

Report on Domestic Adoption in Romania

A Report Prepared for:

**The National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption
Of the Government of Romania**

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Chapter I. Introduction and Overview

This report is the product of a joint undertaking between the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption (NACPA) in Romania and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under sponsorship of the U.S. Agency for International Development. It is based largely on work conducted in the field in Romania from December 3, 2001, to December 11, 2001. The purpose of the project is to examine current domestic adoption practices and to make recommendations regarding changes in policy and practice to facilitate the development of an efficient, effective system of domestic adoption.

Site visits were made to Departments for Child Protection (DPCs) offices in three Sectors in Bucharest and in Ilfov Judet. These sites were selected in part because of weather related travel difficulties outside of Bucharest. However, a range of domestic adoption and other child protection activities were in evidence in these sites and we believe our findings are valid and generally reflect the state of domestic adoption practice in Romania. In addition to the site visits, interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders in the system, including service providers, funders, the NACPA, the Department of Child and Family Protection Ombudsman, adoptive parents, and maternal assistants who provide foster family care.

While the focus of the report is domestic adoption, the report must necessarily consider adoption within the context of the entire range of activities that comprise the “child protection” or child welfare system in Romania. To develop an effective domestic adoption program requires that adoption be treated as one component of a continuum of child protection services in which a child’s individualized needs are assessed and the most appropriate services provided. Therefore, findings and recommendations in this report address a number of issues within the child protection system particularly as they relate to the domestic adoption program.

The NACPA coordinates child protection activities in Romania. These include adoption, foster care, institutional care, reintegration of children with their families, placement with relatives, independent living for children who are or were in care, and maternal and child centers and other services designed to maintain children in their own home and prevent out-of-home placement of children. The Romanian Committee for Adoption (RAC) is the central authority for adoption in Romania. A list of children eligible for adoption is sent by the local DPC to the RAC and the list is then made available to other judets for up to 60 days to determine if there are prospective Romanian adoptive parents. Local DPCs send information to the RAC on prospective adoptive parents and waiting families should be registered with the RAC. The local Commission for Child Protection must issue a certificate approving a family to adopt, following an assessment and recommendation by the DPC. This approval process includes the family appearing before the local Commission for Child Protection. Once the certificate is issued, a child may be placed or “entrusted” to the family for the purpose of adoption for a period of at least three months. The DPC monitors the adjustment of the child and the family during this time. If the adjustment in the home is satisfactory, the Commission for Child Protection makes a

recommendation for the adoption to proceed. The RAC must approve the adoption. The final step in domestic adoption is the court decision to legalize the adoption.

Broad child welfare reforms have been implemented in Romania and it is evident that these efforts are beginning to have a positive impact on the delivery of services in some locations. The NACPA has made the promotion of domestic adoption a component of the national strategy for child welfare reform. This strategy encompasses a number of steps to be accomplished including adopting regulations, laws or standards taking into account international conventions on adoption; reducing and simplifying time limits and procedures; development of economic supports such as global tax relief or other measures; organizing public awareness campaigns, both nationally and locally; providing seminars and conferences on adoption; disseminating informational materials on adoption and consideration of intercountry adoption only as a last resort when domestic options have not been successful.

We saw evidence and heard about programs where domestic adoptions are experiencing success. However, this success is not reflected evenly in judets across the country. According to figures provided by the NACPA, 1,154 domestic adoptions occurred during the first eleven months of 2001. (January 2001-November 2001) During that same time period an additional 1,272 children were placed with approved families for the purpose of adoption. These adoptions should be legalized once the adjustment period has been completed. The number of adoptions legalized in 2001 is on track with the 1,219 domestic adoptions that occurred in 2000. At the same time, intercountry adoptions accounted for 3,035 adoptions in 2000 and 1,413 adoptions in 2001 before the suspension of new intercountry adoption applications in June 2001.

