomes have to go up for the living standards of the people at the bottom to merely stay the same.

In Poland, for example, where the economy is larger than it was before reform, the poor are now poorer than they were in 1989 due to the rise in inequality. At that time, the poorest 20 per cent of the population shared 9.2 per cent of total income. By 1996 this figure had fallen to 7.6 per cent. Average income would have to be higher by one-fifth for the poorest 20 per cent to have the same incomes they had in 1989. The loss of access to subsidized goods and basic social services reduces the living standards of the poor even more, pushing them further beneath 1989 levels.

The slice of the cake for children

Falling government revenues represent a serious threat to the slice of the economic cake once earmarked for children. Government systems have been disrupted in countries affected by war, and taxation systems across the region have failed to keep pace with the change to market economics.

The drop in the proportion of GDP represented by government expenditure has been largest in countries that have experienced the greatest falls in GDP itself. While the expenditure share was over 40 per cent in Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Slovakia and Slovenia in 1997, the picture is grim in some other countries. In Georgia, for example, government expenditure was less than 15 per cent of GDP, down from almost 36 per cent in 1993.

The fall in public expenditure on family support has been disproportionate in many countries, at a time when many parents are unable to protect their children from the cutbacks. Add the impact of rising unemployment, the fall in real wages and the loss of a whole range of social safety nets, and the end result is that more children now live in poverty than did so before the transition began, even in the better-off countries. Indeed, such children, as a group, are more likely to be poor than other traditionally vulnerable groups such as the elderly.

Families in the countries most affected by falling public expenditure and high inflation find that their incomes, including traditional cash benefits, are increasingly unable to cover basic household necessities. Savings may have been diminished or even eliminated by inflation. Measures to make ends meet have included eating more cheap, bulky food – an obvious threat

to the nutritional health of a child. Parents wanting to earn more money may have to leave their children alone for long periods. And there is some evidence of increasing child labour in a number of countries as families struggle to make ends meet.

What needs to happen

The systems of family support that existed in the communist countries prior to transition were real achievements, recognized as such in the West. Many of their features – cash transfers, maternity and parental leave, pre-school education – promoted child and maternal health and child development. While the retreat of the State is a welcome development in many areas of life, the State still has a vital role to play in ensuring universal access to basic social services such as health and education, just as in western countries.

Basic services essential to the well-being of children should receive adequate support, whatever the economic climate. Sadly, the coverage, efficiency and equity of these services is under threat across the region at a time when new skills are being demanded by an evolving labour market and health risks are growing more acute.

A transition policy with ‘a human face’ is needed, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that these services, so vital to the future development of the region, receive priority support.

3 EDUCATION

“Our parents have not received either their salaries or their child stipends for half a year. Our teachers are on strike, consequently we are not receiving a full education. Our school is falling apart. There is nothing to repaint the school with. The roof leaks. Every year everything just gets worse and worse.”

Seventh grade pupil in Karelia, in Russia, quoted in Uchitel'skaia Gazeta, 20 May 1997.

Good quality basic education is one of the keys to successful child development. A good education delivers more than facts and figures – it recognizes the rights and responsibilities of children as young citizens. In strengthening this role, reforms in education are an integral part of the transition to more humane societies and a better quality of life.

While many education systems in the region, particularly in Central Europe, continue to offer good schooling, reports from other countries are worrying. A combination of government cutbacks, poverty, conflict, and the legacy of rigid approaches to education, mean that many children may not receive the basic education they need.

The MONEE project calculates that about one in seven children of compulsory school age are not enrolled in several countries in Central Asia

and the Caucasus. Real public spending on education has fallen in many countries – by one third in the Russian Federation and by three quarters or more in Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan.

Pre-reform education may have had its faults, but it was often of a high technical quality and it was virtually universal. This achievement should have provided the foundations for a new system, keeping the best aspects of the old system and discarding the worst. Instead, many of today’s children are receiving an education inferior to that experienced by their parents.

The situation before reform

Levels of access to education in the communist countries surpassed those in many other countries at similar stages of economic development and there was broad equality between the genders in terms of access at different levels of education. Standards of learning in maths and science were always high, an achievement that has endured and that was reflected in an international survey of young people aged 13-14 held in 1995. This ranked the Czech Republic 6th in mathematics out of 41 countries, with Germany ranking 23rd and the USA coming 28th (Figure 3).

But it would be wrong to claim that “Education for All”, meaning high quality, dynamic and equitable education, existed under communism. Enrolments in higher education showed the same kind of class distinctions found in Western

The communist system left a legacy of excellence in such subjects as maths and science, but other essential skills, such as the ability to apply acquired knowledge, were neglected

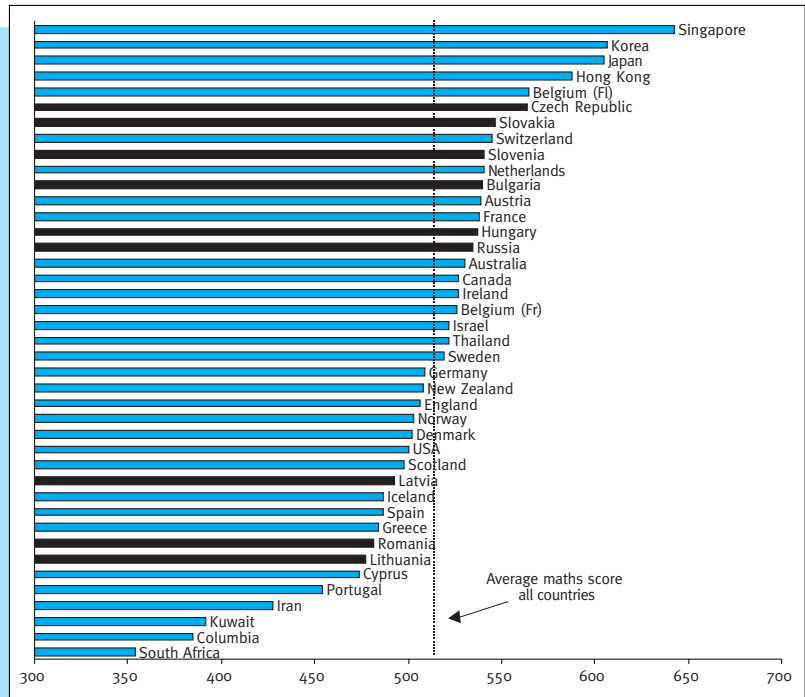


Figure 3 – Maths achievement among children 13-14 years old, 1994-95
(national average scores)

Source: Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

Note: Children tested were eighth-graders.

countries. In the Former Soviet Union, a 1982 survey of children finishing secondary school in the three Baltic republics and in Belarus found that around 70 per cent of the children with professional fathers continued in education, compared to 30 per cent of the children of agricultural workers.

The educational emphasis was often on 'factology' – the learning of facts and figures, rather than on creative thinking and problem-solving. Teaching methods were, typically, authoritarian, and rarely focused on the needs or abilities of individual children. Many children found their education confined to vocational schools providing just the minimum of training needed for employment by the State enterprises in their locality. This is now creating problems for the new market economies, with their need for workers who are both flexible and skilled.

While provision was fairly uniform, educational standards varied. Most urban basic schools in the Soviet Union, for example, had running water, central heating and indoor plumbing, while most rural schools did not.

The current situation

Education faces a series of challenges:

Lack of resources

One threat to education has been the calamitous drop in government finance for schooling in some countries.

Between 1990 and 1996, the share of national income spent on education fell in eight of the 15 countries where data were available. In Georgia and Armenia it almost collapsed. Their national incomes had shrunk enormously – by two-thirds in both cases – but the fall in education spending was disproportionate. In Georgia, education as a share of GDP fell from 6 per cent in 1990 to just over 1 per cent in 1996.

