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DETERMINANTS ANALYSIS AND THEORY OF CHANGE ON ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN BULGARIA

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IN BULGARIA**

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VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN BULGARIA

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Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Conceptual Framework	3
3. Methodology	5
4. Analysis	6
4.1. General Description of Domains as Applied to the Issue of Violence Against Children.....	6
4.2. Definitions, Outcome Indicators & Measures for Monitoring Change	13
4.3. Bottlenecks/Challenges to the Prevention/Intervention of Violence Against Children	17
4.4. Opportunities and Promising Practices.....	26
5. Summary and Areas of Influence	33
5.1 Modifiable areas of influence	35
6. Supporting the Building Blocks for Change: Using Theory of Change Concepts to Promote System Development and Quality Improvement in Responding to Violence Against Children.....	37
References	41

1. Introduction

Violence against children has enormous consequences for a Nations' present and future by limiting the opportunities, vision and social and emotional wellbeing of its citizens. Bulgaria has been addressing the issue of violence against children (VAC) at multiple levels to support prevention, early intervention and treatment with partners at multiple levels of government, civil society, academia, and professionals. This assignment focused on providing support for UNICEF and the Governmental structures involved in advancing current efforts aimed at improving the system response to violence against children in Bulgaria.

2. Conceptual Framework

For the purposes of this report, the concepts of child care, child welfare and child protection will be differentiated as this is a critical point of influence when considering systemic change. Child care refers to the point of upbringing; Child Welfare refers to child well-being as a whole within society and is framed from a child rights perspective; and Child Protection refers to particular cases of risk for which intervention on behalf of children by state structures would be necessary based on applicable legislation.

In order for an effective child protection system to function it is necessary to address three important and inter-related factors: structures, professional ideology, and culture (Gilbert, 2011). For example, culture influences political philosophy that influences structures, including resource allocation and support. Therefore, it is imperative to determine the particular approach to child protection that is implemented within a society from a systems perspective. Historically there have been two main approaches: child protection, which is more of a remedial/intervention approach; and family service which relies on a family support model of prevention. Interestingly, no differences have been found in the rate of children being placed outside of the home between the two systems (Freymond & Cameron, 2006). Gilbert, Parton, & Skivenes, 2011 (p.255) illustrate a more recent trend that includes a third option: Child Focused. Their comprehensive chart below outlines these comparisons to provide further clarity:

	Child Focus	Family Service	Child Protection
Driver for Intervention	The individual child's needs in a present and future perspective; society's need for healthy and contributory citizens	The family unit needs assistance	Родителите negliжират и проявяват насилие към децата (малтретиране)
Role of the State/ Government	Paternalistic/ defamilialization: State assumes parent role but seeks to re-familialize child by foster home/kinship care/adoption	Parental support; the state seeks to strengthen family relations	Наказания: държавата действа като „пазител“, за да гарантира безопасността на детето
Problem Frame	Child's development and unequal outcomes for children	Social/psychological (system, poverty, racism, etc.)	Индивидуалистична/ моралистична
Mode of Intervention	Early intervention and regulatory/need assessment	Therapeutic/ needs assessment	Законова/ разследваща
Aim of Intervention	Promote well-being via social investment and/ or equal opportunity	Prevention/ social bonding	Закрила/намаляване на вредата
State-parent relationship	Substitutive/partnership	Partnership	Конфликтни
Balance of rights	Children's rights/ parents' responsibility	Parents' rights to family life mediated by professional social workers	Правата на децата/ родителите осигурявани със законови средства

(Gilbert, Parton, & Skivenes, 2011, p.255)

There are four areas to consider when determining the model that fits a particular cultural context:

- 1) Societal conceptions of children and families (how does the public think about children/families?);
- 2) Everyday living realities for families (what are the common issues facing families);
- 3) Congruence (do policies and professional responses align with those realities and the expectations of service users?); and
- 4) Authority and Collaboration (is there a balance between support for families and the coercive power of the state?) (Freymond & Cameron, 2006, p.290).

Furthermore, according to Gilbert, Parton & Skivenes (2011), all child protection systems face common challenges such as:

- 1) operating under conditions of intense public scrutiny, including challenges to qualifications and quality of front-line professionals (which creates challenges in recruitment and retention);
- 2) as a result, increased emphasis has been placed on legalistic and systemic thinking in most child welfare systems, including the addition of more evidence-based tools (measures) and procedural methods/manuals; and

- 3) growing recognition of the issue posed by racial and ethnic disparities in child welfare systems. (p.251)

Regardless, an ideal system is one in which violence against children is easily recognized and identified by most individuals, and responded to by a system of professionals who work towards protecting the child and preventing further violence against all children.

3. Methodology

Data was collected through multiple sources and focused around a site visit by the consultant from July 4 – 12, 2014. Key documents provided to the consultant by UNICEF and its partners on VAC-related activities were reviewed prior to the site visit to inform a set of interview questions and determine areas of exploration. An in-country visit was conducted from July 7 – 11, 2014 and consisted of visits to various local service agencies and Ministries. Key stakeholders were interviewed at each location. Additional documents were identified as part of the qualitative interviews and were reviewed post-visit. A list of all documents reviewed and notations made is attached as Appendix A.

The project methodology drew on the Determinants Analysis Framework put forth by UNICEF, which identifies key aspects of a programme's planning and operations that are tied to specific factors related to:

- 1) the enabling environment,
- 2) supply of appropriate and necessary resources;
- 3) demand for services and outcomes, and
- 4) issues of quality.

Within these various factors are sub-categories that a programme review is to consider in assessing the overall functioning of the system.

Observations and interview notes were combined with the findings of the document review to provide the basis for an initial Determinants Analysis which was then presented in draft to all stakeholders interviewed, followed by a second in-country visit that resulted in a workshop to review the Determinants Analysis and incorporate further feedback. Data from those sources were used to populate the tables and framework presented below.

During the site visits and briefing meetings with UNICEF, the consultant was able to assess the current state of the system, establish what relationships exist between various organizations, roles and individuals operating within the system, and identify key bottlenecks, gaps and areas of strength within the operations and structures to support VAC programming in the country. A list of organizations consulted and the interview guide used to frame questions is in Appendix B. An overview of the results of the workshops and training delivered during the second in-country visit is provided in Appendix C.

4. Analysis

The following charts have been created to present the Determinants Analysis in a coherent fashion that begins with an understanding of the issue within each categoric domain, followed by a description of indicators and measures, leading to the recognition of bottlenecks and identification of promising practices and future focus for UNICEF.

The tables below provide data that adhere to the Determinants Analysis along with the definitions and inclusion criteria. The first table provides a general overview of the findings, while the following sections reflect the specific criteria outlined in the Determinants Analysis framework. Italicized quotes come directly from interview and workshop participants and are designed to provide context.

