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**ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION, PRESENTED BY THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

stipulates that "In exercising the rights and obligations under this law no restrictions or privileges shall be allowed, based on sex".

Article 307 of the Labour Code prohibits jobs which are physically hard and hazardous to women's, particularly mother's health. This prohibition is based on ILO Convention No 3 and is related with the biological function of women and anatomic - physiological peculiarities of their body system. The list of such activities is comprehensive and is included into Ordinance No 7 of 1987 concerning hazardous and physically hard jobs prohibited for women. In addition, in Chapter XV, section II and in some other provisions of the Labour Code a range of special rights are envisaged for women - employees - relevant to their potential or actual status of mothers, aiming to provide conditions also for factual equality.

Specific provisions are included in the national legislation (The Constitution, the Labour Code, etc.) which guarantee in particular the protection of maternity, childcare and family (ensuring for example paid maternity leave).

For example, article 312 of the Labour Code provides that a female employee who is a mother of a small child shall be entitled to work at home with the same or another employer until the child reaches the age of 6. The right is given both to the birth mother and the adoptive one. The work at home is done on the basis of agreement between the mother employee and her employer. When a female employee is reassigned to work at home with the same employer, he shall provide upon ceasing of the work at home, but not later than reaching of the age of 6 by the child, the job performed before reassignment at home, and if the job has been eliminated, another job with her consent and according to her professional qualification.

If the female employee starts work at home with another employer, her employment relationship with the employer with whom she had worked prior to her reassignment shall not be terminated, but she shall be given unpaid leave. When she ceases to work at home, but not later than reaching of the age of 6 by the child, the unpaid leave shall be terminated. If the job has been eliminated the employer shall provide another job with her consent. Art. 313 of the Labour Code explicitly allows the father to use mother's rights to work at home if the mother is not in a position to use them. It is a matter of agreement between both parents as for who is to exercise these rights.

The principle of equality and non-discrimination of women and men is observed also in case of unemployment. The higher relative share of unemployed women compared to the total number of unemployed persons (53.5%) is due mainly to the closing of jobs in branches with predominantly female workers. Therefore, despite the fact that women are relatively more affected by unemployment than men, there are no grounds to claim that there is a tendency towards feminisation of unemployment.

The Bulgarian pension legislation fixes minimum age for gaining a pension right, which includes two factors: work experience and age. According to article 2 of the Law on Pension, the pension right for these two factors occurs in the presence of a certain minimum age and insurance experience, which depend on the sex and labour category. The age is determined as follows:

Labour category	Men	Women
1 st category	52 years	47 years
2 nd category	57 years	52 years
3 rd category	60 years	55 years

There are some exceptions to these general rules, referring to the state of health, the type of the work, the social status. For example, according to the provision of article 4, paragraph 1 of the Law on Pension, mothers of many children retire after 15 years of work experience and at the age of 40 for 1st category, and at the age of 45 for 2nd and 3rd labour category. Mothers of many children are considered those women who have given birth and raised 5 or more children to the age of 8.

The Penal Code of the Republic of Bulgaria regulates the legal regime of crimes and punishments disregarding the sex of the citizens, excluding naturally the hypotheses when *corpus delicti* contains this indication. All types of violence against women - domestic violence, sexual harassment, etc. are regulated by the Penal Code. The amendments of the Penal Code over the last years have led to increase of sanctions for a number of crimes, concerning violence against women. In cases of violence against minors, the sanctions have become especially strict. The crimes of private character, which involve violence against women, are punished at the complaint of the victim. However, when a particular action constitutes a crime of general character, it is prosecuted without exception regardless of the appeal, lodged by the victim.