Responses to this crisis have varied. Romania and the Russian Federation have reduced the number of years of compulsory education. In parts of former Yugoslavia, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and rural Tajikistan, officials have sent children home for weeks or even months when there were no funds to heat or light schools. And many countries have seen a dramatic decline in the number of pre-school facilities. For example, over 30,000 pre-schools closed in the former Soviet Union as a whole (excluding the Baltics) between 1991 and 1995.

Falling enrolment and attendance

Both enrolment and attendance have fallen, particularly in the poorest parts of the region. The MONEE project estimates that at least one child in every seven of primary or lower secondary school age is out of school in Georgia, Latvia, FYR Macedonia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The situation in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan is particularly alarming, with significant falls taking place at primary and secondary levels. In Russia, it is estimated that approximately 5 per cent of primary school students – about 100,000 children in each grade – are out of school. In many of the poorer countries there have been big falls in pre-school enrolment rates (Figure 4).

Falling kindergarten enrolment rates highlight two problems: the lack of supply due to cutbacks, and the lack of demand due to rising female unemployment and lower family incomes

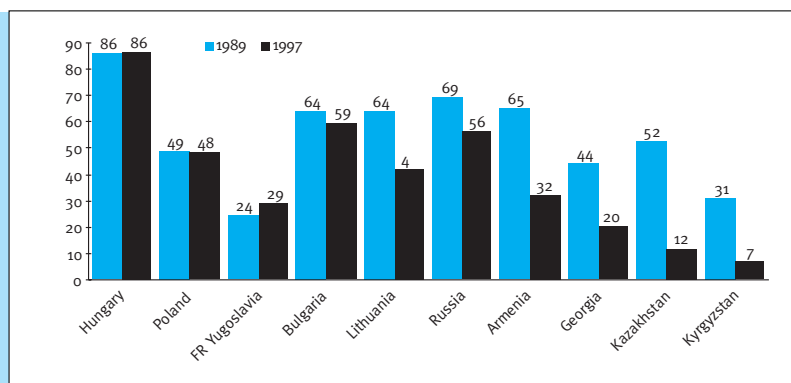


Figure 4 – Kindergarten enrolment rates, 1989 and 1997 (per cent of 3-6 year-olds, net rates)

Source: MONEE project database.

Note: Hungary: 3-5 year-olds; Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: 1-6 year-olds.

Rising costs for families

The provision of free basic education at the elementary level is enshrined in written constitutions, national legislation and the ratification of international law through the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet families across the region are, increasingly, paying for the education of their children. There are reports of parents paying teachers for extra lessons, to get their children into good schools.

Textbooks are supposed to be free of charge in Russia, but frequent failures in the State supply of these books have compelled some parents to buy them. In Georgia, where textbooks are free only for refugee families, the cost of a set of books for a grade seven pupil is reported to be double the average monthly wage. One parent in Armenia told a World Bank survey team: “I spend 90 per cent of my wages on food: how can I buy textbooks?”

Clothing and shoes are no longer subsidized. In the Bel-Adoi region in Kyrgyzstan in 1994, almost two-thirds of children reportedly did not attend school for lack of winter clothes and shoes.

All of these increased costs come at a time when family incomes have fallen and inequality has risen. Income, location and connections have become important factors in educational access.

Poor quality of education

The quality of schooling has, in general, fallen. Schools in most countries are struggling to maintain their buildings and equipment. The heating of schools in winter is now a major problem in such countries as Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and FYR Macedonia. In the most extreme cases, soap and other cleaning materials are scarce, making schools unsanitary and leaving children vulnerable to scabies, lice and other infestations. Parents are reluctant to send their children to such dirty and unsafe schools, and teachers are unwilling to work in such conditions.

Curricula are outdated in some countries and have not adapted to the needs of the new environment. During a visit to one country in 1997, members of the MONEE project team were shown a history textbook which had

been 'updated' merely by blanking out the photos and names of former Soviet leaders.

Conflict

The impact of war has severely disrupted the education of hundreds of thousands of children from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Tajikistan and its effects are still felt by refugees and internally displaced families. By 1994, for example, 35 per cent of the kindergartens in Croatia had been damaged or even razed to the ground. Schools in war-torn areas are, too often, the targets of violence. The sheer danger of getting to school is a deterrent. Even in areas not directly affected by conflict, schools have been used to house refugees and displaced people. Ethnic tensions within education can act as a flashpoint even before violence erupts. Long before the recent crisis in Kosovo, the withdrawal of autonomy for the province at the end of the 1980s resulted in the withdrawal of virtually every child of ethnic Albanian origin from the state educational system.

Educational disparity

While the general level of education has often declined, some children have been more seriously affected, including those from ethnic minorities (particularly children from Roma families), those from rural areas, the poorest, children with disabilities and, of course, children and families caught up in war. Four-fifths of the children who dropped out of school in Moldova without having finished compulsory education in 1996-97 came from rural areas. Even a comparatively wealthy country – Hungary – has not been immune. There, the tests that measure learning achievement are revealing falling scores for children in rural villages, while those of children in cities have improved.

Box 1

Roma children

Roma children are, in general, one of the most educationally excluded groups in the region. The figures on their education, and on their prospects, speak for themselves.

Bulgaria:

A 1992 study found that only half of Roma children aged 7-10 attended school on a regular basis. One third had never attended or had dropped out. Around 20 per cent of men were illiterate, rising to 33 per cent of women.

Czech Republic:

Only 6 per cent of Roma youth are enrolled in secondary schools, and Roma children are routinely placed in special schools for children with mental disabilities, regardless of their actual abilities. Roma children comprise only 4 per cent of the total child population, but 30 per cent of children in public care. Around 70 per cent of Roma youth are unemployed.

Hungary:

Only half of Roma children complete primary education. Only 3 per cent go on to secondary school, and few of these complete their education. Roma children account for up to 50 per cent of those in homes for children with mental disabilities or other special schools. Two-thirds of the Roma population of up to 700,000 people live in poverty and extreme deprivation.

What needs to happen

Six key factors must be addressed:

1. Financial resources and their distribution

Governments must not only reconsider the amount of money being put into public sector education, but how well that money is being spent. They must assess whether low-income households are effectively excluded from education and whether poorer areas have sufficient resources to fund local schools. More money is needed for buildings, equipment and teachers' pay, not least to reduce 'moonlighting'. Decentralization means that local governments are increasingly responsible for education services, but this does not relieve central government of its responsibility to ensure that resources reach the areas of greatest need.

2. Parental and community participation

The involvement of parents and communities is one way to break free from excessive reliance on the state and is a vital bulwark against the

Box 2

Tackling 'factology' in FYR Macedonia

The children of FYR Macedonia have become part of a peaceful revolution that has taken place in their own classrooms. The Inter-Active Learning Programme, launched in 1994 by the Ministry of Education and Physical Culture and the Paedagogical Institute of Macedonia, with support from UNICEF, aimed to enhance the quality of basic education, linking it to the wider changes taking place across the country. Teaching in the FYR Macedonia had been teacher-centred, with children learning from the blackboard or from textbooks. There was little deviation from the rigid curriculum, and limited scope for children to develop their communication or problem-solving skills.

The Inter-Active Learning Programme has encouraged teachers to develop the skills needed to allow more child participation in their classes. Inter-active learning techniques give children a new voice in the classroom, boosting their self esteem, helping them express their feelings, and encouraging dialogue, rather than conflict, as the way to resolve problems.

The Programme, initially piloted in four schools in 1994, expanded seven-fold in its first year. As of June 1999, 74 schools were participating in the programme – almost one quarter of all the schools in the country. Enthusiasm for the scheme has continued unabated, and the project's key supporters, Bishop Grosseteste College in Lincoln, England, are hard-pressed to keep up with the demand for seminars, workshops, training materials and information.

An evaluation of the programme published in October 1996 confirmed that teachers and parents remained extremely enthusiastic about the new approach, which has renewed teacher motivation and encouraged parents to get more involved in the daily life of their local schools.

