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International Briefing 1

# Capacity Building in Macedonia

Designing and implementing an in-service development  
programme for social welfare professionals

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## Introduction

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This briefing paper illustrates CELCIS' international work, and provides information about an exciting international collaboration, aimed at enhancing child welfare practice in Macedonia. The project provides an example of high-level collaboration as CELCIS worked with senior international consultants and the Government of Macedonia. Together the project team developed a framework for professional development that is rooted in the Macedonian context and informed by the highest standards of internationally-accepted social work practice. Drawing on previous experience, CELCIS staff developed an in-service curriculum aimed at all registered social service personnel in Macedonia.

CELCIS staff, working with Macedonian colleagues, undertook a wide-ranging 'training needs analysis' and consultation with key stakeholders. Following this they developed a curriculum and devised training tools and materials that now provide the foundation of a professional development framework for social workers, social pedagogues, psychologists, sociologists, and other professional staff throughout the country. The project was funded and monitored by UNICEF-Macedonia, who also provided interpretation and translation services.

The project team was led by Gary Westwater of *Westwater International Partnerships* (WIP). Gary is a social work manager with senior experience in both Scotland and south-east Europe. He has acted as a UNICEF consultant in many countries across the world. Dr. Irene Stevens from CELCIS led the development of the training materials based on her substantial professional and academic experience in Scotland and drawing on another project in the Republic of Vietnam. The team was also assisted by a national, Macedonia-based expert, to ensure that culturally-appropriate material was developed.

## A 'capacity-building' Project

The project was described in the UNICEF tender document as: *'Institutional and human capacity building for the Institute for Social Activity, Centres of Social Work and institutions for children in Macedonia'*. The project consisted of developing an in-service training curriculum for social protection and child care staff, plus training and development for key staff at the Institute for Social Activity (ISA). The project team were required to undertake the following (see below for explanation of acronyms):

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1. Conduct a training needs assessment targeting ISA, CSW and child care institutions' staff
2. Develop an in-service training curriculum targeting ISA, CSW and child care institutions' staff
3. Develop training tools and training manuals
4. Develop tools for monitoring the learning achievement of trainees
5. Provide training for ISA staff on the use of tools including the evaluation

## National Context

The Institute for Social Activity (ISA) is the government-funded, independent body responsible for the inspection of centres of social work in Macedonia; it is responsible to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. It also has a key role to play in terms of professional leadership, training and development of social work

services. Despite this wide and demanding remit there are only 14 ISA staff in total. They are drawn from the range of professions found in the Centres for Social Work and all of them have experience in delivering ad hoc in-service training. This capacity-building project is intended to strengthen ISA by providing a systemic and verifiable approach to training and the creation of high quality training resources. The project team developed training modules that will be used by ISA staff to train social work personnel. The project team therefore also delivered 'training of trainers' courses to ISA staff.

Centres of Social Work (CSW) are the offices where a range of professionals are based. There is one very large centre in Skopje, and smaller ones throughout the country - 30 in total. The social work centres have two main functions: a) social work b) the administration of cash benefits. Social work staff are involved in the assessment of individuals' eligibility for welfare cash benefits, such as for families with a disabled child; it has been recognised by the government that it is not desirable for trained social work staff to spend time in administering cash benefits and there are plans to separate these two functions into different organisations.

There are a large number of administrative staff within the CSWs, many involved in the administration of cash benefits. The centres also contain a number of different professional groups who work together; collectively they are referred to as 'social protection' staff:

social pedagogues

social workers  
psychologists  
sociologists  
lawyers  
'defectologists'

This latter group of staff work with people with disabilities and their families (the term 'defectologist' would be considered highly inappropriate in the UK and elsewhere; professionals in Macedonia are well aware of the outdated nature of this nomenclature and it is anticipated by them that the term will be modernised in the near future.) As it is the term which professionals in Macedonia use to describe themselves it will be used in this briefing.