Recently, the relative share of women in the executive power and the public administration, including in the decision-making process has increased. Women's representation in the Parliament is 13,3 %. About 28,9 % of the administrative and leadership posts are occupied by women, as well as 57 % of the professional and technical posts. 28,1 % of the administrators and managers are women. Women are also well represented in the judiciary. Despite the already mentioned and other traditionally good legislative decisions, the problem of factual gender equality in Bulgaria, has not been resolved to the required extent - mainly because of the traditional role of women in the family, for example the upbringing of children; the underdeveloped system of public services, as well as other factors the relevance of which would diminish with time due to active policy of the state policy aimed at the elimination of inequality.

2. The Republic of Bulgaria is a party to most international instruments on human rights (The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) - as well as to international conventions on the rights of women such as the Convention on the Elimination of All

According to article 5 paragraph 4 of the Constitution, the international

equality in society, with the peaceful means of culture and cultural interaction - a Law on Culture was adopted in 1999. As for **section K** - *Improving the role of the mass media for achievement of full and true gender equality* - a Law on Radio and Television was adopted in 1998.

The Bulgarian government is firmly committed to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. We share the view that the best way to do so is to empower women who should participate, on an equal footing with men, in decision-making processes. At the same time, effective ways and means also involve men in the process of eliminating obstacles to equality, in changing the prevailing power structures and stereotypical gender roles have to be explored.

II. Financial and Institutional Measures

Over the last few years a number of external and internal factors had a negative impact on the economy of Bulgaria, thus influencing the economic activity of both women and men. The main internal problems and difficulties encountered during the transition towards market economy were the delay of economic reforms and the absence of a clear national strategy in this field, the decline in industrial production, etc. till 1997. As to the external obstacles several negative factors deserve to be mentioned: the heavy foreign indebtedness, the Gulf War which left a billion-dollar unpaid Iraqi debt to Bulgaria, the Kosovo crisis, the economic sanctions imposed against the FR Yugoslavia, severing Bulgaria's main overland transit routes to the Central and Western European markets and causing the country millions of dollars of losses in earnings.

These severe economic circumstances became serious obstacles for the advancement of structural reforms in the national economy, attracting foreign investments, stabilisation of the banking and financial sector and limited the opportunities of the government in the social field and, especially after the introduction of the Currency Board Agreement on July 1, 1997. Consequently, the burden of the economic crisis is carried by the overwhelming majority of the people, both men and women.

Women in Bulgaria have equal guaranteed access to all state resources, and in particular those in the sphere of health care, culture, education and social security. Funds are assigned according to the needs, and not by gender characteristics. For example, the resources of the Unemployment and Professional Qualifications Fund are

Types of benefits	Expenses are on the account of
Compensation for pregnancy and childbirth	Social security, national budget, local budgets
Payment for wage differences for transfer of pregnant women to appropriate work	Social security
One-time allowances for childbirth	Social security and local budgets
Compensation for child care	National budget, social security, local budgets
Monthly allowances for children	National budget, social security, local budgets

The expenses of the social security budget for the above benefits gradually increased in absolute terms and their share in the total of benefits was retained.

Data of the paid insurance to mothers for the period 1995-1998.

Indicator	1995	1996	1997	1998
Pregnancy and birth benefits	698 958	995 064	8 389 318	16 839 682
Paying off the divergence in wages in case of re-assignment of pregnant women or breastfeeding mothers	1 624	1 422	46 471	60 158
Compensations for child care	1 596 549	2 127 304	17 943 031	27 252 634
Birth promotion: Monthly allowances for children	6 632 547	9 329 840	88 692 526	111 037 362
One-time allowance for childbirth	133 593	204 250	1 351 155	2 3449 502

III. Implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action

1. Women and poverty

1.1. Examples of successful policies, programmes and projects to implement the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action

The main objective of the government in this sphere is the reduction of poverty among women and improvement of social assistance and social welfare.

However, despite the tendency for reduction, the unemployed women still prevail in the total number of the unemployed.