But most importantly, the Inter-Active Learning Programme is having a direct impact on the lives of children. The evaluation found that children's learning has improved. Even the most withdrawn pupils are now taking part in classes, and children are increasingly interested in their lessons. The classroom is now a place of excitement, where they can learn the skills that will help them reach their full potential.

impact of weak state funding and institutional inertia. Parents can be encouraged to help organize after-school activities and restore other aspects of the social support once provided by schools. The watchful eye of the community can stimulate and help maintain the quality of schooling. And a positive approach to parental involvement in school life may help ensure the enrolment and attendance of children from less-advantaged backgrounds.

3. Content and methods of teaching and learning

Curriculum reform is important in promoting ethnic tolerance and civil values – values needed as never before in parts of the region. An overhaul of old-fashioned methods must be reflected in revised examination methods to ensure selection according to merit, rather than income. Slovenia has already made important reforms in this area, while Poland, Moldova and Romania are expected to follow suit.

4. Combating marginalization

The language of instruction is one important factor in the full inclusion of children in education and is an issue being addressed in Russia, Ukraine, and FYR Macedonia, among other countries. It is important to involve ethnic minorities in the governance of the local school system.

There have been welcome moves to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream schools in the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, but little progress in other countries, such as Bulgaria and Moldova. Effective measures to meet the needs of this group of children are hampered by the chronic lack of information on their current situation.

5. Early childhood care and development

Public policy on early childhood care and development should not focus exclusively on formal kindergartens, to which children from rural and low-income families may have little access. Schemes should include parental education, public health campaigns and the stimulation of local community action for self-help schemes. Innovative programmes have, for example, been launched in Azerbaijan, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina to bring early child development into the home.

6. Control of methods and standards

There are many positive aspects to the reduced role of the State in favour of devolved local government and community schemes. The pitfalls, however, include the lack of local resources to meet the need for education, and the continuing need for quality control. Well-designed systems of transfers from the centre are essential. And central government must keep firm control over standards. The State has a duty to ensure that the child's right to education is respected, no matter which level of government or which institution actually provides that education.

The pre-school years

Pre-school enrolment rates have fallen sharply in parts of the region (Figure 4). This is certainly the case in most republics of the former Soviet Union. While the fall in the supply of, and demand for, kindergarten places is a matter of concern, there have always been large numbers of children in the region who have never had any kind of pre-school education at all. UNICEF's concern is more wide-ranging – examining many aspects of early childhood care and development.

Childhood development means more than kindergartens. A range of programmes and support are needed to reflect the different needs of children of different ages, and of parents who may or may not be employed and may have their own preferences and their own skills to offer. Some schemes may be home-based. Some may focus on the children, while others target parents to improve their child-rearing skills. All should be viewed as complementary.

New initiatives should be, and could be, low-cost. The fact is that countries struggling to maintain state provision of compulsory education are unlikely to divert large amounts of resources to children of pre-school age. But many programmes for early childhood care and development are inexpensive, making the most of careful planning, plenty of ingenuity and maximum community involvement. Toys and equipment can be designed and made locally. Advice and materials can come from national radio and television – enormously cost-effective in a region where televisions are common, even in the poorest areas.

Governments must help to mobilize local communities to take on initiatives with or without state backing. Locally developed schemes have been among the most successful in recent years, taking the initiative to cope with problems of child care and child development. These have often included home-based initiatives.

A number of schemes to stimulate pre-school education are underway in the region, including a partnership between UNICEF and the Ministry of Education in Azerbaijan to design television programmes for children to encourage pre-school development. In FYR Macedonia UNICEF and its partners are working with local women's associations in rural areas on schemes for children without access to public sector pre-schools. Home visits help families stimulate the development of their children and parents now provide informal facilities where groups of families can meet.

4 HEALTH

Many of the countries in transition are facing a health crisis. Its scale can be seen in large numbers of avoidable deaths, the spread of diseases once thought to be under control, and the rise of new epidemics, including HIV/AIDS.

The crisis has not affected every country with the same intensity and has been, without doubt, most pronounced in Eastern and South Eastern Europe.

A complex set of social, economic and health factors has combined to push overall mortality rates upward. UNICEF's Fourth Regional Monitoring

Report, published in 1997, found that in Russia alone the excess mortality accumulated since 1989 had risen to more than 1.5 million people, most of them adult men.

The news on infant mortality rates (IMR) is better. They have, in general, stabilized or improved since 1989.

The situation before reform

Massive reconstruction programmes after the Second World War led to increases in incomes and food intake, upgrading of housing and sanitation, and increased coverage of health services. Between 1950 and the mid-1960s, infant mortality rates fell by 56 per cent in the USSR, compared to a fall of 41 per cent in Western Europe and 11 per cent in the United States.

But health care faced some serious challenges, including some of its own making. The overall approach tended to be curative, rather than preventive, with an emphasis on in-patient, rather than out-patient care. There were few campaigns to promote healthy lifestyles, and little tracking or evaluation of health trends. The communist regimes had their own views on healthy diet, with the Soviet Union recommending an intake of animal protein three times higher than the level recommended by the World Health Organization.

Many doctors lacked the authority, resources or motivation to introduce new approaches. Their basic training did not equip them to deal with new disease patterns or enable them to adjust to changing health needs. Some requested payment for their services. In 1987, three out of every four patients in the USSR were making payments to their doctors.

The environmental damage caused by monolithic industrial and agricultural policies increased the problems. Almost one million (960,000) children in Ukraine are now registered as having been affected by the Chernobyl disaster of 1986. The rapid disappearance of the Aral Sea, which began prior to transition, is now having a major impact on Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, including dust storms, saline soil, and limited clean water.

By the mid-1980s, years of deteriorating health conditions were taking their toll, particularly on adult men. Between 1965 and 1985 the death rate for men in the 45-49 age group rose by 42 per cent in the USSR, 67 per cent in Bulgaria and by 118 per cent in Hungary.

However, health conditions did stabilize, and life expectancy did begin to climb again in the years 1985 to 1989. The downward trend in IMR continued during these years in virtually every country.

The current situation

Every country in the region has, at some time in the last ten years, cut back its public expenditure on health services in response to economic problems. On occasion, the costs of health care have been passed on to the public. According to a survey in Georgia by Médecins sans Frontières published in 1995, 29 per cent of people with illnesses in the Ajaria region could no longer afford to seek medical help or pay for medicines.

The health crisis has not affected all countries, or all age groups, with the same intensity. It has been most pronounced in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and the highest increases in mortality are recorded for male adults in the 20-59 age group. Deaths of males in Russia rose by nearly 60 per cent between 1989 and 1993. In 1989 the average male could expect to live to the age of 64. By 1993 this had fallen to 58 – lower than the official age of retirement and lower than male life expectancy in India.

Many of these additional deaths are due to a near epidemic of heart disease and other chronic illnesses. Though homicide and suicide rates have edged upwards across the region, violence accounts for a sizeable part of the increased mortality only in Russia, Ukraine and Hungary. In these countries, up to two thirds of additional mortality of adults in the 35-45 age group can be explained by alcohol poisoning, psychosis, murder, suicide and various types of accidents.

Adult death increases the risk of child poverty, abandonment and orphanhood. UNICEF estimates that an additional 500,000 children in Russia lost a parent between 1990 and 1995. The total rises to an estimated 700,000 children when the other countries in the region are added.

A more positive aspect of transition has been the relatively modest rise in infant mortality in many countries. Infant mortality has actually fallen in some countries. After an upswing in 1990-1991, infant mortality rates fell in Central European countries and rates in, for example, Slovenia and the Czech Republic (5.5 and 7.7 respectively per 1,000 births) are now comparable to those in Western European countries (Figure 5). However, if every country achieved the infant mortality rate of the European Union average, around 60,000 young lives would be saved each year.

The comparative stability of IMR may be credited in part to the strength of the inherited 'public health asset' and national efforts – often with international help – to maintain public hygiene and immunization levels.

