



## **EVALUATION REPORT**

### ***CAMPAIGN FOR ROMA EDUCATION***

#### **- Enrollment and continuity in the education process -**

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November, 2008  
Skopje, The Republic of Macedonia  
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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Roma Centrum from Kumanovo realized the project *Campaign for Roma Education (Enrolment and continuity in the education process)* in the primary schools of 11 cities (Kumanovo, Prilep, Skopje, Bitola, Tetovo, Kriva Palanka, Vinica, Kocani, Kavadarci, Veles and Stip) in the period from February 2007 to August 2008.

The project **mission** was “Full enrolment of Roma pupils into the regular primary education through promotion of socially responsible education policy and elimination or minimizing of the Roma pupils drop outs”.

The Project **objectives** were the following:

1. Increase the number of enrolled Roma pupils in the elementary education (zero year and primary) through improved institutional cooperation in all levels and awareness rising for the importance of education within the Roma community.
2. Creation of a data base, which will serve as a main tool to the educational institutions in creation of policy on improvement of Roma education and progress monitoring of already enrolled pupils with the previous project activities.

The objective of the evaluation are to assess the past performance of the project, while paying particularly attention to the impact of the project actions against its objectives, to identify key conclusions and lessons learnt, and propose practical recommendations for follow-up actions. To fulfil this, it was realized through four different stages:

1. Inception stage within the desk phase,
2. Finalisation of the desk phase,
3. Field phase, and
4. Synthesis phase.

For the evaluation purposes we covered representatives from the various stakeholder groups (project management team and mediators, parents, school officials, education advisors at municipal levels, representatives of State Educational inspectorate, representatives from the media, Government representative, responsible for the Roma Decade). The stakeholders interviewed were randomly chosen from Skopje, Prilep, Kumanovo, Vinica and Tetovo.

With the Evaluation report, we first present the relevancy of the identified project issue to the overall situation, and tried to provide information that supports our perspectives as evaluators. From the analyzed statistical and official findings and especially from the field analysis we concluded that the problem that the project deals with is well defined and relevant to the needs of the targeted beneficiaries. Also, the overall planned and applied methods and tools for the project stakeholders correspond to the working surroundings and conditions.

Further on, we continued in presenting whether the project purpose and desired effects have been achieved. To demonstrate this we looked into the separate activities that were defined with the project and evaluated if the planned benefits have been delivered and received, as perceived by all key stakeholders. Through the evaluation report we present statements, based on the responses we received during the

interviews with the stakeholders, conclusions to which we came through observations in the field and by going through the project materials and documents. In this part we evaluate the work of the mediators and their and the project's relation to the institutions, families and media. We provide objectively our findings regarding the promotional material, the debates, the educational material distributed to the children, the database and the personal documentation that the Project provided.

In the second part of the chapter where measuring the project effectiveness, we matched the performance targets initially set to the actual results that were achieved. For that purpose we looked into the Expected outcomes and based on the defined Measurement indicator we presented our Findings whether we consider the output to have been achieved or not.

In regards to this part we consider the Project to have been successful, as based on the official school records for the school year 2007-2008, that we received from NRC, and which the mediators have gathered from the school officials, the total number of enrolled Roma pupils in the primary education was 5.816. Based on the official school data, that we worked with, from the total number of 5.816 enrolled students, 601 (10%) were irregular at the classes and 252 (4%) dropped-out from school, which means that approximately 96% of the total enrolled students continued their education, i.e. NRC met its targeted aim not to have more that 10% drop-outs.

The main **conclusions** that we came up with as a Project evaluators, through the review of the existing Project documentation, and especially as feedback from the interviewed parties, are the following:

- The applied methods and tools are relevant to the defined problem and needs, and some of them are innovative, but yet well corresponding to the working environment.
- The deviation from 15 to 19 mediators is justified by the scope and sensitivity of work.
- The training as a method of job inception has proven to be successful and needs to continue in the future.
- The mediators demonstrated good cooperation with the schools and the Roma parents, which is supported by the increased number of enrolled students and the decreased number of irregular and drop-out students.
- The school material is a practical incentive for both the parents and students.
- The promotional material is not very effective and efficient way to address the target group, and to have its attention on the long run, as opposed by the direct contact and field work of the mediators that is a great success.
- NRC proved to be successful in providing personal documents for the children who do not have it, and as a result can not sign into school.
- The data gathered through the questionnaires is highly valuable, not only for the project, but also for the educational institutions. However, the database must be further improved and be available on-line.
- NRC shows excellent cooperation with and strong utilization of the media.