Where domestic adoptions are occurring, they most often involve infants or very young children. It is reported that most Romanian families prefer to adopt young, healthy children and currently the number of young, healthy children exceeds the number of requests to adopt. This supports a belief expressed by many of the professionals we met that Romanian families will only adopt infants. As a result, older children, sibling groups, or those with either physical or mental disabilities may be considered unadoptable and may not benefit from adoption services. Efforts to place these children in adoptive homes appear to be minimal and are often focused on intercountry placement. A domestic adoption program based on a child-centered model, rather than an infant adoption model, is crucial if Romania is to provide adequate adoption services to the large numbers of children in the system who might benefit. Underpinning this model is “a central and critical value in the adoption of older children, and, indeed, in the adoption practice of all special needs children, is that all children are potentially adoptable.”¹ A child-centered adoption model is typically utilized in the United States in State child welfare agencies that place children of all ages, from infants to teens, children from diverse ethnic groups, sibling groups and children with physical, mental or emotional disabilities.

¹ Cole, Elizabeth S. (1997) “The Adoption of Older Children.” In *Avery, Rosemary J., ed. Adoption Policy and Special Needs Children*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.

Specific recommendations are described in detail in Section III; however, the basic findings fall under four areas:

1. A child-centered adoption program model rather than an infant adoption model is crucial for a child protection system with large numbers of children in care who need placement in permanent families. Efforts are being made and should continue to design a domestic adoption program that utilizes a child-centered adoption model.

A child centered adoption model is characterized by these factors:

- The model is child focused and designed to find a family that best meets the needs of a particular child.
- Adoption is seen as a service for any child who cannot be reunited with their birth family, regardless of the child's age, ethnicity or special needs.
- Families from many socio-economic levels are encouraged to adopt by providing needed supports, including financial support and services to the child and family, both prior to and after the adoption.
- The adoptive home study uses a strengths based approach to explore a family's parenting abilities, ability to cope with adversity and willingness or experience in seeking help and resources as needed. Pre-service training is part of the home study process.
- A variety of both general and child specific recruitment methods are utilized to find families for children.
- Relatives and families providing foster family care are encouraged and supported in adopting children in their care.
- Openness in the adoption is supported and maintaining meaningful connections throughout the adopted person's life is encouraged.
- Post adoption services are available for the child and family after the adoption is legalized.

An infant adoption program is characterized by a number characteristics:

- Efforts are made to find a child for a family, rather than a family for a child.
- Adoption is a service only for abandoned or orphaned infants.
- Children who are older or have special needs are seen as "unadoptable" which then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- The adoptive home study process screens out potential adoptive families rather than screening in families through a strengths-based assessment.
- Assumptions are made that families will seek the service and recruitment of families isn't necessary.
- When recruitment does occur, infants and very young children are featured.
- Relatives and families providing foster family care are not encouraged to adopt.
- Secrecy about adoption is promoted and maintaining connections is not supported.

2. While there have been improvements in child protection laws in recent years, standards of practice, rules or policies and methodologies are needed to carry out the intent of these laws and to encourage consistent practice across the country. Standards for foster family care have been implemented and are seen as helpful, however, standards are needed for each program area in child protection. New adoption legislation is under development with USAID and other donor assistance. Adoption standards are being developed by USAID with the assistance of adoption experts. These should both greatly enhance practice. (Since this report was completed, the Government of Romania approved the Strategy for Implementation of Measures from the Report of the Independent Group for International Adoption Analysis and a legislative package is under development that addresses national or domestic adoption and international adoption procedures.)
3. A training and technical assistance program for child protection staff and DPCs is needed to encourage consistent practice and conformity to policy and to enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities of child protection staff. The staff's ability to assess a child's needs and develop individualized service plans requires specialized training. The training must address utilizing a child-centered adoption model, beliefs regarding the adoptability of children, including older children and those with special needs and preparing children for adoptive placement. Where successful domestic adoption and foster family care programs have been implemented, opportunities are needed to share this information between DPCs and to build on the strengths currently in the system.
4. National and local public awareness and adoption recruitment strategies are needed to let the public know about the children who need adoptive families, change negative perceptions about adoption, and to encourage adoption. A public awareness campaign began airing television spots in November 2001. These spots are addressing a range of child protection issues, including national or domestic adoption. These positive efforts need to be expanded to include general and child specific adoption recruitment at both a national and local level.