Structure of unemployment with regard to the sex - unemployed registered in Labour Offices

Indicator	1995	1996	1997	30.09.1998
Active population	47745424	4749223	4749476	
Registered unemployed	423773	478770	523507	410717
Women	235793	263417	287053	228044

are related to their health, education, professional orientation and qualification, employment, providing of suitable living conditions, social and economic protection. The Council of Ministers is authorised to determine the list of products and services to be assigned to the specialised enterprises and co-operatives of disabled people through state orders.

3. The Law on Protection in Case of Unemployment and Promotion of Employment (1997) provides that unemployment insurance is compulsory and voluntarily. Compulsory social insurance covers the following rights of the insured person: information about vacancies, inter-mediation for starting a suitable job, minimum employment, professional information and consultation, compensations and dole. People uninsured due to circumstances beyond their control also have the above

same or another employer until the child becomes 6. When she is not able to exercise

6. creating better living conditions for invalids at their home
7. priority development of suitable social service forms for vulnerable groups, social integration and reintegration of the dependent groups of the population.

2. Education and training of women

2.1. Examples of successful policies, programmes and projects to implement the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action

The main objective in front of the government in this sphere is to increase the professional preparation and qualification of women and girls and to ensure equal access of women to education.

New legislation

1. The right to education and equal access to it are guaranteed by the Constitution, the Law on Public Education, the Law on Higher Education and other legal regulations in the sphere of education.

2. In the system of education the access to professions and majors is free and is in compliance with the choices and abilities of the people applying for education. According to article 4 paragraph 2 of the Law on Public Education no restrictions or privileges based on sex are admissible; while the admission procedure and requirements do not have restrictive character.

3. The Law on Higher Education (1995) guarantees legal and factual gender equality, as well as conditions and positive prerequisites for the adequate participation of women in the process of obtaining higher education. Article 4 of the Law on Higher Education does not admit any privileges or restrictions based on **sex**. Article 8, items 3 and 4 ensure equal rights of women in financing their studies in state institutions of higher education, as well as in providing credits at certain terms, scholarships and other social benefits.

The Law on Higher Education gives the following legal opportunities to women (article 70, paragraph 1, items 6,7 and 12):

- to be elected to the governing bodies of the institution of higher education
- to use hostels, canteens, medical services, public and international transport reductions, as well as all premises and equipment of the higher school regarding its educational, research, sports and cultural work.
- women students have the right of association in educational, scientific, cultural and sports communities for protecting and satisfying their interests, as well as to become members of international organisations if their activity does not contradict the laws of the Republic of Bulgaria.
- mothers with children up to the age of 6 have guaranteed rights to special facilities when they apply for admission at higher schools. The Higher military schools in Bulgaria also offer admission for women to suitable specialities specified in their catalogues (regulation acts).

4. The Ministry of Education and Science issued Regulation N-5, dated 29.12.1996 concerning the requirements for improving teachers' qualifications in the system of public education and the order of acquiring professional qualification degrees. It provides for complete equality of women regarding career planning and professional development.

No privileges or restrictions based on sex are allowed in any educational level.

Level of education	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98
Elementary	47.64	47.56	47.57	47.69
Secondary	50,2	50.07	49.94	49.46
Higher	58.94	60.72	61.45	61.09

Programmes

The necessary prerequisites (normative and methodological) for expanding access to graduated adults' education and training in evening, shift or extra-mural forms of education are being created in the system of professional education and training. There are opportunities for taking part in short-term profession training courses, or qualification improvement, re-qualification or specialisation courses.

In Bulgaria there is a system of professional orientation on three levels - national, regional, local (at schools). 27 pedagogical consulting offices have been carrying out basic activities of professional orientation and consultation. Girls and women refer to them for advice concerning education, access to secondary and higher education opportunities, orientation in the labour market and possibilities for career development.

The correlation between girls and boys in secondary education according to types of schools is as follows:

	girls	boys
Schools of general education	523355	504099
Polytechnic schools	38916	71468

2.2. New initiatives

Educational documentation for new subjects which will be included in the process of education in the pre-professional preparation at general schools from the 1999-2000 school year has been worked out in the Ministry of Education and Science. It includes: ecology, marketing communications, medium and small sized enterprises information supply. Women and girls, housewives and mothers taking care of their children can be trained successfully in these subjects in the form of school and out-of-school training.

