

National Consultant to conduct Climate Landscape Analysis for Children in Bulgaria with a focus on Social Protection

Detailed Description on the Assignment

I. Background

Climate change and social protection

Climate change is leading to widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and humans. It is resulting in an increase in the number of extreme events, altered ecosystems, severe water scarcity, food insecurity, and displacement (IPCC, 2023). Climate change disproportionately impacts those living in poverty and vulnerability. Poor people tend to lose more when affected by climate shocks, relative to their income or wealth. This exacerbates inequalities, in particular gender inequalities (UN, 2022), since women and girls have lower capacities and opportunities to adapt (IPCC 2022). The climate crisis is already threatening children’s rights and their well-being. Almost every child in the world is exposed to major climate and environmental hazards, and 4 out of 5 children face at least one extreme climate event per year.

Climate risks threaten the global goal of ending extreme child poverty. They push people further into poverty or prevent others from escaping it, undermining current efforts to alleviate poverty. Child poverty is multidimensional, manifesting itself in various ways, such as poor nutrition, lack of health services, or deprivation in quality education. The negative effects of climate change on those dimensions, as well as on the limited capability to maintain livelihoods or participate in society, are widely recognised. According to estimates from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), children will be among the most affected by global warming due to multiple factors including food insecurity, loss of household loss of incomes and livelihoods, adverse health impacts and population displacement.¹

To secure a livable and sustainable future for all, climate resilient development needs to increase the portfolio of adaptation and mitigation options available for all (IPCC, 2023). The *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* and the new *Strategic Framework 2018–2030* of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification emphasizes the importance of social protection tools against climate related disasters and encourages the inclusion of social protection into national climate risk management strategies. Social protection can play a key role in ensuring a climate resilient development (IPCC, 2023), it contributes to sustainable development, helps vulnerable groups to strengthen their coping and adaptive capacities, and contributes to their long-term resilience.

Shock-responsive social protection

Social protection supports both mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, and helps households manage climate-induced loss and damage. It prepares vulnerable children and families to handle climate change-related risks. To harness the potential of social protection in a context of increasing risks, it is critical to analyze and adjust existing Social Protection policy and legal frameworks, financing, programmes, and systems so that they are adaptive and shock-responsive.

Social protection policies and programmes are most often designed to address typical risks faced by individuals and households along their lifecycle. *'Shock responsive' social protection* aims to extend the types of risks covered to include additional, challenges which often impact many households at once such as natural hazards, economic crises, and conflict that also play a critical role in determining life outcomes. When shocks are recurrent, protracted, or severe, they destabilise household economies, making a return to normal life very challenging. This progressive deterioration forces many parents/caregivers to make choices that are in conflict with children's rights with long term negative repercussions for children's wellbeing.

A social protection system that is designed to better anticipate and respond to shocks, in coordination with other sectors, can play an important role for children and their families to better prepare for and cope with the impacts of stresses and shocks. For UNICEF, a focus on shocks reinforces ongoing efforts to strengthen countries' social protection systems. It is based on the premise that poverty and vulnerability (including to covariate shocks) create constraints that prevent upholding the rights of children in fragile contexts and in times of crisis. Social protection can play a role in addressing these constraints, better working alongside other sectors such as Disaster Risk Management (DRM), civil defense etc. that have a mandate to respond to covariate shocks.

Better encompassing a focus on covariate shocks, does not necessarily require a dramatically different approach to designing and implementing social protection. Priority actions may include:

1. Ensuring routine social protection programming is based on a solid understanding of the risks, shocks and stressors that countries typically face.
2. Enhancing preparedness to enable the flexing and/or scaling up of existing programmes or activating new emergency programmes that build on existing systems, to accommodate new populations and needs as a result of a shock.
 - Vertical expansion of an existing programme or set of programmes. The benefit value or duration of the programme is temporarily increased for some or all existing recipients (e.g. top-ups). New components may also be added.
 - Horizontal expansion of an existing programme, or set of programmes, to temporarily include new beneficiaries from affected communities.
 - The activation of a new emergency programme that piggybacks on existing systems (e.g. data, capacity, delivery mechanism) where possible. This could be led via a) the social protection sector or b) by external actors, in close coordination with social protection.