Chapter II. Findings and Summary of Interviews

The findings and observations reported in this section are based on a review of basic documents and on interviews with child protection and adoption professionals in Romania and the U.S., including officials in the Romanian and U.S. governments and private adoption agency officials in the U.S. and Romania.

The provision of domestic adoption services is uneven across the country.

It is reported that adoption services vary among DPCs and private social service foundations and agencies (NGOs) providing services. While child protection reform has resulted in increases in domestic adoptions, these reforms are not consistent across the country.

The law requires that Romanian citizens be given first priority when placements are considered for children. However, concerns were expressed that domestic adoptions have been discouraged in the past due to laws and practices that make it more difficult and time-consuming to complete a domestic adoption than an intercountry adoption. The national strategy seeks to address this by reducing and simplifying time limits and procedures.

One component of the child protection reform strategy in Romania has been to decentralize the provision of direct services. These services are now provided through the DPC offices in each judet in Romania and in Sectors in Bucharest. These DPCs are under the coordination of the Commission for Child Protection in each judet. A range of child protection activities is under the scope of responsibilities of the DPCs. These include adoption, residential institutions and child placement centers, child abandonment prevention, reintegration services to children and their birth families, social integration of street children, foster family care, juvenile justice and independent living for youth. The restructuring of the child protection system has resulted in the transfer of institutions providing services to children with disabilities and specialized training schools from the Departments of Education and Health to the DPCs in the past two years. It is reported that DPCs often do not have adequate staff or resources to provide the number of services needed. In addition, staff turnover is an ongoing issue.

We were told that the coordination between the Commission for Child Protection and the DPC is often an issue. While some DPCs indicated that there is little coordination and collaboration between them and the Commission and other Departments such as Labor and Social Solidarity, Education and Research, Health and Family and Justice, we saw evidence and heard reports that it does happen in some locations with good outcomes for children and families.

In addition to the local DPCs, NGOs provide adoption services. The quality of services provided by NGOs varies. Some NGOs are seen as providing excellent services and are said to have a positive working relationship with the local DPC. In some locations,

Memorandums of Understanding for service provision have been developed and implemented between local DPCs and NGOs and efforts are made to coordinate service delivery. In others, the DPC expressed concern about the quality of services provided by NGOs in their area, resulting in a lack of coordination and in work being duplicated. An example of this is requiring a family to complete an additional home study with the DPC staff after an initial study had been completed by an NGO. Although all NGOs must complete a lengthy accreditation process with the RAC, DPCs expressed concern that this process did not ensure the quality of services provided by NGOs. Additionally, they report that they have little access to the information from the accreditation process.

The belief that Romanian families will only adopt infants creates barriers to the provision of adoption services to all children who need them.

A belief expressed by many of the professionals we met is that Romanian families will only adopt infants and older children or children with disabilities can only be adopted through intercountry adoption. As a result, adoption is not being considered as an option for many of the children in the child protection system, even when reintegration with the birth family has been ruled out. There was little evidence that recruitment for adoptive families is occurring, and when it is, it does not focus on the range of children needing an adoptive home. While some NGOs have had success in placing older children and children with disabilities or special needs, that information does not appear to be available to staff in DPCs. Practices developed from an infant adoption focus do not encourage or support the adoption of other children in the system.

Child protection staff receives little or no training or technical assistance to increase their knowledge, skills and abilities in basic child welfare practice or in specialized areas.

Training opportunities for child protection staff are limited and are not adequate to address their training needs. The lack of standardized child protection training contributes to inconsistent practice and staff turnover. Staff participates in training provided by NGOs when available, but this is not standardized or ongoing. Over the past year training has been provided on adoption to each of the DPCs in a joint project between Holt International, UNICEF, and the NACPA. While this training was seen as helpful, it was limited to one or two staff from each DPC and managers with no direct service responsibility often attended. The training needs of the rest of the child protection staff were not met.