Despite the health crisis that has affected many countries, infant mortality rates have remained fairly stable across the region

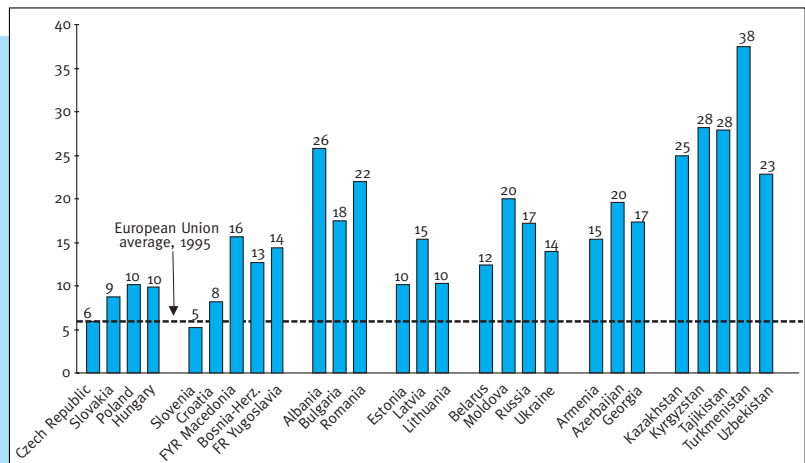


Figure 5 – Infant mortality rate, 1997 (infant deaths per 1,000 live births)

Source: MONEE project database and Eurostat.

Spread of disease

The reappearance of 'poverty diseases' such as diphtheria and tuberculosis, almost eradicated before reform, is a matter of great concern.

Diphtheria returned at the end of the 1980s, with an average of 1,900 cases reported each year from 1989 to 1991. From 1992 onwards, the numbers spiralled into an epidemic in the Russian Federation and Ukraine – from 6,000 cases in the two countries combined in 1992, to 18,000 the following year and 43,000 in 1994. By 1995 there were cases in each of the Russian Federation's 89 regions. The disease has also emerged in other countries. Children have been the main victims in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Tajikistan.

Massive movements of populations fleeing armed conflict have created ideal breeding grounds for tuberculosis. The number of cases is relatively low and stable in Central Europe and highest in Azerbaijan, followed by the Western CIS and Baltic countries where T. B. has begun to rise substantially, with children accounting for 10 per cent of new cases.

Polio, another disease thought to be on the verge of elimination, has been reported in Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and several other countries.

The rise of such disease dates back, at least partly, to the inadequacies of immunization procedures before 1989, such as the poor storage of vaccines, the lack of booster shots, and faulty record keeping. A temporary decline in overall child immunization between 1991 and 1992 did nothing to help. Add the migration of populations fleeing armed conflict and other crises, coupled with the overall deterioration of public health systems, and the stage was set for the spread of disease.

Taking risks

People are taking increasing risks with their health. Smoking, drug and alcohol abuse and unsafe sex are all on the rise.

Smoking is now more prevalent in the region than in most of the industrialised world. One quarter of 15 year-old boys in Hungary smoke at least once a week, and one third in Latvia.

Sexually-transmitted diseases are spreading, particularly in the Baltic and Western CIS countries, as a result of ignorance, the lack of contraception and the growth in prostitution across the region. Incidence of HIV and syphilis are soaring, with the number of recorded HIV cases leaping from around 30,000 in 1994 to about 270,000 at the end of 1998. It is safe to say that these areas now face an epidemic of HIV and AIDS. Syphilis is fast re-emerging in the region after it had been practically eradicated by the early 1990s (Figure 6). The number of cases varies throughout the region, ranging from 11 cases per 100,000 people in Central and Eastern Europe to 221 cases per 100,000 in parts of the former Soviet Union – more than 100 times the average EU rate.

Too many young people are dying as a result of accidents and injuries, which now account for almost one third of all deaths among those aged 1-19 in the transition countries.

The dramatic re-emergence of syphilis is a sure sign of unsafe sexual behaviour - behaviour that also allows the spread of HIV/AIDS

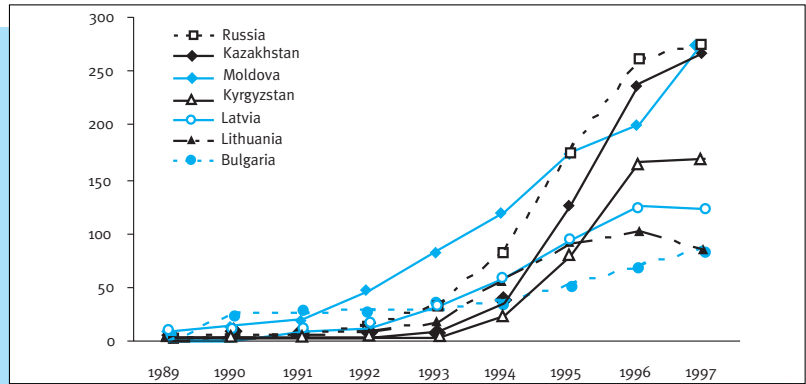


Figure 6 - Newly-registered cases of syphilis (new cases per 100,000 population)
Source: MONEE project database.

Teenage suicide rates, especially among boys, have risen in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, the Baltic countries, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. In the Czech Republic, for example, the number of young people aged 15 to 19 attempting suicide doubled between 1990 and 1994.

In terms of sheer numbers, the most alarming figures come from Russia, where the number of suicides among boys aged 15-19 has more than doubled since 1989, rising from 950 to almost 2,000 in 1997. Between 1993 and 1998 the number of young people addicted to drugs increased 2.7 times, and those suffering from alcoholism 7 times. The country is, according to some esti-

Box 4

HIV and AIDS - a threat to youth

The number of HIV infections in the region increased by 900 per cent in just three years, growing from fewer than 30,000 HIV infections in 1995 to an estimated 270,000 infections by the end of 1998. By December 1997 an estimated 110,000 people were living with HIV in Ukraine, up from an estimated 1,500 in 1994. Over two-thirds of them are thought to be intravenous drug users. Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation also have growing HIV problems, and over 80 per cent of infections are among individuals with a history of injecting drugs. Most drug users are aged 15-24.

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has launched *Listen, Learn, Live!*, the World AIDS Campaign with Children and Young People. The Campaign, backed by all UNAIDS Partners, including UNICEF, encourages adults to listen to the concerns of young people, rather than lecturing them on their behaviour. The old health systems tended to treat sexually transmitted disease as if it were a crime.

UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Health in Ukraine to establish youth-friendly health clinics in Kiev and Odessa. The clinics will provide counselling and practical help on reproductive health issues, including testing, treatment of sexually-transmitted infections and access to HIV prevention and contraception devices. Located in already-existing health-care facilities, the clinics will be staffed by youth volunteers to provide peer-to-peer counselling and support, will be free or low-priced and will be open to all young people including drug users and children living on the street.

mates, home to as many as 1.5 million registered drug addicts, and two-thirds of the country's drug users are thought to be under 30 years old.

What needs to happen

The health crisis affecting parts of the region is not simply a question of lack of funding. While greater investment in carefully targeted and preventive health care would be most welcome, particularly in support for immunization, some health problems have complex origins and require a more complex response. The rise in male mortality, drug addiction, alcoholism and sexually-transmitted diseases will not be addressed by conventional medical means. Measures to address the poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunity that contribute to these problems must go hand in hand with modern, effective and well informed methods of health education.

5 CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONS

Nowhere is the gulf between economic progress and social impoverishment more apparent than in the growing numbers of children in public care.

There are well over one million children in public care across the region. Most have a living parent and most, despite all the efforts of recent years in some countries, still live in large-scale institutions.

In 10 of the 14 countries in Central and Eastern Europe for which data are available, the rates of infants and toddlers aged 0-3 living in institutional care have risen since 1989, by up to 45 per cent in Romania, Russia and Latvia, and by as much as 75 per cent in Estonia.