II. Context in Bulgaria

Bulgaria is a high-income country¹ and a member of the European Union since 2007. The total population of the country is 6,445,481 (2023) and the share of children (0-18 years) is 17.1 per cent. Bulgaria has a negative population growth due to a combination of low birth rates, high crude death rates and lower life expectancy, and net emigration. The population is ageing, which affects the labour force but also puts strain on the pension, social and healthcare systems.

¹ [World Bank country classifications by income level for 2024-2025](#)

Currently, Bulgaria is classified as having high risk of river flooding, urban flooding, and wildfires. It has a medium risk of experiencing earthquakes, water scarcity, and extreme heat, and low to very low risk of landslides, coastal flooding, and storms. Flooding is the natural hazard with highest incidence, affecting 80,000 people annually and USD 400 million on average. Risks for flooding is higher near river systems while risk for drought and wildfire is higher in the continental areas. High levels of inequality and access to health systems, cooling systems, and other services could influence people’s ability to endure hazards.² As other countries in the region, Bulgaria has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the cost-of-living crisis, which have tested the resilience of the economy and exacerbated vulnerabilities.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic the economy has maintained a GDP growth of between 3 and 4 per cent. The employment rate has reached historically record-high levels, while unemployment fell below 4 per cent. This has resulted in a steady growth in wages of about 10 per cent per annum. Inflation was low, while the fiscal policy was rather conservative, and the public debt was the second lowest in the EU at about 20 per cent of GDP.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and the war on Ukraine has had an adverse impact on the social and economic development of the country and have disproportionately affected vulnerable groups, who often lack adequate insurance and coping mechanisms to mitigate shocks and are often less covered by social support mechanisms. After a period of gradual decrease in child poverty – from 41.6 per cent in 2017 to 33 per cent in 2021 – the share of children living at risk of poverty or social exclusion has started to grow. In 2023, it was 33.9 per cent or 411,000 children and considerably higher than the EU-27 average of 24.7 per cent.

Bulgaria is recognized as vulnerable to climate change impacts and is ranked 53 out of 181 countries in the 2021 ND-GAIN Index.³ It has low vulnerability score (0.342) and high readiness score (0.466) and is well positioned to adapt to the existing challenges. In Bulgaria, critical environmental and climate change risks affect children’s rights, such as air pollution, inadequate water resources and waste management. The country has the highest rate of premature deaths due to air pollution in the European Union.⁴ The Bulgarian Environmental Performance Index score in 2020 was 57 and ranked 41 among 180 countries.⁵ More than 21 per cent of children in Bulgaria are negatively affected by the environment and pollution.⁶ Bulgaria is ranked 3,6 on Children’s Climate Risk Index (1 lowest 10 highest) with:

- 94 per cent of children exposed to excessive levels of air pollution (PM 2.5) according to WHO guidelines.
- 72 per cent of children exposed to heatwaves.
- 48 per cent of children exposed to water scarcity.

² [Bulgaria - Vulnerability | Climate Change Knowledge Portal \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bulgaria/overview)

³ <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

⁴ European Environment Agency, Air Quality in Europe, 2020.

⁵ Environmental Performance Index 2020, Country Profile Bulgaria.

⁶ United Nations Children’s Fund, Innocenti Report Card 17, UNICEF Research Centre, Florence.

III. Objective of the assignment

The consultant will support UNICEF to conduct a “light” Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLAC) in Bulgaria with a focus on social protection.