The Ministry of Education and Science together with PHARE Programme has been working on a project called "Improvement of the professional education" including "Improvement of the labour market necessities" in order to connect professional education and training together. Considering the data received about the necessity of skilled manpower, collected in two pilot project communities - Plovdiv and Pleven - programmes will be prepared together with the social partners - employers, branch organisations, etc.

2.3. Commitment to further actions

New legislation

A Draft law on Vocational Education and Training, which will regulate social relations concerning the right of vocational education and training according to personal interests, needs and abilities, is in the process of consideration. It will include the right of equal access to vocational or higher education and training of girls and women.

Programmes

Programmes for distance education, which will increase the access of mothers and housewives to professional training, language or computer courses, etc. are in the process of elaboration.

3. Women and health

The government's main objective in this field is to ensure equal access of women to health care and medical services.

3.1. Examples of successful policies, programmes and projects to implement the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action

New legislation

1. The Law on Health Insurance was adopted in Bulgaria in 1998. In compliance with its provisions a National health insurance system was established. It will start functioning by stages: fund raising through health insurance instalments starts on 1st July 1999 - the full set of services starts on 1st July 2000. Until then the resources for medical aid will be provided by the republican and municipal budgets. The following will continue to be covered by the state budget after that: emergency aid, hospital and psychiatric aid, haemotrasphysiology, obligatory immunisations, epidemiological examination, health programmes, state sanitary supervision, etc.

The law provides that the health insurance be obligatory and voluntary. The obligatory insurance is assigned to a health insurance fund, while the voluntary insurance - to special joint-stock companies. All Bulgarian nationals, foreign nationals and the people permanently residing in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as the persons granted asylum are subject to obligatory insurance. The National health insurance fund

guarantees the provision of medical and dental aid, medical rehabilitation, medicines and medical equipment for home treatment, etc. With the obligatory insurance the health insurance instalment is paid on the basis of compensation for temporary incapacity for work due to pregnancy, birth and child care. When the mother is on unpaid leave for bringing up children, this instalment is determined on the basis of 70%

A pilot project is being implemented on the territory of Sofia along with the introduction of the "EUROCAT" European system for registering congenital anomalies, which will create conditions for comparing the data with that of the other European countries.

The National oncology programme, an essential part of which is the struggle against these illnesses of women, is undergoing a process of consolidation.

Efforts for the prevention of cardio-vascular diseases which, in terms of frequency, draw level between women and men during the period of menopause are being pursued. Experts from various medical spheres have been working on the prevention of climacteric - gynaecologists, endocrinologists, rheumatologists in co-operation with companies producing and distributing medication, as well as the Ministry of Public Health, associated in several NGOs: Menopause Association, Histerectomed women, etc.

The implementation of a **Family Planning Project** within the PHARE programme of the European Union started in 1995. The main objective of the project was to lay the foundations of a national policy of protecting the reproductive and sexual health through increasing the use of modern methods for contraception and for decreasing abortion rates. It was elaborated in conformity with the Programme of Action of the Cairo Conference (1995) of the UN Population Fund and the Fourth World Conference on women in Beijing (1995). The main efforts were directed at the extension and improvement of the clinical, information and consulting services concerning family planning; ensuring equality in the access of disadvantaged to contraceptives; increasing the level of information for the population through the provision of adequate information materials; active participation of the mass media and the active commitment of non-governmental organisations.