To further improve the Project performance and strengthen its role in the society, we **recommend** for NRC to focus on the following:

- The job introduction through training of the personnel needs to continue.

- Continuous upgrade of knowledge and skills of the mediators need to be provided.
- Improved job performance monitoring system needs to be developed and introduced.
- NRC should strengthen its capacities in Lobbying and Advocacy.
- NRC should better cooperate with other similar NGOs, so that it can increase its negotiation and influence power.
- NRC needs to do more effective follow-up upon the taken initiatives and findings, which arise from their work.
- More intensive work and education of the Roma parents and more of the activities and events to be organized in the Roma settlements.
- NRC should also try to influence directly or through the institutions the language issues that Roma children face with when they first go to school.
- The material support with educational accessories should continue, at least for the children who come from poor families.
- NRC needs to have the database available for its employees available on-line and it should upgrade it more regularly.
- The cooperation with the local media, through the mediators needs to be strengthened.

Given all this, the overall assessment for the Project, based on the field visits we concluded is that the stakeholders have positive opinion and show appreciation of the Project activities, and recommend the project continuation, as if it stops at this point it will bring to an end the positive changes and processes that have started in providing quality education to Roma children.

As evaluators, we also recommend the Project to continue, while considering further strengthening of its role in awareness rising for importance of education within the Roma community, through continued institutional cooperation, and to increase its influence in triggering policy changes for improvement of Roma education.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background

The project *Campaign for Roma Education (Enrolment and continuity in the education process)* was realized by the National Roma Centrum – Kumanovo, on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, covering primary schools from 11 cities, in the period from February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 to August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008.

The project **mission** was defined as “Full enrolment of Roma pupils into the regular primary education through promotion of socially responsible education policy and elimination or minimizing of the Roma pupils drop outs”.

The Project **objectives** were:

1. To increase the number of enrolled Roma pupils in the elementary education (zero year and primary) through improved institutional cooperation in all levels and awareness rising for the importance of education within the Roma community.

2. Creation of a data base, which will serve as a main tool to the educational institutions in creation of policy on improvement of Roma education and progress monitoring of already enrolled pupils with the previous project activities.

The project was a continuation of the Roma education Campaign that was conducted from January 2006. The campaign continued in Skopje, Kumanovo and Prilep, and was extended to 8 more cities from Macedonia, i.e. Tetovo, Kriva Palanka, Kavadarci, Veles, Bitola, Vinica, Stip and Kocani. The project was modified from its first stage, when it addressed “Mobilization of the Roma parents to send children in mainstream schools” to “Enrolment and continuity in the education process”.

The targeted Project objectives were planned to be achieved through work with the *parents, schools and institutions*, and *Macedonian journalists*. The anticipated method was through direct contact and close cooperation with Roma parents, permanent communication and mutual dissemination of information with the schools and institutions, and intensive work with various printed and electronic media.

Hence, the primary Project beneficiaries were the Roma children and their parents, from the targeted 11 cities. Other very important stakeholders, beside the Project team, were the schools’ staff, the Department for education, culture and sports, Ministry of education and science – State educational inspectorate, the local governance and the unit for education and sports within the local governance, and the electronic and printed media. The Project in general, has an impact on national level, and serves the general purpose of equal society integration of the smaller ethnic communities, in this particular case through equal opportunities for education.

## **2.2 Evaluation Objective's**

The final independent evaluation will assess impact of the implemented activities and their contribution to the planned project objectives, as well as Project effectiveness. The evaluation will serve as a ground base for further step project modifications and other project developments.

The evaluation’s objectives are to:

- Make an overall independent assessment about the past performance of the project, while paying particularly attention to the impact of the project actions against its objectives, and
- Identify key conclusions and lessons learnt, and propose practical recommendations for follow-up actions.

## **2.3 Methodology**

The evaluation process was managed by the BASME independent team of evaluators, with the assistance and cooperation with the Project team members, the National Roma Centrum (NRC) office staff and the mediators.