**Institutions for children** Macedonia has a small number of government-run, large-scale institutions for children, including one for babies and infants - eight in total. There are plans to close them, and replace them with a mixture of small-scale residential, fostering and family-support services but progress is slow. Many of the staff in children's institutions are trained as social pedagogues. The Centres for Social Work are expected to develop fostering systems but progress here is also slow.

## Project Overview

The project team worked closely with national staff from UNICEF and ISA through extensive e-mail communication and sharing of materials at each stage of the project. The project team also initiated an Advisory Group drawn from a range of stakeholders who met to review progress and offer comment. WIP and CELCIS staff worked both in Scotland and in Macedonia. CELCIS personnel

contributed to the programme of visits during the life of the project, including the inception seminar, consultation events with ISA and other key stakeholders, all of which were facilitated by the provision of interpreters and, for the seminars, simultaneous translations.

The materials that were developed for this project used local, culturally-relevant literature and case scenarios, while also drawing on internationally-accepted standards of social work and recognised approaches to adult learning and professional development.

## The project was undertaken in the following stages:

1. Desk-based research and 'Inception seminar' to launch the project and start the audit of training needs.
2. Training Needs Audit (TNA) undertaken via questionnaire, and report produced.
3. Curriculum development - based on a set of professional standards. The curriculum is structured over 14 x 2-day modules. Programme consists of six 'Core' modules for all staff, and eight optional modules, two each for four specific groups of staff. Detailed participant and trainers' handbooks produced for each module. \*
4. System for monitoring the learning devised, and integrated with a new approach to professional supervision.
5. 'Training of Trainers' course - based on two of the modules - delivered to ISA staff, plus 'live supervision' of first delivery of modules.

A separate week was allocated for staff development for Directors of the Centres for Social Work and Directors of Institutions for children. These senior personnel are political appointments who may or may not have received relevant professional training. Whilst this presented a number of challenges the input was well-received and appeared to have significant impact. Final sessions saw members of the Project Team observe the staff of the Institute for Social Activity actually train staff from the Centres and from institutions - amounting to 'live supervision'.

\*The Handbooks were produced in English and translated under the auspices of UNICEF-Macedonia.

## Model of Training

From January 2012 all staff in the CSWs and institutions for children must join a professional register and be licensed. As part of their continuing registration workers will be required to undertake a minimum number of days of in-service training. ISA is responsible for providing professional development and training at a national level. The project focussed on the development of a standards-based in-service training and development programme for all social work and related professionals in Macedonia. The training is not intended to be comprehensive in terms of addressing major topics such as child protection, assessment or care-planning; rather, it was expected that the modules would be used with people who had already received a thorough professional grounding. Each module contains some detailed content on key topics to deepen the knowledge-base and enhance the skills of the participants; but the focus is on the integration of knowledge, reflection and practice skills

rather than simply on acquiring knowledge. The modules are designed to encourage participants to reflect critically on their own work and to consider ways of improving practice in key areas, such as communication skills, engaging with clients, or 'beneficiaries' as they are known in Macedonia.

## One-to-One Review (professional supervision)

A key aspect of the learning introduced through this project was the use of professional supervision (one-to-one review) as a vehicle for reviewing the training courses that workers had participated in. Professional supervision also provides an opportunity for evidence to be gathered about how learning has been applied in practice.

The concept of regular professional supervision for social workers is taught on university training courses in Macedonia; however, it is not well-developed in practice. The importance of supervision (or 'one-to-one review' as it was termed) was emphasised in the curriculum and training materials. The use of one-to-one supervision as a vehicle for monitoring and promoting learning was integrated into each module. This new approach to supervision was warmly welcomed by the staff at ISA and other senior personnel whom we consulted during the development of the project.

## Evidence of Learning

A key aspect of the design of the curriculum and the training materials is the concept of 'evidence' of learning. After attending a training course all participants are expected to produce written work to demonstrate that they have used and applied the learning from

the modules in their practice. Only once they have attended a 're-call' session, and provided written evidence of learning will they be eligible for the certificate awarded by ISA. These certificates will provide evidence of meeting the mandatory 'continuous professional development' requirement that has now been introduced for all social protection staff. Guidance and proforma are provided in the participants' handbook for each module. These give guidance as to the kind of 'evidence' that a participant might write to show how they have applied the learning. This could take the form of a case study of practice with a particular beneficiary around a specific issue, or it might include copies of assessment documents or other standardised material. The evidence could also take the form of a note of a one-to-one supervision session with a line manager where the training has been discussed in relation to a particular case. While the participant is required to write the evidence that they present, it must also be counter-signed by a manager or other person, potentially including 'beneficiaries', who can confirm or authenticate the practice that is being described.