4.1. General Description of Domains as Applied to the Issue of Violence Against Children

Domains	Determinants	Description
Enabling Environment (social, political, budgetary, and institutional determinants necessary to achieve results for children)	Social Norms (context-specific rules/behaviours that members of a community follow in the belief that others expect them to do so)	<p>A social history of years spent under communism has left valid residual concerns of Governmental control over family life and a lingering sense of social injustice and lack of trust in State systems (such as Justice and Health care). These are important ideologies to be sensitive to when considering a child protection system that relies on members of the public to ‘report their neighbours’ for the abuse of children. These experiences have also been attributed to statements regarding a ‘culture of punishment’ in society.</p> <p>Social norms in Bulgaria are beginning to shift away from acceptance of violence against children in any form, although bullying and corporal punishment are still widespread. A recent survey funded by Oak Foundation found that 39% of parents in Bulgaria said they would hit their children. Researchers believed this was low and would be higher in reality (other sources have cited 68% in favour of corporal punishment) indicating that possibly participants were responding to social desirability norms indicating an understanding that hitting children is socially unacceptable. According to the SACP’s analysis, 77.4% of VAC cases originate within the family environment. Likely related to inappropriate care/discipline. This study also indicated that within one year child protection measures increased by 22% - a sign that attitudes are changing and the system is responding.</p> <p>A recent campaign to raise awareness of child abuse ‘Making the Invisible Visible’ was carried out by UNICEF, however awareness of the salience of the issue continues to be brought up as a key issue among those that are interviewed, suggesting another public awareness campaign could be timely.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Description
		<p>Although there have been several media based public service announcements (e.g. UNICEF Campaign “A Family for Every Child” and SAPI’s “Bad Touch” Campaign (http://www.canee.net/bulgaria/bad_touch_campaign_in_bulgaria), & Good Parent, Good Start Campaign (http://www.canee.net/files/Outcome%20of%20the%20campaign%20Protect%20me%20I%20small%20in%20Bulgaria.pdf) supported by Oak Foundation), there continues to be a need to educate the general public about violence against children – as well as child development, for example many participants advised that a current social belief system is that children often lie.</p> <p>In addition, VAC cases reported in the Media continue to be problematic as they are most often focused on finding some party guilty – usually it’s the social workers involved – either guilty for doing nothing or for doing too much.</p>
	<p>Legislation / Policy (encompasses laws, legal bodies, judicial decision-making – sets of principles and long-term goals forming the basis of making rules and guidelines to direction overall planning and development)</p>	<p>A number of key legislative and policy components are in place that are deemed pivotal to an effective system to prevent violence against children. These include: The Social Assistance Act, The Social Insurance Code, The Law for Family Allowances and Benefits, The Law for the Integration of People with Disabilities, The Child Protection Act, Juvenile Justice Act, Protection Against Domestic Violence Act, National Strategy: ‘Vision for Deinstitutionalisation of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria’ Policy Document, National strategy on prevention of violence 2012-2014, National child Strategy 2008-2018, and the National Plan for Prevention of Child Abuse 2012-2014. The latter two documents have key operational goals and activities designed to secure the well-being of children in Bulgaria and to protect them from violence/abuse.</p> <p>Children’s issues are covered in several legislative acts, which becomes problematic at the point of implementation since they aren’t synchronized and currently the Criminal Code overrules civil matters such as child protection. In addition, many professionals lack the necessary awareness and training on the available legislation to ensure compliance and best practice approaches.</p> <p>Among the aspirations of some working in the Juvenile Justice sector is the opportunity to be given a chance to propose a broader range of measures for young offenders, including a legislation change.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Description
		<p>Recently a Coordinating Mechanism has been implemented by the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP). To date, ten agencies have signed on and it has been implemented at the local level in every municipality. This mechanism includes annual monitoring using a specific tool kit that provides education and information (using information cards) to organizations as well as conducting scheduled and targeted investigations (on site as well as using survey materials to gather feedback) at the institutional level. They have been able to produce a current map of efficiency for the areas involved. Annual Monitoring Reports are available. This is also the body responsible for implementing consequences (fines) for non-compliance with reporting legislation. The staff at SACP have cited immediate impact of this practice as being very effective in promoting change.</p> <p>There currently is no national child protection registry – but other initiatives prove the government has the capability. Currently case management guidelines exist for CPDs however, implementation practices remain unclear. In addition, there continue to be concerns about the low enforcement rate of the Domestic Violence Act which would also need to be understood in order to attempt change.</p>
	<p>Budget / Expenditure (allocation and disbursement of required resources that are critical to achieve desired results)</p>	<p>In every conversation with stakeholders, the issue of lack of resources to optimize responses to violence against children came up repeatedly as a significant barrier, including lack of sufficient remuneration of social workers and basic resources to ensure their effectiveness (for example, operational expenses such as printer paper and toner). However, there have been significant investments in social structures (the new child protection system is an example of this) but there is a continuous need to develop more effective means of supporting a growing social programme.</p> <p>Numerous social services exist within the country. One of the largest NGOs providing services for children victims of violence is Animus with 75-80 staff working across all services with an annual budget of ½ million Euros. One promising Post-graduate qualification partnership between Animus and a University Social Work Faculty was discontinued because it was not financially viable, but may have been an important avenue for providing opportunities for practical training for students.</p> <p>There are family allowances centralized under the Social Assistance Act (2003) and administered by the Agency for Social Assistance (ASA)</p>

Domains	Determinants	Description
	<p>Management / Coordination (main and measurable manifestations to assess and monitor good governance to enable provision of essential services)</p>	<p>The current system is spread across jurisdictions with roles played by social workers, healthcare, education, criminal justice and law enforcement officials.</p> <p>The Child Protection Directorate of the Agency for Social Assistance (ASA) functions to methodologically assist the Child Protection Departments (CPDs). There are territorial units at the municipal level which exist to investigate/follow up on all reports and are responsible for convening the Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) each time there is a signal/report; ideally within 24 hours. CPD reported that of 35,409 signals about children at risk, 3605 of these cases were verified. (The context of this would require deeper analysis to ensure that cases are not being missed due to unskilled interviewing skills or other identification issue.)</p> <p>The Ministry of Interior Child Crime Section oversees the work of 300 field officers dealing with child crime prevention, monitoring children who have already committed offenses and the protection of children. They have special rooms in some of the stations for providing the protection of children. Certain criteria are involved: the child must be a victim of crime (or immediate risk that child may be involved in crime) or when child is lost, in helpless state or child has been left unattended.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education and Science has a department that oversees children considered at risk and they involve CPS if these children are being neglected or require support from social services. They also participate in the coordination mechanism that includes the MDTs for cases of violence against children.</p> <p>Children’s Council of the SACP involves 28 children, each participating from one of 28 regions. The Children’s Council meets several times per year, results of which are published on the SACP website.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Description
<p>Supply (actual operational capacity of the relevant instructions, actors and systems accountable for provision of services)</p>	<p>Availability of essential materials (necessary for provision of services to children – includes adequate and essential stocks at ‘service delivery points’)</p>	<p>National Network for Children is an Umbrella organization overseeing all NGOs (124) working on supporting children which indicates there are a network of services for families, even if these are limited.</p> <p>Some examples of available services: Day centers for children with disabilities, shelters for street children, street children centers, community support centres (CSCs), Mother and Baby Units (MBUs), personal assistants to children, Crisis Centers, Centers for Social Rehabilitation and Integration (CSRI), Temporary Placement Homes (TPH) and Sheltered Homes (SH).</p> <p>Animus Association is responsible for the National Child Helpline and have developed the line quite well and are experiencing an increase in the number of calls each year. Currently there are more than 300 calls per day (which is particularly significant given that there is apparently no advertising of this service). Currently the waiting time is 10mins and can be up to 15-30 minutes depending on demand. Forty percent of calls relate to Roma children, which may mean this is the most accessible service to this population. They are seeing an alarming rise in these children not being able to speak Bulgarian (Roma or Turkish only). They also provide a trauma centre (serves 50 children per year), a crisis centre and social services centre. Animus also manages a Community Support Center and a Mother & Baby Unit (MBU) servicing 200 children per month and their families (Sofia location only). They also provide 4-5 professional trainings per year and supervision support.</p> <p>Shumen is one of the areas UNICEF is running programmes in and (they are in 3 out of 28 regions in the country) two examples are:</p> <p>1) Maternal home visiting service consists of three ‘packages’ of services:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Universal service – generally common service provided to all of the families 2. Service for women with specific problems: for example difficulties with breastfeeding, etc. and service will be provided as long as the issue persists. 3. Extra service: where visits are more intense – mostly with high risk and vulnerable groups and usually require other institutions to get involved – (joint meetings etc.) Service may include extra visits, up to twice a day. <p>Currently 1500 families are enrolled in this programme.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Description
		<p>2) Family Counselling Centres (FCC) were opened at the end of 2011 and located close to local Roma communities. The centres focus on children from 0-3 years as part of an effort to prevent abandonment (de-institutionalization) as part of the UNICEF Project: Family for Every Child. They have been very successful, “we can close the gates to institutionalization” reducing infants in the home from 107 to just 8. Working with communities where neglect is very common as well as early marriage (another form of abuse towards 12-14 year old girls). “This issue of ‘children giving birth to children’ has the consequence of very mentally unwell young women – especially in the Roma community”. In addition, violence against women (VAW) is rampant and the dominant position of the mother-in-law in these families increases the risk of perpetuating unhealthy ‘traditional’ childcare practices (such as salination - the packing of babies in salt). There continues to be a notable lack of sufficient (both voluntary and professional) foster care options. However, kinship care is being actively used which can be a positive sign for children when those families can provide optimal environments.</p>
	<p>Access to adequately staffed services, facilities and information (physical access of targeted population to services, facilities and information points/ persons – includes qualified staff)</p>	<p>Both of the above referenced services are particularly unique and effective because of their mobility, allowing them to go directly into the home and often are the ‘first contact in 90% of cases’. There was an expressed need for close collaboration with local CPD due to severity of cases.</p>
<p>Demand (reflects geographic, financial, social and cultural factors that facilitate/hinder the target population from benefiting from the services)</p>	<p>Financial access (affordability of services to the target population – includes direct (fees) and indirect (transportation) barriers)</p>	<p>Bulgaria’s current social service system is supported by the government, donors and other agencies and do not charge for their use. Private options for additional treatment exist, but may be out of reach for some because of costs; particularly for those with low income.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Description
	<p>Cultural practices and beliefs (recognized social roles and responsibilities – assumptions about cause and effect – that may impact desired outcomes/ changes)</p>	<p><i>“Whatever happens the CPD is guilty. Feeds directly into the culture of punishment despite evidence that punishment doesn’t usually work – this is partly the historical context of past communism and current economic difficulties”.</i></p> <p>This ‘culture of punishment’ facilitates the belief that children involved in the Juvenile Justice system deserve whatever happens to them there – they are not seen as victims. It also facilitates a harsh environment towards child protection departments – they either don’t do enough or they do too much.</p>
	<p>Continuity of use (a measure of the full and adequate utilization of services/ adoption of practices)</p>	<p>UNICEF’s Family for Every Child Project has illustrated an effective approach to deinstitutionalization, and clearly services such as FCC, Maternal Home Visiting and MBUs are gaining in popularity. Increasing calls to the National Child Helpline also indicate an increased awareness and willingness to intervene in the best interests of children. The response to these cases is coordinated in the initial stages on a short-term basis.</p>
<p>Quality</p>	<p>Quality (refers to compliance with minimum standards that are defined through national/international norms for effective service)</p>	<p>International Standards (e.g. Convention of the Rights of the Child) and the translation of these into National and local standards. It was deemed important to consider that in many scenarios the standards are there, but adherence to them is low. Would recommend increasing standards for social work training (which would result in improved outcomes for children, the organization as a whole and the reputation of social workers)</p> <p>Current attempts to involve voices of children in these processes is promising (e.g. Children’s Council of SACP)</p> <p>The overall quality of service is variable. Some examples include Shumen where a coordinated approach appears to be yielding positive results – at least it is perceived to be effective by workers in different regions.</p> <p>A client complaint/appeals process is also available which is an important component to an effective service – however, how this process has been implemented is currently unclear.</p>