The BASME evaluators’ team implemented the evaluation task into 4 stages:

1. Inception stage within the desk phase,
2. Finalisation of the desk phase,
3. Field phase, and
4. Synthesis phase.

During the first stage, *inception within the desk phase*, the evaluators worked on the following:

- Identification of the objectives and the scope of work,
- Studying the Project proposal, REF monitoring and reporting documents to REF by NRC.
- Identification of stakeholders to be covered with the evaluation.
- Development of evaluation questions, based on the studied material, so that they objectively measure and verify the project accomplishments (based on the primary defined project objective, outcome and indicators).
- Development of a work plan and final time scheme for finalization of the evaluation task.

For the phase of *Finalization of the desk research* the following activities were foreseen and implemented:

- A systematic review of relevant available documents and interview with Project management (two visits to NRC office Kumanovo).
- Based on the detailed questionnaire with the NRC management team, indicative questionnaires for the stakeholders to be covered with the evaluation were developed.
- List of tools to be applied in the field phase was developed and the schedule for the field visits was defined in cooperation with the Project management team.

The *field phase* started after all project material were reviewed and studied, and it was implemented with assistance of the mediators. The evaluation team organized a workshop with mediators in the first days of the field phase, as they were of key importance to the project implementation and success. The objective of the workshop was to identify what was according to them the key to success, which were the major challenges they faced with, and what future activity continuation and/or modifications they recommend, based on their field experience.

At this stage, the evaluators submitted an indicative list of people to be interviewed, dates of visit, and name of mediator in charge. Necessary planning and preparatory measures were undertaken, to ensure adequate contact and consultation with, and involvement of, the different stakeholders.

The evaluation covered representatives from the various stakeholders defined with the project. Thus, the following parties from Skopje, Prilep, Kumanovo, Vinica and Tetovo were included in the evaluation process:

- *Roma parents*, were visited at their homes by the evaluator and the mediator for the chosen area. Three families per mediator were selected randomly by the evaluators, with whom an interview was conducted.
- *School officials*, i.e. directors, pedagogues, psychologists, social workers and school teachers.
- *Education advisors at municipal level*, with exception of Vinica, where the officer for Minority issues was interviewed, who is of Roma nationality, and Vinica is one of the few Municipalities that have this type of office.
- *Representatives of the State Educational Inspectorate*
- *Representatives from the media*

- *Government representative responsible for the Roma Decade.*

The work plan was flexible enough to adjust to any last minute difficulties in the field, even though there were not any that affected seriously the primary evaluation schedule.

After all field visits were finished, the phase was concluded with a brief summary of all the findings that were collected during the interviews. The reliability and coverage of the collected data was also reviewed by the evaluators' team, as well as the overall findings.

The *synthesis phase* was mainly devoted to the preparation of the Evaluation report. The project outline was discussed and concluded. The evaluators' team split their roles, so that one wrote the evaluation report, and the other controlled the objectivity and balance of the presented findings, as well as the applicability of the recommendations. The report writer used the most reliable and appropriate sources of information and harmonized the data from the various sources, so that to allow ready interpretation, the neutrality of which was controlled by the reference group members.

## 2.4 Work plan and timetable

Activity
<i>Inception</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of the objectives and the scope of work.</li> <li>• Studying the Project proposal, REF monitoring and reporting documents to REF by NRC.</li> <li>• Identification of stakeholders to be covered with the evaluation.</li> <li>• Development of evaluation questions, based on the studied material, so that they objectively measure and verify the project accomplishments (based on the primary defined project objective, outcome and indicators).</li> <li>• Development of a work plan and final time scheme for finalization of the evaluation task.</li> </ul>
<i>Finalization of desk research</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of the objectives and the scope of work.</li> <li>• Studying the Project proposal, REF monitoring and reporting documents to REF by NRC.</li> <li>• Identification of stakeholders to be covered with the evaluation.</li> <li>• Development of evaluation questions, based on the studied material, so that they objectively measure and verify the project accomplishments (based on the primary defined project objective, outcome and indicators).</li> <li>• Development of a work plan and final time scheme for finalization of the evaluation task.</li> </ul>
<i>Field phase</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of the objectives and the scope of work.</li> <li>• Studying the Project proposal, REF monitoring and reporting documents to REF by NRC.</li> <li>• Identification of stakeholders to be covered with the evaluation.</li> <li>• Development of evaluation questions, based on the studied material, so that they objectively measure and verify the project accomplishments (based on the primary defined project objective, outcome and indicators).</li> <li>• Development of a work plan and final time scheme for finalization of the evaluation task.</li> </ul>
<i>Synthesis phase</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of the objectives and the scope of work.</li> <li>• Studying the Project proposal, REF monitoring and reporting documents to REF by NRC.</li> <li>• Identification of stakeholders to be covered with the evaluation.</li> <li>• Development of evaluation questions, based on the studied material, so that they objectively measure and verify the project accomplishments (based on the primary defined project objective, outcome and indicators).</li> <li>• Development of a work plan and final time scheme for finalization of the evaluation task.</li> </ul>