### The Curriculum - the 14 modules

The content of the modules was derived from the responses to the Training Needs Audit and on the judgement of the project team in consultation with ISA and the Advisory group. They reflect key aspects of contemporary practice; in particular they encourage a rights-based, partnership approach to working with families.

#### CORE

- Module 1 - Promoting Equality and Valuing the Diversity of People
- Module 2 - Communicating with People
- Module 3 - Understanding the Needs of and Working with at-risk Children
- Module 4 - Engaging with Families
- Module 5 - Engaging with Communities
- Module 6 - Reflecting on Practice using One-to-One Review

#### CORE

- Module 7 - Therapeutic Activity Planning and Implementation
  - Module 8 - Social Group-work
- Modules 7 & 8 are aimed primarily at staff within the institutions for children

- Module 9 - Care Management
- Module 10 - Assessing the Needs of Beneficiaries

Modules 9 & 10 are aimed primarily at staff in CSWs

- Module 11 - Managing One-to-One Review and Continuing Professional Development
- Module 12 - Management Skills in Social Protection

Modules 11 & 12 - are aimed primarily at Managers of CSWs and institutions

- Module 13 - Planning, Managing and Monitoring Continuing Professional Development
- Module 14 - Delivering Learning and Development

Modules 13 & 14 are aimed at ISA staff and senior trainers

## The Handbooks

The development of the module handbooks constituted a major part of the project; for each module a participants' and a trainers' handbook was produced. The participant handbooks are substantial documents of between 40 and 80 pages for each module. The handbooks include the module timetable, principles of learning, detailed content with reference to sources, full explanations of various individual and groupwork tasks, and proformas for providing written evidence of learning. The handbooks also include appendices containing copies of PowerPoint presentations and other key materials.

The trainers' handbooks are very similar to the participants' handbooks, containing all the material that participants have plus some specific points of guidance for delivering each item of training.

## Conclusion

All of the component parts of the project were successfully delivered within challenging timescales and have been warmly welcomed by practitioners in Macedonia. During the project there were occasions when different understandings of key concepts around training emerged; however, these were resolved through careful dialogue and preparedness on the part of the project team to revise materials in the light of feedback. CELCIS staff have learned a lot including the need to check mutual expectations and shared understanding of the project process. The use of e-mail and telephone conferences proved helpful. In-country visits were subject to detailed planning in order to facilitate the best use of time and UNICEF staff played a key role here. We believe that the overall partnership approach and

similar materials could be developed for use in many other countries.

At its conclusion the project team received very positive feedback from UNICEF and ISA staff. The team were thanked for their enthusiasm and capacity for working in partnership with their Macedonian colleagues. The 'training of trainers' event was also positively evaluated and ISA staff were very enthusiastic about the new materials that had been developed. Similarly the focus on reflective practice and the structured use of supervision was felt to be an approach which they could introduce as they undertook training of staff in all the Centres for Social Work.

## Contact

Anyone interested in exploring the possibility of drawing on CELCIS' experience in training and development should contact Dr. Ian Milligan, lead officer for International projects at CELCIS.

Westwater International Partnerships is a consultancy service led by Gary Westwater with extensive experience in areas such as social service development, NGO capacity-building, government decentralisation, post-crisis intervention, protecting children's rights, deinstitutionalisation and juvenile justice.

## About CELCIS

CELCIS is the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland. Together with partners, we are working to improve the lives of all looked after children in Scotland. We do so by providing a focal point for the sharing of knowledge and the development of best practice, by providing a wide range of services to improve the skills of those working with looked after children, and by placing the interests of children at the heart of our work.

## For more information

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