4.2. Definitions, Outcome Indicators & Measures for Monitoring Change

The following section includes the specific definitions, outcome indicators and measures associated with the system as it is currently structured and as reflected in the Determinants Analysis.

Domains	Determinants	Definitions	Outcome Indicators	Measures
<p>Enabling Environment (social, political, budgetary, and institutional determinants necessary to achieve results for children)</p>	<p>Social Norms (context-specific rules/behaviours that members of a community follow in the belief that others expect them to do so)</p>	<p>Prevailing attitudes toward VAC and the role of various support systems in place.</p>	<p>Reported attitude changes to VAC-related activities such as corporal punishment, emotional abuse, neglect,</p>	<p>Public opinion surveys Review of the literature Interviews with public and professionals reflecting attitudes, beliefs and observed practices Media reports which provide indications of public protest/support on matters of public policy related to VAC (such as child abuse legislation, professionalization of social workers etc.) Database monitoring to illustrate rates of reporting for example</p>
	<p>Legislation / Policy (encompasses laws, legal bodies, judicial decision-making – sets of principles and long-term goals forming the basis of making rules and guidelines to direct overall planning and development)</p>	<p>Current legislation or regulatory frameworks to support child protection, facilitation of treatment and early intervention, and educational supports for students integrating fully into society.</p>	<p>Introduction of new legislation (or changes to current), policies and procedures to support VAC prevention, early intervention and treatment Increased # of reports in the media, and public statements by public officials in support of existing policies and laws and denouncing VAC.</p>	<p>Governance documents, legal statutes and existing laws and policies. Annual Monitoring Reports of SACP Coordination Mechanism.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Definitions	Outcome Indicators	Measures
	Budget / Expenditure (allocation and disbursement of required resources that are critical to achieve desired results)	Current budgeted funds to support child welfare programming and protections across the various service streams such as police, education, child welfare, and healthcare. In particular increased family/ child allowances to promote the wellbeing of children in impoverished families.	Adoption of budgetary measures to support VAC programmes – including family support and child protection models of intervention. Amount of funds allocated to VAC programming (and related increase, decrease, percentage of overall budget)	Budgetary forms. Lower rates of child poverty. Corresponding lower rates of child maltreatment are generally seen with increased public spending on family support.
	Management / Coordination (main and measurable manifestations to assess and monitor good governance to enable provision of essential services)	Governance mechanisms in place to support essential services and coordinate care and service provision between different providers	Coordination mechanisms are functioning. Active partnerships exist in the shared responsibility towards the wellbeing of children in the community	Service agreements including terms of reference. Joint statements of intent. Annual Monitoring Reports of SACP Coordination Mechanism. Annual report of CPD.
Supply (actual operational capacity of the relevant instructions, actors and systems accountable for provision of services)	Availability of essential materials (necessary for provision of services to children – includes adequate and essential stocks at ‘service delivery points’)	Fundamental services are available and able to be delivered in an adequate manner.	Self-reported inventory of key assets and tools. Wait lists (or lack thereof), adequate placements for children within the system – and timely processes for those placements.	Survey data, observation. Monitoring of service needs (e.g. wait lists and placement times)

Domains	Determinants	Definitions	Outcome Indicators	Measures
	<p>Access to adequately staffed services, facilities and information (physical access of targeted population to services, facilities and information points/persons – includes qualified staff)</p>	<p>Availability for citizens to access services in their community and receive the appropriate care, information and related services.</p>	<p>Reported education levels, comparison with international standards / recommended best practices. Increased literacy levels. Adequate supply of needed specialists in each discipline.</p>	<p>National survey data. Client Satisfaction Questionnaires. Professional standards/ qualifications for staff.</p>
<p>Demand (reflects geographic, financial, social and cultural factors that facilitate/hinder the target population from benefiting from the services)</p>	<p>Financial access (affordability of services to the target population – includes direct (fees) and indirect (transportation) barriers)</p>	<p>Affordability of services for the public. Consideration of services being made within appropriate financial reach of families.</p>	<p>Client feedback/ self-report as well as indicators tracked within community agencies. Client access to services.</p>	<p>National survey data. Client satisfaction questionnaires. Programme usage rates.</p>
	<p>Cultural practices and beliefs (recognized social roles and responsibilities – assumptions about cause and effect – that may impact desired outcomes/ changes)</p>	<p>Cultural practices are defined as actions that are repeated, shared with others in a social group, and invested with normative expectations and with meanings or significances that go beyond the immediate goals of the action. (Miller & Goodnow, 1995).</p>	<p>Professional and public self-reported attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and knowledge about VAC Media reports and commentary.</p>	<p>CPD data, such as reported incidents of violence against children; # charges laid; #visits by social services; #families engaged with social services with VAC issues; #children in care</p>

Domains	Determinants	Definitions	Outcome Indicators	Measures
	Continuity of use (a measure of the full and adequate utilization of services/adoption of practices)	Service usage, attitudinal changes, professional compliance with standards.	Adoption of budgetary measures to support VAC programmes Amount of funds allocated to VAC programming (and related increase/decrease in percentage of overall budget) Service usage, attitudinal changes, professional compliance with standards.	Things to look for in the future would be changes in the openness to home visitors, increased reporting rates, usage rates for services like FCC and MBUs. Ability to recruit higher quality social workers. Perceived value of social workers goes up. Attitudinal changes towards children's rights/ perceptions of childhood
Quality	Quality (refers to compliance with minimum standards that are defined through national/international norms for effective service)	Perceived value for resources, comparative effectiveness with known standards of care and treatment.	Standardized practices including protocols, guidelines, manuals for intervention etc.	Reported outcomes; recidivism rate for violence; decline in VAC-related incidents; increased levels of validation of cases due to increased skills in engagement and forensic interviewing for example.