### 3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The evaluation questions were defined so that they reflect upon the relevance of the defined project issue, as well as the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the Project.

With the prepared questionnaires, the Project stakeholders and beneficiaries, gave their objective opinion about the following:

- The relevancy of the project activities in relation to the accomplishment of the general and the specific Project objectives,
- Which elements were successfully implemented by the project team and accepted as such by the project stakeholders, and which ones could be improved, and
- To what extent did the Project influence the shift of paradigms about the Roma community in general, as well as the shape of attitude and awareness rising about the Roma education as a specific issue?

The questionnaire forms for summative Project evaluation were distributed to:

- **Involved parties in the Project implementation** – Project management team and mediators,
- **Direct project beneficiaries** – Roma families, and school and local governance representatives.
- **Indirect beneficiaries** – The branch officers from the Ministry of education and science, and Media.

The overall purpose of the prepared forms of questionnaires, distributed to the stakeholders, was to obtain an objective perspective about the project success and to provide valid conclusions and recommendations for potential further Project extension.

#### 3.1 Problems and needs - Relevance

The four action plans under the 2005-2015 Decade of Roma Inclusion, that were prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social policy, concern development of *education, housing, employment and health care*, still have limited impact and tangible progress for the Roma community. At the period when the project was developed, *“The enrolment rate in primary education is below 30% and high drop-out rates are still recorded, in particular among girls”<sup>1</sup>. “Although there was a slight increase in Roma children attending school in 2007, they still have the lowest levels of participation in primary school, with only 63% attendance and the steps taken to tackle high drop-out rates from the education system are inadequate”<sup>2</sup>.*

The above supports the need to address outside of the conventional system forms the need of increasing the number of enrolled Roma students into the primary education and to decrease the drop-out rates, through improved institutional cooperation and awareness rising for the importance of education within the Roma community. To do this, NRC identified the Roma families and children at the age of 6 to 8, from the 11 cities covered by the Project as main beneficiaries, and direct involved parties were the schools, the municipalities, and the educational institutions. Indirectly the project had a

<sup>1</sup> European Commission Progress report on the Republic of Macedonia 2007 (<http://www.sep.gov.mk>)

<sup>2</sup> European Commission Progress report on the Republic of Macedonia 2008 (<http://www.sep.gov.mk>)

positive impact on the image of Macedonia, as a country that enables equal access to education to all ethnic communities, and on the community in general, by supporting actions that help the diminishing of the stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination.

According to Nikolina Koneska, Social worker at the primary school “Dobre Jovanoski” from Prilep, without the Project and mediators’ support they were not going to be able to access the Roma community, due to primarily trust issues, as a consequence of which the number of unregistered children and drop-out rate would have remained high. The project proved to have addressed a genuine issue through appropriate methodology that gave tangible results, and in Koneska’s opinion if it does not continue, especially at a point when they have identified the need for employment of Roma person to do this exact work, but do not have the resources for it, they will go back in the process and both sites (Roma children and parents, and school and educational system) will suffer great losses.

Our findings show that currently there are no effective mechanisms applied by the official state institutions to access the Roma community and to influence the low school enrolment rate and the high drop-out rate. Things are additionally complicated since the enforcement of the Law for Protection of personal data. Previously, the Ministry of internal affairs submitted lists of children to the school, who should be registered in the active school year. With the enforcement of this Law, this data is considered as data of personal character, so it is no longer available and there is no system to get to these children, especially when the parents are not aware about the need to register them. The “Campaign for Roma education” addressed exactly these weaknesses, and identified the Roma children that should be enrolled in school and approached each one of the families directly through its mediators. This resulted with higher enrolment rate not only of the pupils who should be regularly registered, but also tackled the problem of children who are older and have not started school yet.

