May 28, 2003

Dear Colleagues:

It was such a pleasure to meet you at the workshop. I very much appreciated the opportunity to get to know you and to initiate the project. Thank you for your good work and good suggestions.

As you know, at the workshop we briefly discussed the six (6) basic components of the National Reports. Based on our discussion in our meeting I have revised the content of the six items that were included in the material distributed at the workshop. The revisions are as follows:

1. Expenditures on recent legislation related to direct social services (excluding cash benefits and medical care benefits under social assistance programs). We need the total annual amount of expenditures, as well as the amount as a proportion of total yearly government budget or some comparable index. The information provided by the Bulgarian National Research Team that was distributed at the workshop provides an example. If possible, we would also like to have data by type of social service, gender, and rural and urban distributions. Estimates of expenditures on direct social services by NGOs would also be welcomed. Although I recognize how difficult these data are to obtain.

2. A brief overview of the intent of current legislation that impacts the delivery of social services, in general, and good practices, in particular. This should include an itemization of the aims of the legislation and the current barriers that impede implementation. We are interested in how legislation impacts the delivery of social services by both government and non-government agencies.

3. A brief overview of the intent of legislative reforms of social services under consideration. This should also include an itemization of the primary aims and potential barriers to reforms. Some items identified were identified at the workshop. I will send these to you and the participants.

4. A brief description of the characteristics of good practices for vulnerable populations receiving social services (e.g., victims of violence, domestic and child abuse, disabilities, addictions, mental health, etc.) in both government and nongovernment agencies. For example, the participants at the workshop suggested that client or consumer-oriented services was a characteristic of good practice. What exactly does this mean in practice and what makes it a good practice characteristic?

5. A discussion of which of these characteristics of good practices are the most productive in terms of transferability to other geographic areas or other services or sustainability in the context of limited resources? How would the characteristics be prioritized? For example, continuing education and training of staff was noted in the workshop as a characteristic of good practice. Given all the needs of agencies, how much of a priority is continuing education? Is this something that all agencies can do? Can services be sustained without continuing education?

6. A discussion of existing processes that facilitate the involvement of community stakeholders (trade unions, business, educators, local government, civil society, consumers, and volunteers) in decision-making and program implementation. What are the prevailing mechanisms for inclusion? Broad representation on advisory boards? Use of volunteers? Systemic approaches to delivering services that are community-based?

Please let me know if you would like to make additional modifications. We can continue to refine the areas until we are all in agreement. If I do not hear from you in a few days, I will assume that it is satisfactory.