4.3. Bottlenecks/Challenges to the Prevention/Intervention of Violence Against Children

The key bottlenecks identified within the system are reflected in the table below. Details from the review are presented with reference to specific points, including direct quotes, where possible to anchor the data to the Determinants Analysis.

Domains	Determinants	Bottlenecks/Challenges
<p>Enabling Environment (social, political, budgetary, and institutional determinants necessary to achieve results for children)</p>	<p>Social Norms (context-specific rules/behaviours that members of a community follow in the belief that others expect them to do so)</p>	<p><i>“It will require a whole lot of political will to put children on the agenda. We don’t have the culture of listening to the child.”</i></p> <p>Building trust in children – that they know things, that they don’t lie, that they are individuals – not possessions. Lack of mechanisms in social services and the courts to address the child’s best interests. The way the child is seen as part of the family system needs to be improved. They are too often pitted against each other.</p> <p>Definition of violence continues to be problematic because not everyone holds the same opinion of what VAC is. Participants repeatedly called for more work on public awareness of VAC, in particular the more difficult ones to recognize, such as neglect. Social norms have shifted considerably in the past decade toward a greater understanding of VAC, although more is still needed. Participants interviewed continued to mention the need to increase the overall awareness of the prevalence of the issue and for the public to recognize VAC as an important component. However, participants also pointed to the need to educate other professionals, particularly in education, the police and criminal justice fields.</p> <p><i>“Some areas are like Medieval villages – the CPD knows these areas well”</i> This statement by staff from a large service organization opposes decentralization of CPDs due to a believe that it won’t help address issues within particular geographical areas.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Bottlenecks/Challenges
	<p>Legislation / Policy (encompasses laws, legal bodies, judicial decision-making – sets of principles and long-term goals forming the basis of making rules and guidelines to direct overall planning and development)</p>	<p><i>“We need to mobilize the state institutions to do their job, instead of calling it culture/tradition”</i> (agency staff talking about the need to prosecute child marriage)</p> <p>Children’s issues are covered in several legislative acts, which becomes problematic at the point of implementation since they aren’t synchronized and currently the Criminal Code overrules civil matters such as child protection. In addition, many professionals lack the necessary awareness and training on the available legislation to ensure compliance and best practice approaches. Judges desire a broader range of measures for young offenders. This refers to a legislation change but it’s not impossible. Potential legislative amendments would require quorum and agreement, which is problematic. Statistics and practice evidence illustrate that those who experience abuse often become perpetrators of violence themselves. Ultimately placement of young offenders in correctional facilities is something to be avoided if possible. Penalties or sentences are very narrow in terms of diversity. Probation sentences are also possible but very limited/scarce.</p> <p>There is a desire to see some social service type of follow up after sentencing as a preventative measure.</p> <p>Training for lawyers in child protection issues would be helpful.</p> <p>Police are hesitant to issue child protection orders which indicates a training issue as well.</p> <p>Concerns that there is not a “whistle blowing mechanism” for children in conflict with the law before they reach the age of liability. These children are often known to police for years before reaching the age of liability – they send reports to juvenile delinquency committee (JDC) which has a CPD representative; suggesting that this is a missed opportunity for early intervention and prevention. Currently there are no statistics to see how effective the JDC’s are.</p> <p>DV Act is not being implemented to effectively remove perpetrators from the home before victims are removed.</p> <p>Lengthy court processes also seen as problematic.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Bottlenecks/Challenges
		<p>Social Workers from CPD aren't recognized as an authority – the system is very young and they haven't had time to build reputation and authority. They don't even have legal support (necessary for all the legal work of child protection); for example, filling out applications to restrict parental rights. Some CP units do have legal consultants – but not everywhere.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about the approximately 280 children currently residing in Juvenile Justice (JJ) centres - placed there based on juvenile delinquency committees – which are at the local level. These kids remain essentially unprotected and they are experiencing violence daily but have no support. Most people think these children should be there and deserve everything that happens to them (as part of this culture of punishment mentality), which makes further change problematic.</p>
	<p>Budget / Expenditure (allocation and disbursement of required resources that are critical to achieve desired results)</p>	<p><i>“Prevention is not a priority – there is no sustainable funding.”</i></p> <p>The police have such a low budget – no staff or resources to do their jobs – SAD have severe limits – CPD has shortage of staff (“They don't have a car – they use the car of the SAD and often they don't have gas for the car!”)</p> <p>Throughout the interviews numerous successful/ promising programmes were mentioned as having been discontinued without ongoing funding.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Bottlenecks/Challenges
	<p>Management / Coordination (main and measurable manifestations to assess and monitor good governance to enable provision of essential services)</p>	<p><i>“Structurally everything is in place but practically it’s not working”</i></p> <p>MDTs are theoretically required to meet within 24 hours of a report/signal. Feedback from stakeholders on this was mixed with their being some doubt whether or not this is happening realistically in practice in all locations. It would seem that even if it functions now, upon an expected increase in reporting (which would coincide with any public education campaign) would create a certain bottleneck here as well. Already concerns were raised about the lack of involvement by key sectors – notably health and education members. Coinciding with concerns that intersectoral cooperation is very low between health, education and social services. Bottlenecks have been noted to take place throughout the system, particularly with respect to reporting. As noted each of the different strands of service appear to have different reporting mechanisms, forms, protocols and procedures and there is no systematic means for comparison or communication between them. An example of the CPD finding out about a case through the media before the report came from the Police is an example of a challenge in communication protocols and administrative processes related to reporting. This was further confirmed when members of the education sector indicated that often they try to resolve cases of VAC within the school setting without reporting it to CPDs. Despite being aware of the mandate to report, it was believed that the CPDs don’t respond and therefore teachers give up and take matters into their own hands.</p> <p>The system is currently not structured in a manner that provides coordinating authority for any one group or the responsibility to conduct follow-up assessments or progress reports across the system. Education, criminal justice, healthcare and child welfare services all operate independently and have their own systems for reporting and filing documentation. As a result of this cases get lost or do not get referred appropriately, there are unnecessary and long delays for children receiving appropriate care, or cases get lost altogether. Clearly written commitments/roles of every stakeholder in the process is being developed to improve communications.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Bottlenecks/Challenges
<p>Supply (actual operational capacity of the relevant instructions, actors and systems accountable for provision of services)</p>	<p>Availability of essential materials (necessary for provision of services to children – includes adequate and essential stocks at ‘service delivery points’)</p>	<p>There was a noted concern about the lack of available services – and in some cases, lack of information about available services (therapy and respite, and places for children to go), as well as the capacity of social workers and other professionals in recognizing and intervening with abuse cases. Deinstitutionalization continues to have an impact as the need for crisis spaces and longer-term homes for children remains challenging within the system. There is a diverse group of children requiring an array of services who continue to put pressure on the system. It’s still hard to identify the target group: children who can be returned home with supportive intervention versus those children who need to be permanently removed.</p> <p>The definition of VAC includes physical, psychological and sexual abuse – including prostitution and trafficking, and neglect. Crisis centres can be effective but when it comes to intervention, deadlines for placement require attention. For example, the duration of stay is supposed to be 3 months but it according to those working in the system it is almost impossible to complete the administrative components in order to support an exit to a more appropriate placement for a child within that time frame. “When the service extends beyond 3 months it’s really not a crisis centre – it becomes an institution.”</p> <p>Throughout the interviews with staff across settings, concerns were raised about the availability of the necessary resources to support a complement of trained, qualified staff to address VAC concerns. For example: In one locality, there is only one police officer for several villages – they have limited hours of work – they have no cars – no gas – there is a real risk to the social workers involved – no protection from perpetrator threats, which are often very real. Social workers are key ingredients but they need resources. Workers don’t have basic resources to do their jobs – training, supervision etc. There were also concerns of basic infrastructure issues raised such as not having enough toner or even paper to print reports etc.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Bottlenecks/Challenges
	<p>Access to adequately staffed services, facilities and information (physical access of targeted population to services, facilities and information points/ persons – includes qualified staff)</p>	<p><i>“You only give power to people who are highly qualified – this is why they are [referring to social workers] in the middle of nowhere in this profession/ system”.</i></p> <p>Participants reported social workers as being overworked, undervalued and disrespected within the system. Low pay, low prestige, high workload combined with low entry-level education of those that are within the system has created a series of problems for the profession working within the child protection system. CPD cited statistics of 35,409 reports handled by 835 social workers and there is no standard workload limit in place. Trainings are organized at a central level and appear to be problematic in terms of reach so concerns about who gets what training, coupled with high turnover rates makes for problematic issues. Lack of formalized supervision processes is also an issue. Currently social service work is seen as a low status profession. It is difficult to attract and retain talented service staff.</p> <p>One example was provided that there are 12 crisis centres operating within 28 regions – none of which have specialists trained to do expert medical assessments on violence against children cases. The National Helpline consider themselves as a door to the CP system but don't have the right software to keep track of child's history – don't have a proper filing system.</p> <p>The healthcare sector is not facilitating the work either as issues of mothers with mental health issues was repeated. Children are being harmed because of an inability to access much needed mental health services for women. Example of recent case of post-partum psychosis was provided to illustrate the participant's viewpoint.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Bottlenecks/Challenges
<p>Demand (reflects geographic, financial, social and cultural factors that facilitate/hinder the target population from benefiting from the services)</p>	<p>Financial access (affordability of services to the target population – includes direct (fees) and indirect (transportation) barriers)</p>	<p><i>“My dream is to not see starving children when I do home visits”.</i></p> <p>The current welfare system is per person/family – and allowances are not enough to manage basic needs. Although most services are of low or no cost, which does not present a barrier to parents, however the limited funds to support the needed specialist professionals in the field does limit some access to families.</p> <p>This growing poverty contributes to the lack of parental capacity to respond to and meet children’s needs. In addition, high rates of illiteracy as well as the lack of documentation (ID papers) for people hinders their ability to obtain government support (family allowances) and services (possibly health care and education) all considered protective factors in the prevention of VAC.</p>
	<p>Cultural practices and beliefs (recognized social roles and responsibilities – assumptions about cause and effect – that may impact desired outcomes/changes)</p>	<p>A recent campaign to raise awareness of child abuse ‘Making the Invisible Visible’ was carried out by UNICEF, however awareness of the salience of the issue continued to be brought up as a key issue among those interviewed, suggesting another public awareness campaign could be timely.</p> <p>There has recently been a backlash against the children’s rights act – a vocal group of parent associations protested parent’s rights against child rights and state involvement in personal life. This is based on concerns that CPD staff have the power to take your child and questions the authority of the state to intervene in ‘family matters’. This is a social issue which requires education of the public about what social services does and does not do.</p> <p>The previously mentioned ‘Culture of punishment’ leads to a lack of empathy for children involved in the justice system.</p> <p>Gender inequity and ‘beliefs’ in cultural ‘traditions’ support abusive practices such as child marriage and the sexual abuse of young girls.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Bottlenecks/Challenges
	<p>Continuity of use (a measure of the full and adequate utilization of services/ adoption of practices)</p>	<p><i>“We don’t always know how it’s going to go...”</i></p> <p>Every institution seems to work with their own criteria and procedures aren’t clear (lack of understanding about how other systems work was a common issue). Some agencies do their own assessment, make their own decisions and let CPD know about it afterwards. Lack of consistency means experiencing different responses.</p> <p>Demand on the system is high, but there is a lack of trust in it. One key agency advised that as an organizational practice they don’t call CPD, instead they write a formal letter. This is because of a complete lack of trust in the system and the desire to have every contact documented. Another concern is that individual workers make decisions on their own and there is a lack of trust in the qualifications, skill level and training in CPD staff to appropriately recognize or intervene in cases of violence against children.</p> <p>The absence of a necessary 24hr accessibility of social workers (currently they work 9-5 on weekdays only) is problematic.</p> <p>There is concern that teachers in the school setting are more likely to try to sort it out internally and refer cases to the school psychologist if they even act at all. Repeatedly stakeholders advised that the teachers in the education system would often not report to CPD, not recognizing it as their task. For those who do recognize the responsibility to report, there is sometimes such a lack of trust in the system that they purposefully don’t activate a signal.</p> <p>Parent education alone has also not been proving successful – pre and post tests of these programs are indicating a change in knowledge but not, yet resulting in a reduction of corporal punishment and prevailing attitudes towards spanking. Perhaps stronger messages around the harm that children experience are needed.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Bottlenecks/Challenges
Quality	<p>Quality (refers to compliance with minimum standards that are defined through national/international norms for effective service)</p>	<p><i>“When the system is overwhelmed it’s the child who suffers.”</i></p> <p>CPS needs to be developed and reformed as a whole. The system is very young as it has only been adopted since 2000 and the obligations and demands have continued to grow. They are seen as being the main bearers of responsibility. If everything has to be reported there then it needs to be better organized and adequately resourced.</p> <p>The overall quality of service is variable. Some examples include Shumen where a coordinated approach has yielded results that workers believe make it an example of a successful approach. Every institution is practically training their own staff and ASA think that joint training of the MDTs would be best to facilitate the coordination mechanism; on site, in the field, in each municipality.</p> <p>There is a need for better quality of social work reports. Stakeholders advised that judges make decisions on these and even the Ombudsman’s office has received complaints about the reports being poorly done. Social workers are seen as unmotivated, or too busy to produce the necessary quality reports. Again this is an area that could be improved through training and the development of standardized reporting formats.</p>