The mediators also worked on decreasing the drop-out rate and have accomplished good results, through awareness rising, direct visits and education, and the other tools applied throughout the Campaign, such as debates, promotional material and projection of the documentary movie “The key is in your hands”. However, sometimes their impact to the issue was limited or even low, due to the hard living conditions of the Roma families, which has direct negative impact on the children’s attendance to school. The negative effects were reduced to some extent by the offering of the school materials.

The Project primarily planned to address the identified problem through 15 mediators, the number of whom increased to 19, i.e. all that attained the training program. Even though this has not been initially planned, due to the sensitivity of the issue, as well as the volume of work, we found that this has only had a positive impact to the project outcomes.

*Hence, generally spoken, the defined problem is relevant to the identified needs of the targeted beneficiaries, and the overall planned and applied methods and tools for the identified stakeholders correspond to the working surroundings and conditions.*

## 3.2 Achievement of purpose - Effectiveness

### 3.2a Delivery of planned benefits to the stakeholders

#### 15 Roma mediators

The primary planned number of mediators, to cover the work in the 11 cities, was 15. With the job selection process 19 were selected to attend the training program, after which 15 were to be chosen, to continue working. However, the project management team estimated that greater effectiveness will be achieved if all of the trained personnel are engaged in the work. According to them this did not cause changes in the primarily budget planning.

*In our opinion this deviation from the initial planning of employing 15 mediator to 19, is justified by the volume of the field work, the sensitiveness of the assignment, as well as the uniqueness in the approach that was for the first time established in Macedonia. The further on evaluated and described project outcomes also support the validity of the made decision.*

Training for the Roma mediators was planned, which was realized through 5-day workshop. Due to the perception of the mediators themselves, the training enabled them to get clear and unified understand the project concept, speeded up the inception period phase and provided them self-confidence and knowledge of how should they act in various situations. At the training the participants received also written material that has been very helpful for them throughout their work. Important for success of the mediators in their opinion is their experience, approach, knowledge about the project purpose and tasks, which is crucial to get the attention of the target group or beneficiary. To be a good mediator, the communication skills and capacity are important, as well as negotiation skills and techniques, and readiness for compromise.

*The mediators feel that through the training they attended at the beginning of the project, they strengthened their communication skills and confidence, but they need additional capacity building in **negotiation techniques and making and accepting compromise**, as these are important for their further professional upgrade.*

For the project management team, the training enabled them to see the capacity of each of the mediators, and so to delegate their responsibilities adequately. With the realization of the training for the mediators, the project management team assured the realization of the Project, as the mediators were trained in *communication skills, familiarized with their rights and obligations, acquainted with the legal framework that concerns their work, by a lawyer, social worker and the trainers*. They understood the project principles of work, identified the stakeholders and the working approach with each one of them. The mediators also learnt how to report to the Project management team.

*This way of job introduction is positive and needs to continue, especially for the newly employed, who get clear acquaintance with the working procedures and the team, but also for the existing team members, as they build and further develop their work approach, based on exchange of previously gained experience.*

## Visits of Roma families

The mediators visited the Roma families from the 11 cities and gathered the following data:

- Information about the **parents** (mother and father name, place and date of birth and level of education),
- Information about the **children** in the family (children's name, place and date of birth and level of education),
- Information about **personal documents** (Birth certificate, identity card, health insurance card, certificate of marital status, passport),
- Questions regarding **education** (home conditions, education material, acceptance in the school by the teacher and children, level of integration and support they receive, and other),
- Description of the **household**.

All this data was *fed* to Data software<sup>3</sup>.

The visits to the families did not end with the survey. According to the parents and school official statements that we have gathered through our field visits, any time the children were irregular at school, or there were any type of identified problems related to the school, the mediators contacted and visited the families.

*By doing so, the school absences were limited and the number of school drop-outs was decreased, as the **parents** were **more educated and aware about the importance of education**, but also about the **legal penalties that would be applied against them, unless their children go to school**.*

The mediator also took extra steps to supporting and informing the parents and supporting the Roma families to improve their quality of life. Hence, outside of their project responsibilities they worked with the Ministry for health, to educate the parents that their children should be vaccinated against mumps, as the disease started spreading rapidly, especially among the Roma community. Knowing the families and having regular contacts with them, the mediators voluntarily helped the action to disseminate information about the disease, by this showing their care for the Roma community and readiness to help.