These figures are contrary to all policy intentions and raise concerns for the future. The worry is that these children may be the tip of the iceberg – their growing numbers representing a clear symptom of increasing social stress and of families unable to cope.

The situation before reform

The region has inherited a public attitude and a state approach to public care dominated by institutionalization. The old regimes supported uniform family support schemes – social insurance, free education and health, and full employment – intended to meet the supposedly uniform needs of every family. There was one solution for children whose families ran into difficulties – institutionalization.

There were no effective structures in place to prevent it. Social work was poorly developed across the region and was banned in Romania in 1969 for ideological reasons.

Some policies helped to swell the number of unwanted children. The most extreme were the pro-natalist policies of the Ceaucescu regime that filled the orphanages of Romania. Elsewhere, there was widespread ignorance about, and lack of access to, modern means of contraception. In addi-

tion, some parents genuinely believed that institutionalization was in the best interests of their children.

While the conditions found in Romanian orphanages at the beginning of the transition shocked the world, institutional care was poor across the region. The children in these institutions were a forgotten underclass, who frequently lost all contact with their family. Daily routines were regimental, and children had nobody to turn to if they experienced cruelty or abuse. While conditions in homes across the region varied, the worst were appalling and left infants and children living in sub-human conditions that failed to meet even their most basic needs.

Children with disabilities were particularly at risk of institutionalization as it was difficult for the parents to keep them at home. There was no system of social services to provide practical or emotional help and, for many parents, institutionalization seemed the only option.

The current situation

Wherever statistics are available, they show that the proportion of young children in institutional care across the region has risen (Figure 7), while declining public expenditure has undermined the quality of the care those children receive.

UNICEF's Fourth Regional Monitoring Report, published in 1997, examined the situation in 18 countries across the region and found that, despite sharp falls in the birth-rate since the late 1980s, the total number of children of all ages in orphanages and similar child institutions or placed with foster parents has increased. There were roughly one million children in public care across the 18 countries, an increase of about 50,000 since 1989. This represents 1 in every 100 children, most of them living in large-scale institutions.

The surge in the rate at which children are institutionalized is contrary to all policy intentions, and highlights the increasing number of families under stress

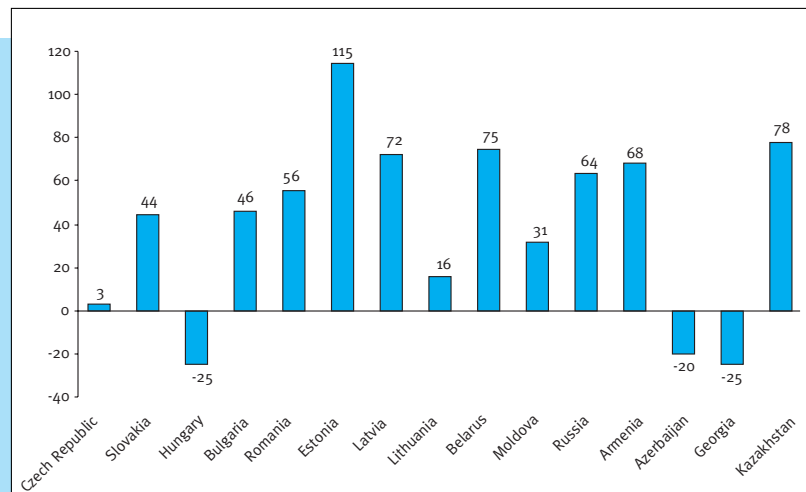


Figure 7 – Change in the proportion of children aged 0-3 years in institutional care, 1989-97 (per cent)

Source: MONEE project database.

Note: Data refer to children in infant homes.

They are, for the most part, 'social orphans' abandoned or neglected by their families. In Russia, for example, an estimated 95 per cent have a living parent. The number of children in public care in Russia in 1995 exceeded 600,000 and the country now accounts for over half the children in public care in the region.

State expenditure seems to have been influenced more by reduced G.D.P than by the changing needs of children. In both Moldova and Georgia output fell by two thirds between 1989 and 1998 and, in both countries, the public child protection system has virtually collapsed.

Adoption and foster care:

Adoption is the best option for young children who cannot remain with their own families. While the total number of adoptions has fallen across the region, the adoption of children aged 0-3 has either risen or remained constant. In all Western CIS countries, and in Bulgaria and Slovakia, the numbers and rates of adoptions have increased.

The rise in adoptions of very young children is linked to the growing importance of international adoptions. Many may be illegal, or at least questionable, and few countries in the region have ratified the 1993 Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. At the same time, falling living standards have reduced domestic demand for adoption. International adoptions accounted for almost 50 per cent of all adoptions in Lithuania in 1994, for example.

The news on fostering is mixed. The number of children in foster care has increased across the region, highlighting the increased numbers of children needing care from the State. The good news is that fostering accounts for a growing proportion of children in public care in some countries, signalling

Box 5

Speeding ahead – Azerbaijani youth courier service

At the age of nine, Shamil Mamedov was picked off the streets of Baku by the police and placed in a state orphanage. Today, this 17-year-old is in business, employed as a courier for the city's Youth Azeri Parcel Service (YAPS). "The greatest event in my life was receiving my first pay cheque," says Shamil.

The project, initiated by UNICEF and supported by the Azerbaijan Government and several local businesses, began in July 1997. The scheme aims to provide employment and training opportunities to Azerbaijan's most disadvantaged youth – young people leaving state orphanages. All 30 drivers grew up in public care, while the managers are young people with disabilities.

The training on offer includes English, moped driving and repair, customer relations, computer proficiency, radio communications and office management – skills that will enhance their future employment prospects. YAPS is run as a business, not a charity, and is in great demand. A recent survey among 160 of YAPS clients revealed 90 per cent customer satisfaction, with many asking YAPS to expand its range of services.

From an article by Leyla Gassanova for "Children First!" the magazine of the UK Committee for UNICEF

a welcome move away from institutionalization. Both trends can be seen in Poland where the number of children aged 0-17 in foster care grew from 338 per 100,000 children in 1989 to 469 per 100,000 in 1996 and over 40 per cent of the children in public care are now fostered, up from 36 per cent in 1989.

What needs to happen

While reform will require money, the lack of funding is not the most important problem. There is a reluctance at all levels of government to prioritize social services for marginalized groups.

Preventive services are needed, led and coordinated by the State and based in the community, to help families keep children at home. New kinds of social services are required, including family centres and counselling. New professions, such as social workers, health visitors and community nurses need support.

While State support will always be essential, there is a role for the non-governmental sector in the provision of social services. At present, thousands of NGOs are competing for limited funding, with little monitoring of their services or management. This sector requires reform to ensure public confidence.

Existing systems of public care need review, backed by legislation and infrastructure to support the family as the best environment for a child.

Box 6

The Child Care Forum

In Bulgaria, a “boarding school” is an institution housing children who may have committed ‘anti-social’ offences. In Hungary, it means a school where children stay during the week, going home to their families for weekends and holidays. In Slovakia, a “boarding school” is a residential institution caring for children with disabilities – an institution that takes in children from other institutions that shut down during the holidays. These three very different definitions of one simple phrase highlight the problems facing those trying to collect meaningful and comparative regional data on children in public care.

Lack of information on children in public care throughout the region is a major stumbling block to reform. Too little is known about why children enter care in the first place, what kind of institutions care for them, or what happens to them when they leave.

The Child Care Forum for Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, based in Hungary, is now starting to pull this information together. Created as a result of UNICEF’s Regional Monitoring activities, the Forum is analysing the different child care systems in Slovakia, Poland, Lithuania and Moldova as well as Hungary. The National Institute for Family and Children, Budapest, acts as the hub of the Forum, and pilot studies have been launched in each of these five countries to provide data on children in public care, information on children before institutionalization and to describe and analyse alternative family-based care options. Similar surveys have been launched by UNICEF partners in Romania and Bulgaria.