Training is needed to address child protection staff's beliefs and bias about the adoptability of children with special needs. Staff should receive training to prepare children for adoption and to provide individualized services based on the child and family needs. These are critical components of a successful child-centered adoption program.

While we heard about successful child protection programs, there is no process for this information to be shared between DPCs. Conferences and forums to provide training and technical assistance could provide an opportunity to build on the strengths already in the

system and could facilitate sharing of positive program outcomes and networking between DPCs.

Standardized policies and procedures are needed to implement legislation.

There was general agreement that due to the lack of standardized policy and procedures there are a variety of interpretations of current laws that contributes to the inconsistent practice seen across the country. Although there were changes in child protection laws in 1997, we were told that some DPCs, courts, and the RAC have continued to operate under old mandates that no longer exist in the new statute. The implementation of the foster care standards is believed to have improved practice. The adoption standards currently under development should also have a positive impact on adoption services and will be critical to the successful implementation of domestic adoption services. Practice standards are needed in all child protection program areas with recognition that adoption is one component of a continuum of child welfare services.

The perception that many children available for adoption are Rroma and that Romanian families will not adopt Rroma children has a negative impact on domestic adoptions.

It is reported that many in the general public believe that the children available for adoption are Rroma and that Romanian families will not adopt Rroma children. This belief appears to have a negative impact on domestic adoptions as families have indicated a reluctance to adopt Rroma children. However, some NGOs have implemented foster family programs where they have been successful in placing these children with families who were at first reluctant to take them into their homes. This reluctance to take these children has since changed as families have had success parenting these children and other foster families have witnessed these positive experiences. Maternal assistants we met indicated a willingness to adopt Rroma children in their care. While it is reported that there is a governmental strategy for improvements for the Rroma population, there is no national strategy to coordinate recruitment efforts within the Rroma community itself or to address public perceptions regarding adoption for these children.

National and local public awareness and adoption recruitment campaigns are needed to increase the number of domestic adoptions.

We were told of the need to address the public's negative image of adoption and beliefs that many of the children in the child protection system are unadoptable. National and local public awareness and adoption recruitment strategies are needed to let the public know about the children who need adoptive families and to enhance the public perceptions about adoption. A national public awareness campaign began airing television spots in November 2001. These spots are to address a range of child protection issues, including national or domestic adoption. These positive efforts need to be built upon and expanded to include general and child specific adoption recruitment at both a national and local level.

Adoptive family support in the form of financial assistance and services are needed to increase the pool of available adoptive families who can adopt children who are older, are in sibling groups, or who have disabilities.

It is recognized that there is a need to develop an array of services to support adoptive families and children, however, there is disagreement as to whether this should include financial supports for families adopting children who are older or who have special needs. Global tax relief and increased funding through the universal child allowance, based on the child and family's needs, were suggested as possible avenues to provide financial supports to families adopting these children. Maternal assistants who expressed an interest in adopting children in their care often cited a lack of resources as a barrier to adopting. Relatives are also often prevented from adopting due to a lack of resources. These resource issues must be addressed to increase the numbers of children with special needs being adopted. In addition to financial assistance, pre and post adoption services should include training, counseling, medical and legal services.

Chapter III. Conclusions and Recommendations

Expanding the domestic adoption program from an infant adoption focus to a child-centered adoption model that promotes the adoption of all waiting children, regardless of age or needs, will enable children of all ages and needs to be adopted, rather than just young, healthy children.

- Efforts are being made and should continue to shift the focus of the program to a child-centered adoption model. A model based on the belief that all children are potentially adoptable is critical for this effort to succeed. This belief forms the lens through which actions and alternatives are viewed. “Although adoption may not be accomplished for all children, we must still approach all youngsters as though they might be adopted. The implications are that all children are entitled to have their adoptability assessed by someone who knows how to do this and who has a strong belief that adoption may be possible.”² The following basic principles should be incorporated into the program: 1) efforts are made to find a family for children, regardless of their ages or needs; 2) families from all socio-economic levels are encouraged to adopt, including relatives and maternal assistants, through support in the form of monthly allowances and services; 3) families are assessed using a strengths based home study model; 4) training is provided to adoptive families and child protection staff; and 5) families are recruited using both general and child specific recruitment, both nationally and at the local level.