## Preparation of educational materials (brochures)

With the project document, publishing of 1.000 copies of educational material (brochures) was planned. However 5.000 copies of the brochure were published, in a smaller format than initially planned. The brochure included what it primarily suggested, information about the change from 8-year basic education to 9-year, information, about the program, and about the possibility to choose Roma language as elective subject in third grade. The brochure was published bilingually, in Roma and Macedonian language. The Project management explains that they decided to publish more copies of the brochure, in order to cover as many (if not all) of the Roma parents from the 11 cities, who were to enrol their children in first grade. Therefore, the brochures were mailed to all the families registered in the database, and some were distributed through direct filed visits of the mediators.

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<sup>3</sup> Additional information and opinion of the evaluator about the data software are given further down in this chapter.

Through our field visits, we came to the conclusion that only few of the parents remembered having received the brochure or its contents, and some mentioned that they have not received it. The reason for not receiving it sometime lies in the mailing services, but still there were enough copies distributed directly to the parents, even though they did not have maybe the desired effect. The information was received more effectively directly from the mediators, when they conducted the surveys with the families. As result of the combination of these two efforts, the majority of the Roma parents covered by the project enrolled their children at school in May, and not September, as it was the earlier practice.

Another point made by the parents was that they need more material support for their children, such as clothing, breakfast, school material. These things are costly and directly affect the motivation of the children to go to school and the readiness of the parents to send them, as they enable to diminish or lower the discrepancy between the other pupils. Sabina Redzepova, official representative of the Government, responsible for the Roma Decade, through our interview also pointed out that instead of investing into promotional material, resources should be directed towards direct contact with the families and material support, which NRC did by combining the three methods.

*In our opinion the **promotional material** could be to **raise the awareness** about the specific identified issues **in the general public**, while as the mediators should continue even more intensive and direct contact with the families and the educational institutions' representatives, as this method is the key to success of the project.*

An additional expense, outside the primary planning, was the printing of 100 posters that were used to promote the Campaign and were displayed mostly at the schools and the Roma communities. The posters were also used at the points where the debates took place.

### **Presentation of documentary movie in the Roma settlements**

The documentary movie "The key is in your hands", was presented during the 35 organized debates, where various stakeholder representatives were present, and 20 times in the Roma settlements throughout the 11 cities. The NRC management team pointed out that they took the lead in this approach, since as an NGO they were the first ones to influence the target group through a positive example, presented through a documentary movie. Ever since, other NGOs working with Roma, which recognized the benefits, apply this method, as well.

Only few of the parents whom we have interviewed have seen the movie, but when we explained them its contents, they all agreed that it would have positive influence to them and especially to their children willingness to attend school, as they need to see more positive examples about the Roma in general.

It is good that the movie was presented at a local Roma TV station, where bigger number of the population could see it.

*We believe that the documentary movie could be offered to some of the national TV stations, for example for the 8th of April, and to be presented to the general public, because it promotes the positive image of the Roma, and by doing so it helps to break the created stereotypes.*

## Organizing debates with parents

35 debates were organized throughout the 11 cities, covered with the Project activities. The debates were a good opportunity to gather the various stakeholders together, where they can confront their opinions and come to a conclusion of how to improve things. According to the NRC management team, the debates were a possibility for wide-spread of the message among the Roma and non-Roma community that the Roma students should and want to study. With this, the parents were clearly informed about the meaning and importance of education, while as the schools showed that they welcome the Roma pupils in the education process.

From the families, whom we have chosen by random choice for the survey, none have participated at the organized debates. We noted that in Tetovo debate have not been organized, due to political reasons, as it was explained to us by the mediator, Hasan Idrizi. In Kumanovo, a total of 10 parents took part at the debate. The debate, where coordinator was Memet Memet from part of the schools in Skopje, was visited by 14 parents, and in the Skopje region, covered by Ljatife Shikoska, one debate was organized. Most of the debates were organized in cooperation with local governance and/or the schools.

*The results would have better effect if the debates are organized in the Roma community.*

This was pointed out also by the school representatives from Prilep. They said that this approach seemed too official for the parents, and if it is in the Roma community, they have bigger self-confidence and also it would be simpler for a bigger number of parents to attend the debates.