4.4. Opportunities and Promising Practices

Domains	Determinants	Opportunities/Promising Practices	Focus
<p>Enabling Environment (social, political, budgetary, and institutional determinants necessary to achieve results for children)</p>	<p>Social Norms (context-specific rules/behaviours that members of a community follow in the belief that others expect them to do so)</p>	<p>UNICEF has sponsored trainings for parents to manage behaviour problems by providing alternatives to corporal punishment. It is not yet clear what kind of impact these programmes are having on shifting social norms. However, it is believed that new generations are using corporal punishment less – the Internet has been a great resource for families in Bulgaria and has contributed to providing parenting information as well as changing social norms on this issue.</p> <p>Suggested training for teachers in recognition and responding – this would also include anti-bullying frameworks.</p> <p>National Network for Children, the umbrella organization overseeing all NGOs (124) working on supporting children has targeted a campaign on three Rights of Children with the objective of changing attitudes of the public towards young children.</p>	<p>Shumen is one of the areas UNICEF is running programmes in and (they are in 3 out of 28 regions in the country) and is an example of an area where things are going very well.</p> <p>Shumen has a visiting nurses programme pilot and 1500 families are already participating, though there is the capacity for more and there is resistance by medical doctors. Efforts to change public awareness around how critical the early years are for children may be beneficial.</p> <p>Some additional training to promote recognition of symptoms of abuse in very young children could be beneficial.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Opportunities/Promising Practices	Focus
	<p>Legislation / Policy (encompasses laws, legal bodies, judicial decision-making – sets of principles and long-term goals forming the basis of making rules and guidelines to direction overall planning and development)</p>	<p>Synchronization of child protection law with issues for children in conflict with the law. Currently there are efforts being made to change the legislation for children. It was mentioned that there is a task force that is currently:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proposing amendments to the criminal code relating to provisions for interviewing victims and witnesses of crime. 2. Producing a report listing exact changes needed in the juvenile justice (JJ) if any by the end of this year. <p>Requiring social reports in court would be helpful – especially to get perspective of child’s environment and personal settings. Would also raise profession of social work reputation and value (if reports are skilfully done and seen as an asset to the system)</p> <p>A national Educational Policy is being drafted and provides suggestions on how to deal with bullying.</p>	<p>UNICEF has submitted a letter to the Minister of Justice to look at issues for child perpetrators to avoid conflicts between the two legislative Acts. Child accounts are still not given any weight over adult accounts.</p> <p>UNICEF has also supported the specialized hearing rooms ‘Blue Rooms’, for children to be properly interviewed or even have full court hearings with all necessary personnel (police, prosecutor, judge, and accused) behind a one-way mirror. These are limited across the country. UNICEF is also making the procedural rules for how they are used and this is a very promising best practice for children.</p> <p>UNICEF’s “Children at Risk behind Bars” Project has been launched with the objective to provide targeted training programs within the Child Protection and Juvenile Justice systems and establish community-based services to guarantee the rights of children placed in institutions. Since its inception, the number of children placed in correctional-educational facilities has decreased. Many promising practices have been initiated.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Opportunities/Promising Practices	Focus
	<p>Budget / Expenditure (allocation and disbursement of required resources that are critical to achieve desired results)</p>	<p>Oak Foundation has been Funding projects for 10 years already in the area of prevention of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation. They have been supporting building up the CPDs to be educated around the identification of sexual abuse. Now they are focused on primary prevention and could be a possible partner in co-funding an initiative.</p> <p>The foundation is soon going to roll out guidelines and procedures (around child sexual abuse) which will be a requirement of funding which is another positive means of ensuring compliance with new skills. This foundation has already taken the initiative to create a Safeguarding Children Policy Document to ensure that organizations with whom they are associated are complying with standards that safeguard the rights of children from harm and abuse; a very proactive and progressive practice.</p>	<p>The UNICEF funded centres (such as the ones in Shumen for example) are effective because they are properly funded and resourced. There is a lot of good will out there and changing attitudes are a positive sign.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Opportunities/Promising Practices	Focus
	<p>Management / Coordination (main and measurable manifestations to assess and monitor good governance to enable provision of essential services)</p>	<p>Improve SACP liaison and collaborative work with prosecutions office (meeting scheduled for mid-July)</p>	<p>Staff from the UNICEF funded FCC have been struggling with reporting cases of early marriage to CPD who report to prosecutor and nothing happens. They initiated a joint meeting to discuss two pressing issues: 1. Early marriage and 2. Drug use in these communities. All stakeholders were invited, including community leaders. Only the prosecutors didn't come. The result was police presence increased and drug presence reduced. They will try again at the end of the month for another meeting. This is a good example of mobilizing stakeholder collaboration to address VAC issues.</p>
<p>Supply (actual operational capacity of the relevant instructions, actors and systems accountable for provision of services)</p>	<p>Availability of essential materials (necessary for provision of services to children – includes adequate and essential stocks at 'service delivery points')</p>	<p>The National Helpline considers itself a doorway to the Child Protection System and may also be the most accessible service to traditionally hard to serve Roma children across the country. However, there are still issues around the phone line being adequately staffed and the low referrals to CPD is also an area for further exploration.</p> <p>State Agency for Child Protection advises that they have compiled a list of professionals (such as psychologists and social workers with expertise) available for consultation who can provide crisis intervention. However, this list is not seen by CPD as valuable since there are not the necessary resources to access (pay for) these service experts.</p>	