Develop and implement standards, policies and methodologies to implement adoption and child protection laws to support Romanian families adopting children all ages and needs and to provide for standardized practice in all judets and local departments.

- While the NACPA has made domestic adoption a priority and some DPCs and NGOs have had success in increasing the number of adoptions by Romanian families, inconsistent domestic adoption practice was seen among the DPCs. The lack of child protection practice standards, regulations and methodologies for all child protection program areas accounted for some of these inconsistencies. Where good practice methodologies are followed, better outcomes were seen for children. The implementation of foster care standards is reported to have had a positive impact on service provision. The implementation of the adoption standards under development should also have a positive impact on service provision in this area. The development of child protection standards for all program areas should be pursued. Child protection staff from each DPC should receive training on the standards and good practice methodologies. Plans have been made to develop a guide for social workers regarding the new adoption law and standards of good practice and to provide

² Cole, Elizabeth S. (1997) “The Adoption of Older Children.” In *Avery, Rosemary J., ed. Adoption Policy and Special Needs Children*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.

training for NACPA staff, social workers and administrators in both the public and private sector, and for the judicial system.

- Adoption services should be implemented as one component of a continuum of child protection services. This array of services should include services in the home to prevent removal, foster family placement, and reintegration with the birth family, relative placement, independent living and transitional living programs. These service arrays are being developed in some locations as a result of the child welfare reform efforts and these successes should be shared and expanded to other DPCs.
- The process for adopting a child by a Romanian family requires review and approval by several governing bodies including the local DPC, the Child Protection Committee, the RAC and the court. Policies, standards, and methodologies should examine ways to streamline the process so families will not experience significant delays or unnecessary burdens in completion of the adoption. Securing medical reports by the adoptive family as part of the home assessment and obtaining a new birth certificate for the child after the adoption were cited as difficult or time consuming for the adoptive family. Many of these procedures result in the adoptive family missing work, which may unnecessarily exclude some families with limited resources as potential adoptive families.
- Under current policies, maternal assistants are not prohibited from adopting, however, in practice, it appears that they are not encouraged or supported in adopting. Maternal assistants that we met indicated a willingness and desire to adopt the children they are caring for, but could not due to a variety of reasons such as a lack of financial resources and housing. It appears that the financial standard for recruiting and studying maternal assistants and adoptive families may differ in actual practice. Unfortunately this practice does not help children achieve permanency earlier with a family where an attachment has already occurred. In addition, experience has shown that families who provide foster family care are often the same ones who will adopt older children or children with disabilities or special needs. In the United States for FY 1999 64% of the adoptions of children from the public child welfare system were by foster families.³ Policies and methodologies to promote and support adoption by maternal assistants should be developed and implemented. These policies should examine resource issues and consider the provision of incentives for maternal assistants who adopt children in their care who are older or who have special needs. These incentives should include counseling and medical services as well as a monthly allowance based on the individual needs of the child and consistent with the amount that a maternal assistant would receive for the child if he were in foster family care.
- Coordination with NGOs for the provision of services differs across local departments. Some local departments indicated an unwillingness to accept the home study from NGOs, while others coordinated the provision of services, including home studies, through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). The requirements that

³ U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, *The AFCARS Report*, (April 2000). <www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/stats/tarreport/rpt04003/ar0400.htm>

NGOs be accredited by the local Child Protection Committee and the RAC with no coordination or sharing of information among the accrediting bodies was reported to result in confusion and concern regarding the quality of services provided by some NGOs. Efforts should be made to ensure that the accreditation process provides assurance of the quality of services provided. Services should be coordinated to reduce duplication. Information regarding the utilization of MOUs should be shared between DPCs.