The purpose of the “light” CLAC is to examine the overall climate, environment, and energy (CEE) landscape in Bulgaria in terms of data, policy, programming, gaps, stakeholders and how it relates to children. It will look at:

- o What are the main CEE issues affecting Bulgaria?
- o What are the government priorities on CEE?
- o What are the ongoing initiatives on CEE?
- o Who are the main actors and stakeholders?
- o How are responsibilities divided at national and sub-national level?
- o Do government strategies/priorities on CEE take into account children’s needs?
- o Do sector strategies (i.e., health, education, and social protection) incorporate CEE issues?

Considering the role of social protection in responding to shocks, the CLAC will have a special focus on the national social protection system. It will look at how social protection has responded to recent shock events that affect poor and vulnerable people, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living of crisis, and natural disasters. The review of the recent emergency response measures and the lessons learnt generated will support the formulation policy recommendations for enhancing the shock-responsiveness of national social protection system, for strengthening the linkages and synergies between social protection, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation action, and for the inclusion of social protection into national climate risk management strategies.

The “light” CLAC with a focus on social protection will be based on a desk review and may include key-informant interviews. It will be informed by [2019, UNICEF Programme Guidance: Strengthening Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems](#) and other relevant documents.

The expected duration of the assignment is 35 days in the period 1 September - 31 December 2024.

IV. Scope of work and deliverables (Table below)

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	Delivery deadline
<p><u>Work Plan/Inception Report</u>: Preparation and submission of a work plan, including a list of documents for the desk review and a proposal for key-informant interviews.</p>	<p>Work Plan/Inception Report</p>	<p>10 Sept 2024 (3 days)</p>
<p><u>Desk research</u>: data collection and review of relevant information including, but not limited to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The climate, environment and energy situation in the country <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 The current climate, including variability and climate related hazards* 1.2 Observed and projected changes in the climate and related impacts 1.3 High exposure areas (this will likely be a number of maps for various CEE parameters such as e.g. floods, droughts, vector borne diseases, storms, etc.) 1.4 Other relevant environmental issues affecting children such as environmental degradation., air pollution, marine/aquatic environment, mining/extractive industry and chemical pollution 1.5 The energy situation for children (e.g., at home, school, health facilities, public lighting, etc.). <p>*Suggested resources: Climate Risk and Adaptation Country Profiles – World Bank; Country Profiles – Climate Change and Health – WHO</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Government responses to/priorities on CEE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 CEE policies, priorities and strategies, including DRR 2.2 Institutional arrangements [roles and responsibilities, coordination] at national and sub-national levels 2.3 Key stakeholders (CSOs, private sector, academia, other) 2.4 Ongoing initiatives from Government and EU (other). 3. Shock-responsiveness of the national social protection system 	<p>Table with information on data collected and reviewed documents with links</p>	<p>4 October 2024 (12 days)</p>

<p>3.1 Social protection legislation/policy/strategy from the perspective of identified risks and response to recent shocks – COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the cost-of-living crisis, floods and other natural hazards.</p> <p>3.2 Complementarities and synergies with disaster risk management (DRM) and other related areas (i.e. climate)</p> <p>3.3 The role of existing social protection programmes (incl. cash assistance), and how they have support CEE objectives, including ad hoc emergency programmes via social protection.</p> <p>3.4 Opportunities/ entry points to strengthen the social protection system to prepare for/ respond to shocks (considering legal, finance, programme design, and admin systems)</p>		
<p><u>Key-informant interviews:</u> Conducting interviews with key informants, identified as key stakeholders for shock responsive social protection.</p>	<p>Report (2-pages)</p>	<p>15 October 2024 (3 days)</p>
<p><u>Draft Report:</u> Preparation of a draft report in English (up to 30 pages), including key findings from the desk review and the key-informant interviews and two or three case studies on national response, including by the social protection system, to recent natural disasters such as floods and/or water scarcity.</p>	<p>Draft Report in English (up to 30 pages)</p>	<p>5 November 2024 (12 days)</p>
<p><u>Final report:</u> Preparation of Final Report and power presentation with key findings in English</p>	<p>Final Report and PPT</p>	<p>30 November 2024 (5 days)</p>