As a result of the implementation of this project:

- Training courses for over 500 health and other specialists were organised on consulting, ways of communication, etc. National standards for updating training in medical universities and colleges concerning the problems of family planning, reproductive and sexual health, as well as for post graduate qualification of doctors, obstetricians and nurses were approved;
- after 1996 free contraceptives were given to disadvantaged women and to minor girls. 21 000 IUDs, 201 000 series of hormonal contraceptives and about 6 million condoms were received as humanitarian aid from the UN Population Fund. At the same time, during the second half of 1996 through the Family Planning Project, 335 000 series of hormonal contraceptives and 90 000 IUDs were purchased;
- over 30 information centres related to women's organisations and to the Bulgarian Family Planning Association have been opened;
- written and audio-visual materials have been created, addressed to different population groups, including minors
- an information system for the registration, monitoring and assessment of the family planning activities has been prepared, and included in the National Health Information System.

The National Centre for Medical Science and the Hygiene-epidemiologi4.78TJ-3 -1.18 TDC

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sexual health. At the end of 1997 a one-month mass media campaign for promoting contemporary methods of contraception, with the participation of national and local mass media was organised.

On a regional level the Family Planning Project is headed and co-ordinated by the hygiene-epidemiological inspectorates through their prevention and health promotion departments. The Family Planning and Sexual Health Association and women's non-governmental organisations work actively among students in and outside schools.

Up to the moment gynaecologists have been pursuing both reproductive health policies and policies of family planning, contraception, breast and cervix cancer prevention.

As a result of these policies, abortions have been reduced from 48,1 per thousand women in fertile age to 43,2 per thousand for the last year.

Within the framework of the health reform, which is being carried out, family planning is included as a basic element in the compulsory scope of activities of primary health care.

3.2. Examples of obstacles encountered

The economic difficulties, which Bulgaria has been experiencing, have affected the health care system. This is a lack of contemporary medicines, equipment and consumer products, a sharp rise in prices of medicines, the introduction of paid medical care.

1996

Index	Total number for the country			Cities			Villages		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Total number of diseases (001-999)	1125	665	460	752	443	309	373	222	151
Diseases (001-799)	1075	632	443	727	429	298	348	203	145
Traumas and poisoning (800-999)	50	33	17	25	14	11	25	13	6

1997

Index	Total number for the country			Cities			Villages		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Total number of diseases (001-999)	1123	634	4489	719	413	306	404	221	183
Diseases (001-799)	1070	605	465	692	397	295	378	208	170
Traumas and poisoning (800-999)	53	29	24	27	16	11	26	13	13

3.3. Commitment to further action

A reform in the primary aid and its separation from specialised pre-hospital aid is forthcoming.

Programmes

The implementation of a national programme on reproductive health is forthcoming and will be put into practice with the assistance of the World Health Organisation and the UN Population Fund.

4. Violence against women

The main objective of the government in this field is the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women.

communicative skills and work in a team through making the most of the experience, opinions and proposals of the non-governmental organisations in our country; and the training of specialised police officials dealing with the prevention of crimes and violence against women are also on-going.

3. An inter-disciplinary study on the problems of violence against and violence committed by women is forthcoming, involving experts in different fields and from various institutions.

4. IOM initiated the organisation and realisation of a preventive campaign regarding trafficking in women and girls in Bulgaria. The campaign is a part of series of similar events directed towards Central and East European countries and financed by European Union and USA. In our country this campaign is financed by the American government and amounts to 300 000 USD. IOM is going to involve Bulgarian governmental institutions and non-governmental organisations in its implementation. The campaign will last for one year, the first three months will be used for analysing the situation in Bulgaria and defining the vulnerable groups of the population, which it will be directed at, as well as determining specific forms of influence - seminars, posters, brochures, radio and television programmes, etc.

5. Women and armed conflicts

The Law on Defence and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria adopted in 1995 regulates women's participation in the defence system of the country.

Article 116, paragraph 2 of this law stipulates that women in Bulgaria are not required to do military service. However, women can be accepted for regular military service in the armed forces, performing duties determined by the Minister of Defence, on the

minimum working salary established in the country is paid to the military woman, apart from her remuneration (article 261).