Promote domestic adoption through a national public awareness campaign and national and local recruitment campaigns.

- Both general and targeted recruitment is needed to develop the numbers of adoptive homes needed for the children within the system. Recruitment campaigns are needed, both on a national and local level, that provide for child specific, targeted recruitment for sibling groups, older children, children with disabilities, and within diverse ethnic groups such as the Rroma community. The outcome of these efforts should be shared between DPCs.
- A variety of recruitment tools should be utilized such as newspapers, adoption exchange listings of approved prospective adoptive families in judets across Romania and adoption photolisting books of waiting children. Standards must be developed and training provided to staff on the development and use of these tools.
- Recruitment should build on the success of the national public awareness campaign implemented in November 2001, and expand it to include recruitment for all children who need an adoptive family. The national campaign should be coordinated with DPCs and efforts made to work with them to develop a local adoptive family recruitment strategy that involves the local community.
- Coordination with the Rroma community is needed to develop recruitment strategies within that community.
- According to many of the professionals we interviewed, the belief that most of the children available for adoption are Rroma inhibits the successful recruitment of adoptive families. It is reported that prospective foster families have indicated an unwillingness to take Rroma children. However, some NGOs have had success in placing Rroma children in foster families. The bias against taking Rroma children has lessened as families see others experiencing success in parenting these children. These successful programs should be expanded and replicated in both the foster family and adoption programs.

Provide basic child welfare competency training to enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities of child protection staff working in local departments. This should be followed with specialized training for staff working in specialized areas such as adoption.

- Training on adoption has been provided to each of the DPCs in a joint effort between Holt, UNICEF, and the NACPA. Other NGOs also provide training in the area of adoption. While this has been well received and is seen as beneficial, ongoing standardized training is needed in this area. Often the DPC staff attending the training provided by NGOs is limited to one or two managers and the information from the training is not passed on to other staff providing the services. Plans have been made to provide training to NACPA staff, social workers and administrators in both the public and private sectors, and to the judiciary on the new adoption law and best practice standards.
- Training should be provided to address child protection staff's beliefs and bias about the adoptability of children within the system and provide them with the knowledge, skills and ability to implement a child-centered adoption program. This training must address the home study model used and stress a strengths based approach to assessing families as potential adoptive resources for children. Training should also be provided on lifebook preparation and the adoptive placement of children.
- Supervision of child protection staff is a critical component to ensure the provision of quality adoption and child protection services. Well-trained supervisors can provide on the job training and ensure adherence to laws, standards and methodologies. A strong supervisory structure can provide stability to the child protection staff that we were told changes frequently due to staff turnover.
- Conferences, forums or symposiums for child protection staff should be considered to share practice ideas, training on laws, standards and methodologies and models of service delivery.

Develop a system of supports for families adopting children of all ages and needs. These supports should include a monthly allowance if needed, services and training.

- Provide standardized pre-service training for adoptive parent applicants prior to placement of the child in their home.
- Provide support to families adopting children with disabilities, who are older, or are part of a sibling group. These supports should include incentives such as monthly allowances in the form of adoption subsidy assistance similar to the payment for foster family care. Other services such as counseling, medical care and maternity leave at the time of placement in the home are needed. Families should be encouraged to develop support groups and hold conferences and meetings for ongoing training and education after the adoption is legalized.
- While technically maternal assistants have the right to adopt, it appears that this is not encouraged in practice and in many instances it may be discouraged. Policies, procedures and supports are needed to promote adoption by maternal assistants of the children in their care who are available for adoption.

- In the cases of adoption across judets, adoptive families are often required to travel extensively to process the adoption. If this is required, the family's travel and expenses should be provided to facilitate the adoption.

Develop collaborative relationships and partnerships with other parts of the community that are involved in service delivery.