In general this is a unique opportunity for the involved parties to meet and discuss their positions. However, as there are not many meetings of this type, it happened for the discussions to end up by being too general, i.e. discussion of the socio-economic conditions, rather than education as an issue itself. This is why we *recommend* for the debates to continue, but in the Roma community, where the other parties will come, and will make the families feel important, which will also enable bigger attendance and frequency of occurrence.

## School accessories

According to the initial planning, 1.500 Roma pupils, enrolled in first grade, from Kumanovo, Skopje and Prilep, were to receive school accessories. The primary idea was the 4.500 accessories (notebooks, colour pencils, rubber, sharpener and drawing block), to be given to the pupils in three periods, May, September and January.

However, the management team changed the approach, and instead of giving away the accessories three times per year to the same pupils, it decided to give it once to all the Roma children who were to be enrolled in first grade in the 11 cities covered with the Project. Thus, the 4.500 school accessories were distributed through the schools, in coordination by the mediators, to the Roma pupils enrolled in first grade. Beside this, the children received 3.000 school bags and notebooks (printed in 10.000 copies, as it was initially planned). The Project keeps excellent records (signed lists) of all the materials that were distributed.

Regarding the school bags, the only deviation from the original planning, was that they did not have printed on them the mascot of the Project. We believe that if the mascot, together with the message was printed on the bags, it would have been good promotion opportunity for the Project.

However, the children and the parents said that the school bags and the accessories that were provided to them were a great help. Many times, children are discouraged from being regular to school, as they do not have the necessary materials to attend the classes, while as their parents do not have financial resources to provide them. This observation was confirmed also by the school officials with whom we talked. They pointed out the importance and the self-confidence children gain when they have everything that is required and necessary to attend school. The children we visited expressed their joy, because they all had the same school bags, that was interesting for them, and when they opened the bags, as a surprise awaiting for them were the school accessories.

*Therefore, we recommend for this type of support to continue, if not for all the children, than at least for the children who come from indigent families and who live in poor living conditions.*

According to the initial plan, a picture book was to be published in 3.000 copies. The picture book was planned to be in 5 pages, presenting a story regarding children from various ethnic backgrounds, and aiming first grade pupils. However, even though the Project management team took on time all the necessary actions for preparing and getting the approval for publishing and distributing the picture book, to this date they have not received a positive response from the *Commission for preparation and approval for usage of professional literature, magazines and publication, which contribute to the development of the education*. There is no explanation for the delay of the process by the responsible party, even though NRC presented us the requests that they have sent, and of which they keep record. We saw the picture book, as it was prepared and submitted for approval, by Frosina Nedeljkovska, a professional artist, and we believe it is a unique by its form, and as such it will serve its purpose greatly.

### **Personal documentation**

Obtaining personal documentation for the children who lack it and as a result could not enrol to school is a crucial activity, which shows the serious intent of the project to give chance to all the students to get access to education. The Project's effort in this field is of great importance, and should be promoted as positive example at national level, especially while having in mind observations, given in the EU Progress report about Macedonia, where it is clearly stated that "*A certain number of Roma ... lack personal documents, such as birth certificates and medical insurance or employment cards, which are necessary to access social insurance, health care and other benefits*". This proves that NRC has well defined the problem that they are going to deal with, and took into consideration all the various aspects and perceptions, before and when approaching it.

When NRC presented the problem to the education institutions, they received an approval from the institutions to enrol and accept the children without the necessary documents, while NRC works on providing the legitimate papers. The procedure normally lasts from 1-2 week, to up to 9 months in some very specific cases, and it is normally shorter in smaller municipalities. The most common problem is that children have birth certificates, but do not have a personal identification number, as they are born in home conditions. The State Educational Inspectorate provided biggest support to the NRC team in this process. We had a chance to review the documentation of the various cases NRC supported, and we evaluate them as leaders in this area and their effort and experience as highly beneficial, not only to the Roma community but also to the society in general.

*Therefore, we recommend that NRC continues with these actions, and even to consider a development of a separate project to support these activities fully and to disseminate their experience at various levels, as this is a general major identified issue for Macedonia, that persists for many years now.*

### **Follow-up of the achieved results**

Analysis for the presence and drop-out rate of Roma children in all 11 cities have been prepared and submitted to the Ministry of education. According to the NRC team, the purpose of the Analysis was to present the identified problems and propose methods of more effective acting, by which they hoped to trigger additional common follow-up support actions. However, NRC did not receive any feedback, even though they demanded a meeting.