Women can apply for and be educated in all higher military schools in the country. A

	Total	Women	Correlation
Total for the country	1719307	146183	85%
State enterprise	190686	156170	82%
Private enterprise	140137	127626	91%

7. Women in power and decision making

The main objective of the government in this sphere is juridical and factual equality and real participation of women in the decision making process.

The citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria, regardless of their sex, have the right to participate in the government of public affairs and the country's political life, either directly or through freely elected representatives. This right found its complete realisation after 1989 when political pluralism was established in the country.

Women in the legal profession mark considerable progress as well. Women employed in regional and district courts (judges, officers of the court and notaries) are 842 or over 60% of the total number of 1398.

Women equally with men represent Bulgaria at international fora and participate in the work of international organizations. 1/5 of the staff of the diplomatic representations of Bulgaria abroad are women, and their number constantly increases. Almost half of the staff and 50% of the higher decision-making posts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are occupied by women.

8. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

The implementation of the National Action Plan envisages that both the Governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as other institutions in the country operate in co-operation and separately.

The National Action Plan determines the major institutions, which play key roles for the implementation of the strategic objectives and priorities:

1. **The National Assembly** - adoption of the relevant Acts and the ratification of various international conventions, for compliance of adopted Acts and other decisions with gender equality.
2. **The Government** - development and implementation of the National Action Plan, inclusive strategies, draft laws and others regulative acts, programmes and projects.
3. **The Judicial power** - in the fight against violence, crime, discrimination
4. **Non-governmental organisations** - preparation, control of implementation and realisation of the National Action plan
5. **Trade unions**, including Commissions, attached to them for protection of the rights and interests of working women and young people, as well as the National Council for Tripartite Co-operation.
6. An advisory Council of experts on problems of women within the National Council of Ethnic and Demographic Issues.

The observance and protection of human rights is a constitutional duty for all State institutions at national and local level. It would be evident in these circumstances that specific national machinery to promote gender equality women and men had not been constituted as a separate single mechanism. In fact these functions are performed by all government ministries and agencies (e.g. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Health etc.), as well as at the local level.

9. Human rights of women

9.1. Examples of successful policies, programmes and projects to implement the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action

In the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria adopted by the Grand National Assembly on July 12, 1991, the equality of citizens before the law was reconfirmed as constitutional principle being the basis of civil society and the state. Article 6, paragraph 2 provides that: "All persons shall be equal before the law. There shall be no privileges or restriction of rights on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic self-identity, sex, origin, religion, education, opinion, political affiliation, personal or social status or property status." This principle is further elaborated in the other legislation and is valid for the entire legal system of Bulgaria.

No separate special institution a judicial or non-judicial to monitor the observance of human rights, including women's rights, exists at present. This is a constitutional duty of all judicial and other State institutions at national and local level.

A large number of non-governmental organizations active in the field of Human Rights are registered in the country, including women's organizations: the Bulgarian Women's Union, the Democratic Union of Women, the National Women's Forum, the Union "We, Women for Dignity and Equality", the National Movement "Women and Mothers against Violence", the Christian Women's Movement, the Association of Women with Juridical Professions, the Association of University Women, the Association "Animus", the Foundation "Gender project for Bulgaria", the Association "Bulgarian Woman", the Foundation "Guyven - Trust", the Center "Nadja", a number of women's clubs in different spheres, etc.

These organizations contribute to the realization of women in social life and the observance of their rights, elaborate and implement programs and projects on the problems of women, their development and progress, engage in cultural, educational, charity and international activities, assist women in business and scientific and research work, provide legal and psychological assistance to victims of violence, etc.

New initiatives

A subject of discussion is the establishment of the ombudsman institution, which would have responsibility for the rights of women.

10. Women and media

The Law on Radio and Television, adopted in 1998, does not allow the broadcast of commercials containing pornography or such inciting violence or conduct which violates social order or standards of behaviour (article 76 paragraph 1).

The same prohibits circulation of commercials based on sex discrimination.