- We saw examples of collaborative relationships between DPCs and other stakeholders in the community. These included the County Council, and Departments of Education, Health, Justice and Labor. An example of such a partnership was seen in one DPC that reported that over the past year they recruited 89 maternal assistants and one of the most successful methods of recruitment was their work with the Department of Labor to identify potential maternal assistants. The same DPC worked with the Department of Education around the educational needs of youth in the system. When partnerships like these exist or are developed, they can result in more comprehensive and coordinated service delivery. Examples of successful partnerships should be shared among the DPCs.
- It is reported that DPCs are collaborating to complete adoptions between judets. When a family is approved, DPCs are searching for children in other judets for these families. While this is a strength that can be built upon, efforts must be made to redirect these efforts from finding a child for a family to an expansive effort to find adoptive families for waiting children. Networking among child protection staff across the country should be encouraged to promote adoption matching activities and placements of children between judets.

Ensure that local departments have adequate funds and staff to provide domestic adoption services.

- Services are not provided consistently in each DPC. In some offices, it is reported that social workers carry high generic caseloads, making it difficult to address the adoption needs of the children in care or the families seeking services. In other DPCs, domestic adoption services are provided by specialized staff with support and supervision resulting in more adoptions of children from the system.
- Provide incentives to local DPCs to develop domestic adoption programs.
- Provide adoption services at the community level where families reside. Involve the mayor's office and other members of the community to ensure the availability of adoption services at the local level.
- Provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas and good practice models through conferences, forums and meetings between DPC staff from across the country.

Develop and implement child welfare monitoring and tracking system to monitor case activities and promote positive outcomes for the child.

- A child welfare monitoring and tracking system is needed to focus on outcomes for children. Outcomes such as reducing the length of time in care and the time from entry into care to adoption should be monitored. In addition, a tracking system can assist in monitoring efforts to place children for adoption.

Appendix A.

List of Persons Interviewed

Department for Child Protection Sector 6:

Cristiana Morariu – General Director
Daniela Ciola – Assistant Director
Maternal Assistants – 2
Adoptive persons – 2

Department for Child Protection Ilfov:

Adrian Dumitrescu – General Director
Gabriela Anghelescu – Assistant Director
Mona Oproiu – Chief Monitoring Department
Ioana Nedelcu – Chief Familial Alternatives Department
Maternal Assistants – 2
Adoptive families – 2

Department for Child Protection Sector 4:

Anda Tarlea – General Director
Ovidiu Ferentz – Chief Familial Alternatives Department

Department for Child Protection Sector 3:

Sorin Vasile – General Director
Mihaela Petre – Assistant Director
Andrei Dumitru – Financial Director
Emilia Chitu – Chief Familial Alternatives Department
Marius Mihaita – President of the Commission for Child Protection
Maternal Assistants – 2
Adoptive families - 2

National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption:

Tatiana Popa, Director - Monitoring Direction
Theodora Bertzi, General Director – Strategies, Programs, Implementation Direction
Cristina Cuculas, Director – Executive Secretariat for Adoptions

Department of Child and Family Protection

Ecatarina Laudatu, Chief, Department of Child and Family Protection, Office of the Ombudsman

UNICEF

Smaranda Popa, National Program Officer

USAID

Lucia Correll, Senior Child Welfare Advisor

World Learning

Bill Saur, Director

Cerasela Porumb, Child Welfare Consultant

Sorina Artenisa Candea, Child Welfare Consultant

NGOs (Non Government Organizations)

Mona Gotteszman – Pro Child

Cristian Rosu – European Children’s Trust

Beth Bradford – Bethany Foundation

Child Welfare League of America

Ada White, Director of Adoption Services

Appendix B.

Scope of Work-Domestic Adoption Study

Background: Following the fall of the Ceausescu government in 1989, the West learned for the first time of the huge numbers of children living in state institutions in deplorable conditions. There was massive publicity about the plight of the children and citizens from foreign countries began coming to Romania to adopt children. Initially, there was little legal infrastructure to deal with the demand. This lack of structure and oversight led to reports of widespread corruption in the process. In 1997, the Romanian government briefly suspended international adoptions while it created a new system. The new system had two functions: it provided matching of children for inter-country adoption and it created a source of needed funds for child welfare activities in Romania.