Surveys on the reasons children enter and leave public care are now being analysed. This information is vital. It could help to pinpoint the key moments in a child’s life when intervention could prevent their institutionalization.

Adoption and foster care should be stimulated and used more flexibly, with proper recruitment and selection programmes, support and monitoring. And, of course, conditions within children's homes must be monitored to ensure adequate care.

The planning and management of services requires reliable data – still a rarity. Even the most basic information on the flow of children through public care is missing. All that is known for certain is the total number in care at any one time.

6 WOMEN AND GIRLS

The progress of the region's 200 million women and girls is a sensitive indicator of human development in general. And UNICEF's Sixth Regional Monitoring Report, published in September 1999, maintains that their participation is crucial if the social, economic and political targets of the transition are to be achieved.

One of communism's greatest legacies has been a vast pool of educated women. Many have responded to the shocks of transition with initiative and resilience, exploiting their own flexibility and social networks to support themselves and their families. But the gender equality imposed by the old regimes has proved to be a thin veneer, which has now peeled back to reveal gender discrimination in the home, the workplace and in political structures.

The situation before reform

At first glance, the level of gender equality achieved by the former regimes was impressive. Women had equal, and virtually universal, access to basic health care and education and to employment. Women in the workplace had access to state-run systems of family and childcare support, including paid maternity leave, family allowances attached to wages, and childcare services. Quotas ensured their presence in the region's one-party parliaments, with women often accounting for as many as one-third of the seats – a share matched only in Nordic countries.

But a closer look reveals a process that was authoritarian, rather than rights-based. Equality often meant uniformity, and was imposed from the top down. And women's representation in parliaments had little meaning when the parliaments themselves had no real powers.

There were few women at the highest levels in politics or industry. One observer describing their political role in Albania said: "women were often seen on platforms at solemn meetings, serving the same function as the potted plants – decoration."

There was a blanket of silence about the extent of violence against women, and professionals in criminal justice, health care, social work and

education lacked the training to recognize or deal with this issue – a problem that continues to this day.

Women's representation in parliaments almost vanished in the first democratic elections in the region, reflecting the profound failure of the communist regime to cultivate gender equality legitimized and sustained by citizens. Indeed, the imposition of notional 'equality' has left many women, as well as men, with what has been termed an "allergy to feminism".

The current situation

The key issues facing women have implications for the future progress of the region as a whole:

Health

Maternal mortality rates fell in 17 countries between 1989 and 1997. In 11 countries, however, the rates in the second half of the 1990s were more than twice as high as the WHO target for Europe of 15 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births (Figure 8).

An increase in birth complications and in health problems for small babies may reflect a deterioration in maternal health as well as a decline in the provision of pre-natal care. In Belarus, the rate of haemorrhage and eclampsia almost doubled between 1989 and 1995. In Russia, the incidence of birth complications almost trebled.

While the absolute number of legal abortions has declined, abortion rates remain high, with an average of one abortion for every live birth in 1996 across the region. Only Poland, Croatia and Azerbaijan have less than the European Union average of 20 legal abortions per 100 births. In Russia, there are two abortions for every live birth – about 2.5 million abortions in 1997 alone. The policy dimensions on abortion include the lack of infor-

Maternal mortality rates are still too high in many transition countries, reflecting a failure to tackle the most basic gender issue

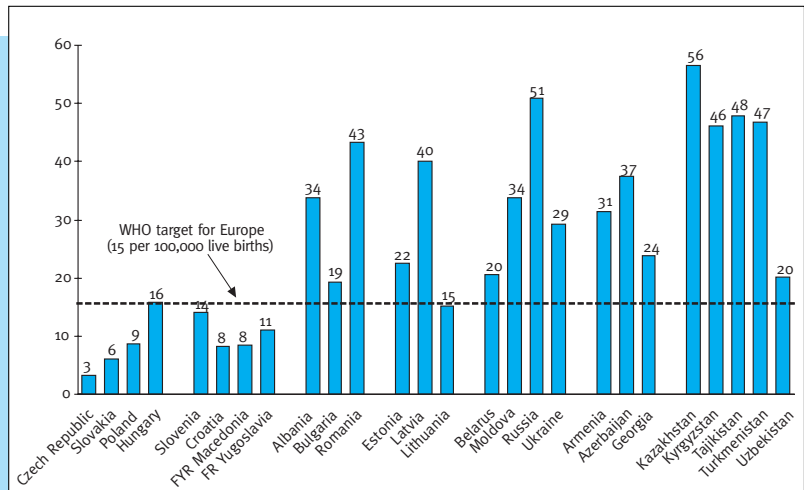


Figure 8 – Maternal mortality rates in the 1990s (maternal deaths per 100,000 live births)
Source: MONEE project database.

Note: Data represent averages of the last three years for which maternal mortality rates are available (1995-97) except for Poland, Slovenia, Albania (1994-96) and Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (1993-95).

mation and education about reproductive health and the lack of access to affordable, effective birth control.

Violence

Violence against women is nothing new in the transition countries, but the issue was rarely discussed before reform. The last ten years have seen an upsurge of all kinds of violence, including violence against women, but the new climate of openness is an historic opportunity to raise the issue and tackle the problem.

Domestic violence is thought to be widespread but there is a lack of data. One study using data from 1991, however, found that Russian women are 2.5 times more likely to be murdered by their partners than women in the United States, who are twice as likely to die in such a way as women in Western European countries.

Women are also faced with new patterns of violence. The most obvious is the violence linked to armed conflict. Estimates of the number of women raped as part of a deliberate pattern of abuse during the 1992-1995 conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina range from 20,000 to 50,000, representing 1-2 per cent of the total pre-war female population. Women also suffer the violence of displacement. Women and children accounted for 80 per cent of the over one million people uprooted at the height of the recent conflict in Kosovo.

Less visible is growth of sexual harassment in the workplace. Women are more likely to be in lower-status jobs, and more likely to work in the grey economy where working conditions are unregulated and unmonitored. The new threat of unemployment also adds to their vulnerability.

Employment

Women accounted for around 60 per cent of those on unemployment registers in 1997 and reductions in the formal provision of childcare are making it harder for women with children to find and keep jobs.

There is evidence in some countries of gender segregation linked to type of employment. Women continue to dominate in the lower-paid public-sector, accounting for up to three-quarters of health care employees, but men are making greater inroads in the growing private sector. In Russia the share of women employed in sectors where the pay prospects have improved – trade, credit, financial institutions, insurance, hotels and restaurants – shrank by 15-17 per cent between 1990 and 1996.

The gender gap in pay has remained stable, but it is hard to explain its continued existence. It is not thought to be solely the result of occupational or educational differences. Gender discrimination must, therefore, be a factor.

But there is good news too. While women are less likely than men to be self-employed or to employ others, the available evidence from nine countries shows that women have established or own about one-quarter of new businesses – a promising start, given the new entrepreneurial freedom in the region.

It is important to put the employment picture in context. Poland,

Doing it for themselves

Women may not dominate the boardrooms or executive suites, but they are the driving force behind many of the small-scale businesses springing up across the region. These businesses give them the chance to take part in decision making in the household, the community and in the economy.

Studies in St Petersburg show that it is the women who use their existing social skills and networks to make the essential connections that lead to employment.

One example is their growing presence in urban kiosk-trading. Because women may place greater emphasis on mutual support than maximizing profit, male and female street vendors in Russia are viewed quite differently. The men are seen as profiteers who are out to exploit ordinary people and who undermine economic regeneration in the process. Women, on the other hand, are seen as fair-dealers who are only trading to feed their families or pay for the education of their children.

Women's cooperation is even more pronounced in rural areas, where they work together to improve small-scale agricultural production. In rural areas it is the women who have been primarily responsible for the intensification of production on small plots, assuring their own subsistence and often helping to support urban relatives, as well as provide a surplus for sale. They have organized cooperatively to care for the increasing number of cattle at pasture and to share responsibilities as production increases. In many countries, this cooperation has resulted in an impressive amount of agricultural output from a tiny portion of the cultivated land.