The Law on Radio and Television determined the formation of a National Radio and Television Council, which is authorised to monitor the radio and television broadcasters. This Council consists of 9 members, 2 of which are women.

The prevailing part of the media reporters on a national and regional level are women.

The current executive director of the Bulgarian National Television is also a woman.

11. Women and the environment

The main objective of the government in this sphere is to ensure the equal participation

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health and recommendations for people's behaviour in case of expected negative effects. According to article 15 paragraph 1 of the Law on Environment Protection if a request for access to public information is rejected without any legal ground or the access public information has been illegally restricted or the information is considered misleading citizens may ensure the defence of their rights through administrative and legal proceedings.

Programmes

1. The Ministry of Environment and Waters is in the process of implementation of 3 national campaigns:

- "To clean Bulgaria"
- "Stimulating the use of unleaded petrol"
- "Against ozone layer destruction"

2. The Ministry of Environment and Waters is in the process of negotiation with the office of JOCV/JICA in Sofia for possible financial support for an environmental programme "Women's participation in the process of environment protection", which is similar to the one already implemented in Japan.

3. The Ministry of Environment and Waters helps methodologically and financially the realisation of projects, oriented to women's participation in activities in the field of environmental protection - protecting nature, ecotourism, planting, environmentally friendly agriculture. A Partnership has been established between the Ministry of Environment and Waters and the Black Sea Association of Women in Bourgas.

4. A new environmental project - Women in Defence of the Biodiversity Project is in the process of implementation. According to the National Action Plan for Protection of Biodiversity, during the next five years this project will require about 25 million BGL.

5. An international project - Agricultural ecology - quality of the waters in the basin of the river Yantra has been elaborated. It is financed by USAID and is aimed at training women from rural regions in composting green refuse, household waste and manure. It could prevent additional pollution resulting from agricultural activities, i.e. it could provide the basis for development of environmentally friendly agriculture in Bulgaria. Training of local women in how to exercise control over the waters draining from the farmyards has been carried out.

6. In the system of vocational education and training a new subject has been introduced - Environment protection teeducation and trainTpstroduced

holidays of the forest, mountain excursions, club activities, laboratory practice, nature protecting work, schools in the open, summer camps, etc.

b. Public relations oriented to:

- organising and co-ordinating the relations with the mass media
- organising public events and campaigns
- co-ordinating public events

11.2. Commitment to further action / new initiatives

New legislation

children are returned to their family. If impossible, they are sent to a specialised health centre or social-pedagogical boarding school.

- Social-pedagogical boarding schools - they shelter minors who are not taken care of by relatives until they reach 18.
- Homes for physically disabled children or children with chronic illnesses - these are specialised homes for children suffering from physical disease which have resulted in disability, if the active treatment has finished.
- Homes for mentally retarded children - they shelter mentally retarded children when their state of health and behaviour do not allow them to remain in the family.

Children without parents are entitled to more social aid than other citizens. The number of children in family also leads to increasing the amount of social benefits. Students, whose families are in an unfavourable financial situation, are granted state scholarships.

A national network of 80 Health schools has been set up, where children are trained in the prevention of drug addiction, sexual problems and children's prostitution, etc.

A programme on nutrition training of orphans and children of low social status sheltered in children homes has been prepared.

Examples of obstacles encountered

The rise on unemployment and the impoverishment of the population have had a negative impact on the situation of children over the last years – resulting in a rise in the number of abandoned children, ill-treatment and violence against children, sexual abuse. The government is aware that there are still a number of unresolved problems such as family consultation, establishment of a state body (mechanism) which will co-ordinate the policy of raising and upbringing children. The Government will further pursue its efforts aimed at resolving these problems. The measures undertaken by the government for overcoming these negative tendencies are legislative and practical (see p.26 and 27).

12.2. Commitment to further action

Legislative measures

1. A draft Family Code is being elaborated
2. A draft law on the protection of children and a draft law on the prevention of juvenile criminality are in the process of discussion at the National Assembly.