The resulting "point" system relied heavily on authorized Romanian foundations to undertake matching available children with prospective adoptive parents. The number of children assigned to a particular foundation was based on the amount of points it was given for child welfare spending in Romania. Many foundations were receiving points solely for providing money and were not actively working for overall improvement in child welfare in Romania. The Romanian Adoption Committee was separated from the Child Protection Authority and became responsible for assigning the children referred from the local Judet level to foundations, called "repartition," and confirming the child-parent matches made by the foundations. This system became widely criticized as the costs of adopting children increased with little data about the welfare of the children and without strong accounting for the funds. A corollary to this is that unethical bodies and foundations did not encourage reintegration or national adoption, for which there were not large financial incentives, and rather encouraged availability of babies for inter-country adoption.

The rapporteur for the European Parliament, Baroness Nicholson, wrote a scathing report on the child welfare system in Romania and criticizing the international adoption set-up as a form of trafficking in children, she called for either a two year moratorium on international adoptions or for the EU to stop accession talks with the GOR. These strong mandates from the European Commission brought inter-country adoptions to a halt in 2001. On June 21, 2001, the RAC issued Decision 55 suspending acceptance of new applications for international adoptions. However, the RAC also allowed the continuation of adoption cases where the child's repartition was approved by the RAC at its December 14, 2000 meeting or earlier.

The Government of Romania (GOR) began drafting new adoption legislation and a working group of USAID, UNICEF, the EU and the DFID provided joint comments about the proposed legislative reforms. The requested study is to bolster the legislative reform in the area of domestic adoption. The United States is seen as the leader in developing and using techniques to encourage domestic adoption, ranging from Federal financial incentives to innovative recruiting practices.

Romanian domestic adoptions number approximately one third of inter-country adoptions. Yet, it is by law the option that must be considered before inter-country adoption. There has been little attention paid to this protective measure on behalf of children. In addition, the birthrate in Romania is on a decline. In Romania, total fertility rates decreased from just above replacement level in 1989 to only 1.3 children per woman in 1998." (Greenwell, 2001) This and Romania's desire to strictly follow the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have made a strong argument to develop new ways of fostering domestic adoption.

Action Requested: Conduct a study of domestic adoption in Romania to contribute to the effort to reform the adoption legislation and practice in Romania. New adoption legislation is being drafted by the Department for International Development (DFID) with input from USAID, UNICEF and European Commission. The results of this study will add to the development of the legislation and the implementing legislation in this area.

Objectives: The proposed study is to define and make recommendation regarding changes in policy and practice to facilitate development of an efficient, effective system of domestic adoption.

Steps of Activity:

- Conduct interviews in two counties or sectors of Bucharest to gather information. One county will have a high rate of domestic adoption and the other will have a low rate.
- Conduct interviews with child welfare experts in Romania.
- Test the hypothesis for judets in Romania, that there is a correlation between young children in placement centers and number of inter-country adoptions.
- Identify the social, political, cultural and economic barriers to domestic adoption.
- Identify culturally acceptable methods of recruitment.
- Test assumption that Romanians do not adopt nationally because of a belief that most available children are Roma.
- Identify methods of increasing domestic adoption for special populations such as disabled, sibling groups, ethnic minorities.
- Describe and Analyze current system, recognizing that this may be undergoing change.
- Conduct a limited survey among prospective parents to gather information regarding: their willingness to consider adoption, ages they would consider adopting, what services they would need to adopt, financial incentives that would encourage them to adopt.
- Assess the ability of the Department of Child Protection to perform adoption services including post-adoption services.
- Describe areas where the system is working and why it is working.
- Make recommendations for procedural and financial changes to develop a viable domestic adoption system.
- Develop practical mechanisms to encourage adoption, including post-adoptive services.

- Recommend procedure that would encourage Romanian citizens to adopt children.
- Prepare a briefing of the study conclusions before departing Romania
- Submit draft within two weeks of departing Romania.
- Complete final work in one week after receiving comments for USAID mission in Romania.