Slovakia and Hungary have a higher percentage of women in senior legislative, official and managerial posts than Germany (Figure 9). The three Baltic countries have more than Denmark or the United Kingdom. And Slovenia, Romania and Tajikistan have more than Italy. Half of all professionals in Romania are women, two-thirds in Slovakia and 70 per cent in Lithuania. This is a substantial base from which to push through the 'glass ceiling'.

While the political representation of women declined with the onset of democracy, their presence at the highest levels of politics and business is more apparent than in some Western countries

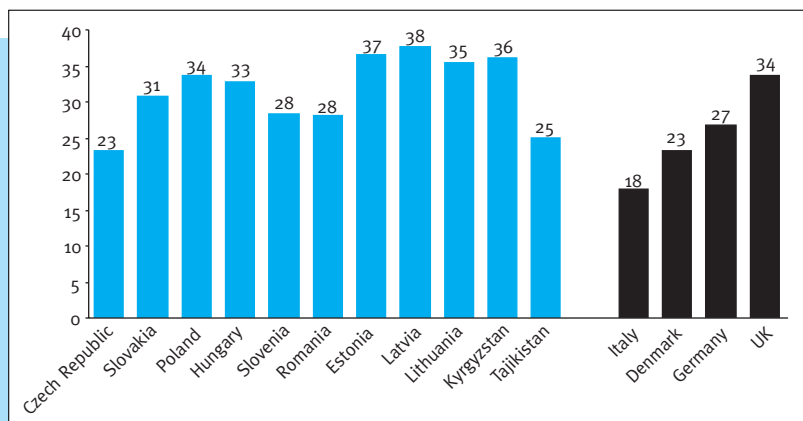


Figure 9 – Women's share of legislative, senior official and manager posts, 1997 (per cent)

Source: ILO and others.

Note: Data refer to Major Group 1 of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88). Data refer to 1994 for Kyrgyzstan, 1995 for Italy and 1996 for Estonia.

Political representation

Women accounted for 31 per cent of parliamentarians in the Soviet Union in 1984. This figure suggested that women were as well represented as in the Nordic countries, the world leaders in this respect, albeit in a parliament that held no real power. But their presence was largely superficial, propped up by a system of rigid quotas. In the 1989 elections, quotas were partially lifted, and the share of women deputies halved, falling to 16 per cent.

Today, the average percentage across the Baltic and CIS countries is less than 10 per cent, ranging from 1 per cent in Kyrgyzstan to 18 per cent in Turkmenistan, where there is only one political party represented in parliament. However, these women are elected in their own right, and may prove more credible and effective than their predecessors under communism.

Some of the countries in transition still have higher rates of women in parliament than some other industrialized countries. Women hold 15 per cent of the seats in the Czech Republic and 13 per cent in Poland, doing better than women in Italy (11 per cent in 1996), France (11 per cent in 1997) and the United States (12 per cent in 1996). Women are doing better at local government level and, as power is increasingly decentralized, this local political foothold will grow in importance.

Grassroots movements

The number of non-governmental organizations is growing, often filling the space left by the retreating State. These NGOs are important incubators for leadership, offering an excellent opportunity for women to increase their skills and exercise influence. In Poland in 1997 there were 73 women's organizations and informal groups. In FYR Macedonia, 154 of the 271 registered NGO activists are women.

NGOs tend to focus on four areas of fundamental importance to the human rights of women and the achievement of women's equality in the region: political and legal issues, the promotion of business and professional activities, social services and the elimination of violence against women, an area where grassroots women's groups are taking a strong lead. The Crisis Centre for Women in Moscow, for example, responds to about 200 calls each month, and carries out media campaigns and public education, despite limited resources. Such initiatives should be matched with action by governments and businesses.

What needs to happen

Some politicians, including some women, feel that this is not the time to address women's issues – that there are more pressing matters, such as the establishment of democracy. UNICEF, however, maintains that true democracy is impossible without gender equality.

Every country in the region has ratified, and has a duty to implement, the United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The advancement of women is not automatically a natural outcome of

political or economic reform. It requires an environment where women are supported in their efforts, have equal access to resources and opportunities, and in which pro-active policies are pursued by governments, business and civil institutions.

No community of people can truly represent the interests of another community, no matter how sincere their intentions. Until women are active participants at every level, from grassroots movements and local government to national leadership, their concerns will not be addressed.

Many building blocks are in place. The women elected to national and local governments are genuine political representatives of their communities. While pro-active measures are clearly necessary to boost their numbers, the combined pressure from ordinary citizens, NGOs, businesses, governments and international organizations will deliver more lasting results than a return to imposed quotas.

The establishment and growth of women's groups and other NGOs are essential components of a revitalized civil society in the region. The women involved in such groups can form links with each other and with the global community of women to maximize their impact.

The international community has an important role to play. For UNICEF, this means promoting and supporting the implementation of the international conventions that focus on the rights of women and children: CEDAW and the CRC.

7 CHILDREN AND WAR

Armed conflict has broken out in around one third of the 27 countries in transition over the last decade. The impact on ordinary people, and particularly on women and children, has been devastating.

These conflicts have typified the global change in the nature of war, with the deliberate targeting of civilians on the grounds of ethnic or religious background. This decade, and to a large extent this region, has given birth to a new phrase, "ethnic cleansing", that is now part of the global vocabulary.

The situation before reform

The fact that there were no actual conflicts in the region before reform does not mean that there was true peace. Authoritarian regimes kept a lid on simmering resentments in the name of national identity. There was no discussion of old grievances that dated back to Stalin's mass deportations or even earlier – sometimes going back centuries.

When these authoritarian regimes were toppled, there was little to stop old resentments erupting into brutal conflicts. Some lasted only weeks, others lasted for months or years, and some continue to this day.

No country in the region has been entirely unaffected by armed conflict. Nations not directly involved have had to receive refugees and provide them with emergency help, at a time when their own budgets are already overstretched.

Box 8

Old tensions erupt

Armenia and Azerbaijan: 1989-1994

The two countries go to war in 1989 for control of Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory within Azerbaijan with a large Armenian population. Almost 1.3 million people are uprooted from their homes. A cease-fire is declared in 1994 and is largely observed, but no permanent settlement is reached.

Georgia: 1991 - present

Fighting breaks out in 1991 between the Government and separatists who have set up administrations in Abkhazia in the north-west, and South Ossetia in the north-east. Almost 50,000 children leave their homes. Conflicts in the Gali region in Abkhazia in 1998 force a further 40,000 people from their homes. The Government transfers funds originally intended for the social sector to the care of the displaced. They now number over 250,000, one third of them children.

Former Yugoslavia: 1991 – present

The region's bloodiest conflict begins, characterized by a new phenomenon – ethnic cleansing. Communities on all sides are forced from their homes because of their ethnic or religious origin. By the time of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, over four million people have become refugees or are internally displaced, including some 1.4 million children. In Bosnia-Herzegovina alone more than 16,000 children are thought to have died and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is now home to more than half a million refugees (the largest refugee population in Europe).

The war may be officially over, but the recent conflict in Kosovo in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has seen a repeat of all the worst excesses of the 1991-1995 conflict – ethnic cleansing, the targeting of civilians and the denial of the most fundamental human rights.

Moldova: 1992

A territorial battle for control of the Dniester region. The fighting is brief, but intense and the status of the region is still uncertain.

Tajikistan: 1992-1993

A civil war beginning in 1992 results in the displacement of 600,000 people within the country. Many Tajiks of Kyrgyz ethnicity flee to neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. Most refugees are able to return by mid-1995 and a peace agreement is signed in June 1997. Tensions continue with neighbouring Uzbekistan and in the north of the country, where violence flared in 1998. Around 85 per cent of the population are now thought to live below the poverty line.