Domains	Determinants	Opportunities/Promising Practices	Focus
	<p>Access to adequately staffed services, facilities and information (physical access of targeted population to services, facilities and information points/persons – includes qualified staff)</p>	<p><i>“People are afraid when they are uncertain”.</i></p> <p>Knowledge is critical in a successful system response to VAC issues and all professionals involved need to have standardized training. Create capacity of social workers in the system. There has been discussion about the need for professional standards for social workers and the concept of a National Training Centre for Social Work has been mentioned.</p> <p>The Ministry of Interior described a promising programme ‘Police in Schools’ that has specially trained officers going into schools with the objective to prevent crime and victimization of children. To prevent situations of crime and promote safety through various topics such as: dangers of the Internet, drug use prevention, and rights of children. It’s not available in every school yet due to limited resources.</p> <p>Another MOI project is related to training officers in sexual abuse investigation and updates on the relevant legislation. Monthly forums provide a peer training model for officers.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education and Science noted a number of successful programmes (none of which are still running unfortunately). These included: The Participate and Change Campaign – successful Gender Education Research and Technology (joint project</p>	<p><i>“UNICEF has invested in us”</i></p> <p>Staff described feeling supported in their work by have access to good supervision and training.</p> <p>Complex for Social Services (CSS) is managed by SAPI Institute and holds most of the licenses required to perform social services. In 2005 SAPI began providing services in various regions (the project in Shumen is just one example of many), which have been successful in bringing together multiple services in one location. The strength of these services is also built on the availability of specialists and good training and supervision for staff. These CSS programs provide an integrated approach and attempt to involve a variety of professionals and services (social, educational, psychological, legal etc.) through referrals. An example of this successful integration has been the availability of the ‘blue room’ concept in several regions.</p> <p>There has been a recent focus on prevention of child institutionalization and children in conflict with the law by building capacity and expanding services which has been supported by UNICEF since 2006.</p>

Domains	Determinants	Opportunities/Promising Practices	Focus
		<p>with National network of Children) to monitor gender based discrimination in schools in which 100 Schools participated voluntarily. In addition, they worked to introduce a mechanism and a set of indicators to combat school bullying.</p> <p>Family Counselling Centres have been highlighted as a promising practice, providing outreach services to improve child outcomes in marginalized communities.</p>	
<p>Demand (reflects geographic, financial, social and cultural factors that facilitate/ hinder the target population from benefiting from the services)</p>	<p>Financial access (affordability of services to the target population – includes direct (fees) and indirect (transportation) barriers)</p>	<p>All of the noted services are free and accessible to their targeted populations. However, not all services are available in all of the regions, which leaves much room to grow.</p>	
	<p>Cultural practices and beliefs (recognized social roles and responsibilities – assumptions about cause and effect – that may impact desired outcomes/ changes)</p>	<p>Animus described a project that involved a children’s group who developed a PSA video about the helpline, and the Ministry of Education have a current contest to have children design a website with child protection guidelines for parents and children.</p> <p>Both may be really progressive ways to get the information out to children and families.</p> <p>In addition, the School Without Violence project – supported by UNICEF and Ministry of</p>	

Domains	Determinants	Opportunities/Promising Practices	Focus
		<p>Education aimed to create school as a good environment for children. In particular, targeting the prevention and responsiveness to issues of abuse and bullying.</p> <p>The Bamboo Study on Child Resilience (commissioned by the Oak Foundation) found that there were clear themes of the family as a source of resilience for children, which continues to emphasize the importance of family support oriented interventions.</p>	
	<p>Continuity of use (a measure of the full and adequate utilization of services/adoption of practices)</p>	<p>There was a desire that when it came to making placement decisions for children it would be very beneficial if CPDs were able to ascertain enough preliminary information which would provide an idea of how long they could expect the child be in care.</p>	
<p>Quality</p>		<p>The document A Methodology About The Conditions and Way of Providing the Mother and the Baby Unit Social Service document provides clear and consistent guidelines for the effective running of the service.</p>	<p>Joint training of the MDTs would be best to facilitate the coordination mechanism; on site, in the field, and within each municipality. There have been concerns that the guidelines for the MDTs may not be clear enough for accountability to be determined.</p>

5. Summary and Areas of Influence

One of the key documents reviewed was the Assessment of the reform of the Child Protection System in Bulgaria (Harizanova, 2007) which thoroughly reviews the goals of UNICEF at that time to: (a) improve policies and programmes that are child-focused both at national and regional levels; (b) local authorities able to plan social service delivery for children at district and municipal levels, based on human rights-based approaches and results-based management; (c) civil society organizations participate in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating child protection programmes; and (d) children from the most vulnerable families, including Roma: (i) receive better parental care; (ii) have adequate access to protection services; (iii) have the skills and practices to prevent risky behaviours; and (iv) remain in school.

Although these are ambitious, challenging goals to reach, the current review finds that much of this work is in varying stages of completion and many aspects of the system are already on the right track moving forward. More importantly, the report provides a concrete definition of change that remains relevant for the current analysis, in that change would “constitute a reform when there is a publicly accepted goal, a logical consequence of steps leading to the new situation (defined in the goal)” followed by the appropriate “operation of the child protection system (structures, institutions, mechanisms)” (p.13). It also recognized that key stakeholders, mainly government structures remain largely responsible for system success through provision of adequate resources; both financial and in terms of human capital. This remains a key issue today for the continued development of a successful system of response. Bulgaria’s current social service system is supported by government and other donors and social services are generally free for users. However, there remains a critical need for ongoing investments into this system to support the continued need for growth and development.

The 2007 report also mentioned several limitations which appear to remain current to date, including challenges with monitoring and reporting so that action plans can be operationalized as well as the need for a unified information system to improve data collection for analysis and change efforts. Again, this area of improvement can only be achieved through the consistent financial support of the state in promoting this level of technological infrastructure.