Russian Federation: 1994-1996

Russian troops enter Chechnya in 1994, following the republic's declaration of independence from the Federation in 1991. The capital, Grozny, is bombarded. Chechen rebels hit back in 1995 by attacking the southern Russian city of Budyonnovsk. A truce is agreed in 1996, but the issue of independence remains unresolved. Around 100,000 people are thought to have died in the conflict.

The current situation

The conflicts of the last ten years have, for the most part, violated the most fundamental rights of children. Combatants on all sides have seen children as representatives of a particular ethnic or religious group and, therefore, as legitimate targets. Such attitudes have characterized three of the most terrible conflicts: the war in former Yugoslavia, the struggle between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and the internal struggle in Georgia over the province of Abkhazia.

Many children have seen their loved ones killed, their communities uprooted, their homes obliterated. Some have taken an active part in the violence, fighting alongside the adults in Chechnya, in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and an estimated 4,000 children in the conflicts in former Yugoslavia.

Those who have lost their parents include the 55,000 orphans created by the conflict in Tajikistan. Too often, the public care systems that should step in are collapsing under the combined pressure of economic and social stress.

Of the approximately six to eight million refugee or displaced people in the region, around two million are children. As well as the trauma of losing their homes and communities, these children are vulnerable to the diseases and illnesses caused by overcrowded and unsanitary conditions in the camps.

In some cases, most notably in Serbia, entire communities have mobilized to welcome refugees of similar ethnic origin. Elsewhere, displaced children have experienced discrimination. In FYR Macedonia, for example, thousands of Bosnian Muslim refugees found it hard to integrate in their new country.

The long-term impact of such turmoil on young minds is a grave concern for the future of these countries. Large numbers of children in Bosnia-

Box 9

Kosovo

The final eruption of violence in the region in the 1990s was one of the most shocking. More than half of the 350,000 Kosovar refugees who fled to Albania, Macedonia and other countries in March and April 1999 were children, expelled from their homes and country after witnessing brutality and chaos. Many thousands lost their own identity as their birth certificates and medical records were confiscated before they were allowed to cross the border to safety. The message was clear: "You do not exist".

As well as protesting against such actions, UNICEF was on the ground to offer first-hand assistance to the refugees, taking the lead on a mass immunization drive against polio and measles in Kukes, providing water purification chemicals, supporting psycho-social counselling programmes and helping its partners restart the children's schooling.

UNICEF also helped to create "Child-Friendly Spaces" in 40 sites in camps in Albania, reaching around 30,000 children. The Spaces gave child refugees a safe place to take part in lessons, to play and to get emotional help and support. And the Spaces gave mothers somewhere to care for their infants away from the noise and crowds of the camps. By establishing these safe havens UNICEF sent its own clear message: "These children do exist".

Herzegovina and in Serbia and Montenegro are known to be suffering from psychological trauma. One study of internally displaced children from Abkhazia, Georgia, found that they all showed emotional disturbances, including chronic anxiety, phobias, sleep disorders, and decreased cognitive abilities, as well as high levels of hostility and aggression.

UNICEF studies suggest that girls between the ages of three and six may be the most vulnerable to serious trauma. But there is no doubting the suffering experienced by adolescent girls in the war zones of former Yugoslavia, many of whom endured rape and enforced pregnancy.

What needs to happen

Above all, children need peace. While this seems obvious, it actually requires more than a signature on a peace treaty or the handing over of guns. It requires a sustained effort on the part of Governments, religious leaders and communities to create a climate of security and tolerance – a climate that will make such violence obsolete.

THE MONEE PROJECT

In 1992, UNICEF launched a major project to monitor the impact on children of the social and economic upheavals taking place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Now known as the MONEE project, this initiative plays a vital role in monitoring the social side of the transition in the region.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of communism had catapulted these countries into a new era of rapid political, economic and social change. As the new nations struggled to cope with these changes, UNICEF was concerned that the needs of children were being overlooked. The organization knew, from its years of experience in the developing world, that children are the first to suffer in any crisis. By gathering data specific to children and women, together with other data on different aspects of human welfare, the MONEE project aims to focus attention on what the transition really means for children and to advocate for the social safety nets and health and education systems that they so badly need.

The project has grown in scale during its seven-year life span. Its first report covered nine countries. In more recent years its reports have encompassed all 27 countries in transition in the region.

The work is carried out by a small team of researchers based at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy, working with a range of external consultants and with the central statistical offices and research centres of each country in the region. The work receives financial support from the Government of Italy, the World Bank and the UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltics.

The project's Regional Monitoring Report provides an analysis of overall welfare trends, explores a different issue in depth each year, and includes a comprehensive statistical annex. This year's report, *Women in Transition*, is the sixth in this regular series.

Regional Monitoring Report No. 1 *Public Policy and Social Conditions, 1993*

The human costs of transition in Eastern Europe were far higher than anticipated, according to the first Regional Monitoring Report. The report warned that neglect of the social aspects of transition would jeopardise not only the futures of individual children and adults, but the entire reform process.

Regional Monitoring Report No. 2 *Crisis in Mortality, Health and Nutrition, 1994*

The mortality and health crisis experienced by most Eastern European countries after the fall of communism did not hit the traditionally most vulnerable groups such as children or the elderly. Instead, it took its toll on

male adults. The report highlighted three factors in this phenomenon: widespread poverty, social stress and the erosion of preventive health services.

Regional Monitoring Report No. 3

Poverty, Children and Policy: Responses for a Brighter Future, 1995

Despite economic progress by 1995, there was no sign that the welfare crisis was over. The third report confirmed that children had suffered disproportionately in such areas as child care, education, protection for adolescents and poverty. It proposed a series of policy guidelines for a "transition with a human face".

Regional Monitoring Report No. 4

Children at Risk in Central and Eastern Europe: Perils and Promises, 1997

The fourth report analysed eight types of risk threatening the 100 million children in the 18 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus: poverty, war and dislocation, environmental degradation, deteriorating health services, family breakdown, reduced access to education, risky youth lifestyles, and juvenile crime. The report also included a special analysis of children in institutions, highlighting the rise in their numbers.

Regional Monitoring Report No. 5

Education for All? 1998

This report, which saw the extension of the MONEE project to 27 countries, flagged the links between the benefits of education to the individual child and to the development of society. It emphasized the need for public policy to promote good education for all children and analysed various factors contributing to growing inequality in educational systems.

Regional Monitoring Report No. 6

Women in Transition, 1999

The Report highlights the role of women in regional progress and the obstacles they face. A broad range of issues are covered, including women's participation in the emerging market economies and democratic governments, female access to health and education, trends in family formation, and violence against women and girls.

All Regional Monitoring Reports are published in English and Russian and are available price US\$ 25.00 from:

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TransMONEE Database

The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre produces the TransMONEE database – a stand-alone electronic database including a vast range of social and economic indicators collected during the compilation of the Regional Monitoring Report. The database allows the user to extract a profile of economic and social indicators for a single country or to compare a single indicator across sub-regions, countries and time-periods.

For more details, see the website at: <http://www.unicef-icdc.org>

Other publications

The MONEE Project has also produced a number of shorter studies of particular countries or subjects. These are published in the Innocenti Occasional Paper series.

For more details, see the website at: <http://www.unicef-icdc.org>

AFTER THE FALL

The UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre has been charting the situation of children and women in the region since the fall of communism. The Centre's MONEE project, created in 1992, analyses social conditions and public policy affecting children and their families across this very diverse region. Its Regional Monitoring Report, published each year, is regarded as the most authoritative source on the human side of the transition, focusing on key issues such as poverty, health, education, children at risk and progress for women.

After the Fall, written to mark the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, looks back at the impact of ten years of transition. It argues for a new focus on the human aspect of transition, and a rededication to its original goals – a better quality of life for every citizen in a humane and democratic society.

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