It is important to note that the current system is very young. Social work as a profession only became recognized within the university system in Bulgaria in 1989 and there is still no strong professional organization of social workers or a self-regulation mechanism (no professional standards, for example). Judges became involved only after the Child Protection Act in 2000. As the above determinants analysis illustrates, much progress has been made in this system in a relatively short period of time. In many instances there appears to be no need to create new services or projects (for example existing PSAs) but rather to invest dependable and ongoing financial resources in order to strengthen current approaches and expand successful practices. Currently there remain several routes into the system, from reports made by individuals (children themselves, family, community members or sector professionals) to situations being discovered through institutional visits for monitoring and evaluation.

There are many promising practices in development, however there are still some key areas for improvement, notably the need to:

1. Build system capacity and Improve Coordination:

- a. More training of professionals is needed. In particular social workers in CPDs, staff in education and health professions and those in the justice system (police, prosecutors, judges); all points of contact for child well-being. Training is needed in child rights, as well as the guidelines for identification, assessment and even engagement. In addition, basic information around child development and behavioural indicators of abuse would also be beneficial.
- b. More accountability in the MDT process, in particular clarification of roles and ongoing interdisciplinary training opportunities.
- c. More coordination between service agencies that provide services (e.g. National Helpline, CPDs and NGOs)
- d. Develop a governmental budgetary plan to meet basic resource needs for functionality within system organizations (such as staffing, computers, paper, vehicles and petrol)
- e. Develop mechanism for tracking and coordinating data across the system (for example ensuring that police reports are matching up with CPD reports and cases of VAC are not falling through the cracks)

2. Delineate clear pathways through the system and promote access:

- a. a. Identify key agents of responsibility for case management (e.g. CPD)
- b. Identify key access avenues (helpline, CSCs, FCCs, home visiting, health and education sectors)
- c. Enforce appropriate legislation to support victims (e.g. domestic violence law – remove perpetrator before victim)
- d. Create community hubs – co-location of services to promote service accessibility as well as professional service coordination (e.g. models in Shumen and other areas that are working well)

3. Build on Promising Practices:

- a. Require all programs to provide evidence of their effectiveness. This means anchoring programs to an articulated theory of change and developing monitoring and evaluation methods that enable programs to demonstrate activities and outcomes that result from modeling the theory of change in practice.
- b. Develop cross-sectoral partnerships to facilitate access and communication for improved outcomes.
- c. Make mandatory reporting guidelines universal.

4. Promote Awareness of Violence Against Children:

- a. Culture of violence against children needs to be changed – social norms continue to be one of the reasons that abuse is tolerated. Changing public attitudes to move towards zero tolerance of violence towards children.
- b. Promote positive parenting practices to prevent violence against children.
- c. Promote public education in recognition as well as response to VAC (so all individuals know what to do when it occurs).

5. Intervene Earlier:

- a. a. Family support is necessary – many families struggle with education and financial issues which are risk factors – improve current mechanisms of social assistance/family allowances/child benefits.
- b. Promotion of community mental health and prevention.
- c. Address the issue of domestic violence as this is an area with a strong link to child maltreatment practices.
- d. Engage men and boys and move to prevent/end violence against women and children before it begins.
- e. Engage children as citizens, to promote non-violence as they become the next adults

It is also important to note that in a system that has such underdeveloped and under-resourced alternative care Services (like foster and kinship care) an emphasis should also be on building Family Support Services (interventions, prevention services, income assistance, education etc.) to focus on keeping children in their homes. Importantly, the current system contains many key components of a successful child protection response and there is a general positive attitude amongst professionals as to the importance of such a system and goodwill towards improving it. However, what is needed most at this point is a permanent commitment of funding from the state to support successful outcomes. Continued and reliable assistance to support system improvements in infrastructure, staffing and basic materials is critical for initiating positive change.

5.1 Modifiable areas of influence

A high-functioning system designed to support children and families will engage in activities within six key domains:

1. Awareness of Issue & Knowledge
2. Skills
3. Behaviours
4. Availability of Community Assets
5. Conditions for living
6. Material resources

UNICEF and its partners in Bulgaria currently have programming that is designed to address many of these conditions. Earl and colleagues define program outcomes as “changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities, or actions of the people, groups, and organizations with whom a program works directly” (Earl, Carden & Smutylo, 2001). Thus, the impact of a program may be on multiple levels within the system. By mapping the system elements and connecting them to a theory of change, program stakeholders from staff to administration to funders and partners are better able to align activities to facilitate outcomes.

An emerging framework that supports the goals of UNICEF and its partners in dealing with VAC is Collective Impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011). The Collective Impact framework was designed with complexity in mind, drawing on the experience of the non-profit sector and others who have been charged with dealing with large-scale, complex problems and yet require a means to act and maintain accountability in the face of this complexity. The five conditions for collective impact mirror the aspirations and requirements of an effective, high-performing child protection and health promotion system. They include:

1. A common agenda
2. Shared measurement
3. Mutually reinforcing activities
4. Continued communications
5. Backbone support

Many of the conditions for this collective impact are already present. For example, the common agenda to improve responses to cases of violence against children is one of them. There is still a need to fully develop a model of shared measurement, particularly connecting government, funder and stakeholder needs for informational and performance metrics that assist with problem identification as well as service accountability. Currently avenues of measurement include various survey mechanisms (some public opinion research has been conducted in the past as well as the ongoing evaluative work on the effectiveness of the Coordination Mechanism). Agency record keeping (for example statistics from Police, CPDs, and the National Helpline) are part of beginning efforts to begin to get a realistic picture of the issue of VAC and the challenges facing the system in addressing it. Some efforts to coordinate these metrics may be of value to create a more holistic view of the situation within Regions and across the country. This would also support the fostering of mutually reinforcing activities, a prime example of this is the work of the MDTs and the need for more cross-sectoral training initiatives to create permanent pathways of improved communication.

Within this framework, UNICEF is ideally positioned to play the role of providing backbone support to the VAC issue within the system, offering resources and coordination to the various governmental and non-governmental agencies. UNICEF's current activity profile suggests this work is already being done to some extent. From this backbone position, UNICEF is better positioned to identify and explore possible areas of synergy between various constituents, aid in setting/positioning the common agenda, ensure that mutually reinforcing activities are done in a coordinated manner and provide the focus for a shared measurement system. Adopting a collective impact framework would simply provide clarification on various roles and reduce unnecessary redundancies that are contributing to bottlenecks. UNICEF has the advantage of having a focus on the singular issue of VAC within this context, which is currently an issue that has divided attention among the other sector organizations as only one of many areas of focus (e.g., Education, criminal justice, police). UNICEF is currently already positioned to play this role by virtue of its broad involvement with organizations across the system with respect to violence against children, and the important role they have played in coordinating this current initiative.

6. Supporting the Building Blocks for Change: Using Theory of Change Concepts to Promote System Development and Quality Improvement in Responding to Violence Against Children

The Theory of Change approach emerged out of initial work done at the Aspen Institute, which sought to explore how communities change (Fulbright-Anderson & Auspos, 2006). In reviewing the state of the literature and knowledge at the time gaps were found between the way programs conceived of, and illustrated, the logic of their program, the activities that were performed and the outcomes that were expected to emerge from these programs. The Theory of Change approach was proposed as a larger framework for bringing together evidence, practice-based knowledge and evaluative thinking to bear on program planning and assessment, particularly in community-based and international development programming contexts. A theory of change is a means of understanding the logic behind why a program is done, why a particular strategy or process is expected to yield certain outcomes, and unpack the fundamental hypotheses underlying the way a system operates and is designed. The Theory of Change approach is commonly used for examining policy initiatives where complexity is commonly found as a fundamental characteristic of the environment in which the policy operates.

A well-articulated theory of change provides guidance for decision-making and accountability. Forti (2012) argues that a strong theory of change is one that successfully answers six key questions:

1. Who are you seeking to influence or benefit (target population)?
2. What benefits are you seeking to achieve (results)?
3. When will you achieve them (time period)?
4. How will you and others make this happen (activities, strategies, resources, etc.)?
5. Where and under what circumstances will you do your work (context)?
6. Why do you believe your theory will bear out (assumptions)?

This becomes more complicated when the program under consideration is dealing with problems that are complex in nature. A complex problem is one that has multiple sources of influences that overlap, interact and counteract one another simultaneously; operates in highly dynamic conditions; are context sensitive; and require the perspective and energy of multiple agents working in collaboration to address. In this case, complexity is manifest in examining a systemic response to the issue of violence against children in society. UNICEF brought together key stakeholders to participate in a workshop to consider the Determinants Analysis and to address the above six questions as a preliminary approach to begin to conceptualize a Theory of Change. Participants agreed that although the end desired result would be decreased incidences of violence against children in Bulgaria, the current goal is to improve the system's ability to respond to the abuse of children. In particular, four main populations were targeted for influence:

1. The general public (attitudes towards VAC)

To this end the outcome to be achieved is the increased understanding and awareness of what constitutes abuse, the rights of the child, applicable laws and legislation and responsibilities and means of reporting. A further outcome would be to see such attitudinal shifts demonstrated by fiscal policy initiatives at the governmental level that would operationalize support for systemic improvements in prevention and intervention. The recommended activities/strategies have been to build on/continue current PSA campaigns such as: UNICEF's Making the Invisible Visible, and Animus' Child Abuse Awareness Video created by children.

This is an area in which UNICEF is already actively involved and could continue to serve as a leader in organizing the timing of such campaigns as well as the ability to keep them 'alive and current'. This area of influence rests on the assumption that the main cause for child abuse is lack of awareness, which is considered the same reason that cases continue to go unreported. An outcome measurement would be a documented increase in the numbers of cases being reported by the general public as well as relevant professionals (teachers, doctors etc.), including referrals to MDTs. A residual outcome may be the resulting state funding to promote awareness and responsiveness within the system.

2. Social Workers in the CPDs and other relevant professionals (such as health and education)

This group has been targeted based on the desired outcome to build the capacity of the core groups of professionals who should be the first point of contact in the majority of child abuse investigations. Feedback from stakeholders indicated a desire and willingness on the part of professionals to develop skills and confidence in their abilities to recognize and respond to cases of violence against children. Professionals often share similar views and beliefs to the general population and require specialized training to recognize and respond appropriately. Although there are short and long term potential activities, it can be expected that change will occur slowly and steadily with ongoing training and capacity building initiatives. To this end activities such as core training that occurs regularly and is directly linked with applicable laws and legislation so that key responders (like social workers in CPDs) will be aware of the rights of children and the responsibilities of professionals to protect them, as well as the available avenues for this protection. There are significant resources required for this, including the operationalization of standards for social work practice in child protection; including standardization of paperwork and other tools of the profession. This work should be undertaken within the current staffing units of CPDs. As this training is developed and delivered it should then be expanded and appropriately adapted to be included in all future orientation of any prospective employees. To keep professionals up to date, refresher programs should be required every 2-5 years based on available resources and any changes to applicable laws, legislation. Furthermore, relevant curriculum pieces on family violence and child protection should be developed and considered mandatory in any social work education program (or other human services education – like psychology, healthcare, education). UNICEF could play a role in supporting the creation and dissemination of such curriculums for professional post-secondary education.

The assumption behind this theory of change approach has several components: 1) it directly contributes to a more professional workforce capable of approaching the issue more appropriately and efficiently (for example improved quality of social work reports will impact judicial decision making and warrant future requests for support); 2) creates in-house expertise within sectors that will promote ongoing training and learning opportunities (through supervision and other forms of formal and informal knowledge sharing); 3) a more professional workforce is also more likely to identify new potential areas

of improvement, thus creating a more sustained climate for improvement and innovation, and 4) A better informed, equipped social work-force will generate stronger policy proposals as well to contribute to ongoing social and governmental change initiatives. In addition, such changes would impress upon the public and cooperating sectors that CPD workers have the skills and authority to intervene (something that is currently lacking).

3. Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) via The Coordination Mechanism

The Coordination Mechanism was highlighted as key as it is clear that professionals working in parallel without such coordination does not lead to the best practices for supporting and protecting children. There was discussion about the need for more accountability for compulsory members, the clarification of roles and responsibilities as well as the development of methods of joint case management. There are still concerns about the avenues of reporting, with preliminary survey results indicating that within the CPDs the majority of reports are received from parents, followed by the helpline, police and education. Statistics indicate that only 5% have been made from medical institutions, and only 1% from General Practitioners which is particularly concerning given that the healthcare system is most logically a first or early point of contact with the system for identification of harm to children. The MDT group was targeted as a model that is working well in many regions but that is still not optimal in every area. This positive initiative is at a critical place where even small improvements may reap very large rewards in particular communities. It was highlighted within the workshops that there are still gaps that are not being filled. There remains a lack of accountability in some regions and a lack of understanding across sectors of the work of each other sector and how working together might improve outcomes for both.

The desired outcome is that members of MDTs would be fully aware of how things work in other sectors and would be ambassadors for and within their own sectors. The need for such widespread skill development requires the development and implementation of a train-the-trainer model whereby practitioners would learn the fundamentals of the model and system with a goal of increasingly their skill and knowledge (with techniques) to train their peers. This would ensure that sector-specific and appropriate training would be received and perpetuated throughout each sector. This would require human, as well as financial resources, a curriculum model that is agreed upon by members of each participating sector, a systematic implementation mechanism (including evaluation) and methods of ongoing improvements to the curriculum as knowledge and practices evolve over time.

Much of the theory of change concept revolves around knowledge and action; these are two areas that training can influence directly by creating more informed action. A train-the-trainer model is also more sustainable and less costly than an expert-driven training program that is more likely to limit access to training in a timely manner. It also doesn't make commitments to shape systems that are unaccountable without some sense of real promise for impact (for example, the training program operates in a professional space that it has influence within, rather than making claims of influence it can't back up or reasonably expect to change). Similar to the desire to improve capacity of direct service professionals (such as social workers noted above), the assumption behind this theory of change has several linked components: 1) it directly contributes to a more professional workforce in each sector capable of approaching the issue more appropriately and efficiently; 2) creates in-house expertise within sectors that can be used to promote ongoing cross-sectoral training; 3) a more knowledgeable workforce is also more likely to identify new potential areas of improvement, thus creating a more sustained climate for improvement and innovation, and 4) Such a more informed, equipped social work-force will generate stronger policy proposals as well to contribute to ongoing social and governmental change initiatives; specifically around influencing financial commitments.

4. Government Administrators (Finance) and other Funders

The potential risks behind the first three targeted populations is that regardless of the amount of resources provided for each approach (for example public education and professional training), there has been consistent recognition amongst stakeholders that there is a profound lack of resources to support basic infrastructure within the system to ensure ongoing success. For example, the lack of sufficient remuneration of social workers and basic resources across all sectors is required to ensure their effectiveness. Key informants of the Determinants Analysis process cited operational expenses such as computers, printer paper and toner as well as vehicles (and fuel) for delivery of necessary services such as social work, policing and home visiting. In addition, there was a lack of resources to support necessary services for consultation – such as legal support to CPD workers to ensure effectiveness in implementing legislation. This significant lack of resources is among the greatest barriers to successfully improving a systemic response to violence against children in the country. Although there have been significant investments in social structures to date, there will remain a continuous need to develop more effective means of supporting a growing social programme. Without addressing the need for adequate resources, any training programs will be limited in relative long-term impact. Therefore, it is imperative that an additional target group be those individuals who may be able to influence fiscal policies and other sources of ongoing financial support, which provides the central scaffolding of such a system. Activities would include advocacy initiatives, seeking economic consultants to promote methods of addressing financial issues on a national level and working with other external funders to continue to build capacity in this regard. The assumption behind this approach is that engaging relevant Ministries and other relevant actors in this regard will result in stability within the sectors, resulting in improved practice and performance, as well as increasing the public trust in their social service network.

A theory of change is a tool for eliciting, revealing and articulating the theoretical and causal connections between program activities, outputs and outcomes. By making the strategies and logic of the program visible, the various stakeholders are much more likely to see the collaborative nature of the endeavour and increase the collective impact of the program. It is recommended that this document be used by UNICEF as a basis to determine their approach to continuing the important work that has been started in improving the system's response to violence against children. Sharing this document with those who may be able to influence the next National Action Plan for the Protection of Children would be another positive step in engaging the necessary stakeholders to move these conceptual frameworks into practical actions for change. There is certainly momentum in the current climate within the country and opportunities await.

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