NRC thought to initiate a Parliamentary discussion regarding the Roma education, outside the Project activities, but during the Project period they have only informed all the Parliament members about the specific issues, which is a good introduction step.

### **Piloting desegregation in Kumanovo**

The process of desegregation in Kumanovo was realized as planned, since transportation was provided for the Roma children, so that they would not enrol only to one particular school that is closest to their homes, but also to the other schools in the town. This effort of the NRC was positively evaluated by Tome Spirovski and Tome Stojanovski, Inspectors at the State educational inspectorate at Kumanovo. They pointed out that some Roma NGOs from the territory of Kumanovo wanted the Roma children to study at the same school, so to have their “own” school. NRC was one of the few that saw a problem here and reacted adequately upon it. According to the two Inspectors, by providing transport NRC made a positive change. If the children study in one school they will be never integrated appropriately, which is why it was important to address this issue.

### **2 Days Conference**

The 2-day Conference before the end of the Project was organized in Ohrid, with Program activities starting on the 12<sup>th</sup> and finishing on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May, 2008. 90 participants from various institutions, representatives of the different stakeholder groups, took place at the Conference and gave their contribution to the event. Very important Government officials and representatives of the EU delegation in Macedonia, NGO sector, local governance, Ambassadors in Macedonia of Slovenia and Hungary, director of the Bureau for educational development in the languages of the various ethnic groups, director of the Bureau for development of education, members of the EU Parliament, guest speakers from Romania and Serbia, project staff and others took place and gave speeches at the Conference. All these were presented into a final report that was sent to all the participants and other parties of influence and importance, so hoping to initiate follow-up actions among the stakeholders.

*Through conversation with some of the Conference participants<sup>4</sup>, we concluded that the event is perceived as very successful and important, especially for giving directions of the future Project continuation.*

<sup>4</sup> Ljubica Taleska, pedagogue at “Dobre Jovanoski” – Prilep; Marjan Matrakoski, Advosor at Local governance Prilep; Zika Krstevski, advisor at Local governance Kumanovo, and other.

## School meetings

The entrance into the school and building of trust with the school officials was important moment for NRC. They showed to be well prepared about this situation, by providing Letters of support for the Project from:

- Mr. Erwan FOUÉRE – Ambassador, Office of the European Union Special Representative, Delegation of the European Commission;
- Ms. Vesna HORVATOVIC – Director, Ministry of Education and science, Bureau for educational development;
- Support from the office of the President of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia;
- Ms. Anife DEMIROVSKA – Director, Ministry of education and science, Directorate for development and modernization of the education in the languages of the various ethnic representatives;
- Mr. Branko CRVENKOVSKI – President, Republic of Macedonia;
- Mr. Samka IBRAIMOVSKI – Vice Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Politics;
- Ms. Dusica PERISIC – Executive director, Association of the Units of the Local Governance of the Republic of Macedonia.

This opened the school doors to the mediators, and according to them without the letters it would have been impossible, or at least very hard to enter the schools and achieve the results in the planned period.

The mediators also had Letters from NRC, stating that they are engaged to work on the Campaign for Roma education.

Besides the regular meetings that the Project management team had with the 35 schools, the mediators visited the schools very often, and where there to support and deal with various difficulties that occurred throughout the school year.

*The school staffs perceive the **mediators** as their valuable link to the Roma community and **supporters for providing better access and quality education for the Roma children**. They appreciate the undertaken activities to **bridge the gap** between the Roma parents and the schools, and by doing so to have better participation by the Roma children.*

*According to the school representatives there is obvious positive difference, compared before and throughout the Project period. The **number of enrolled children is bigger** and the **number of drop-outs is decreased**, which is as a direct result of the field work of the Project that is especially valuable since the schools have limited access to the Roma community and the parents are not very regular at school, which also changes thanks to the project's effort.*

## Creating database as a method to invite Roma children to enrol at school

The database that was created by NRC not only that helped the Project to fulfil its objectives, but it is also highly beneficial for the institutions. According to an Institution representative from Kumanovo, the database helped them to enrol children that they did not know they existed, as they were not registered anywhere. As previously mentioned, with the Law for protection of private information, the schools no longer receive lists of children that should sign into first grade, which is a serious impediment

that the schools face with. However, the detailed database that was filled in with relevant and detailed up-to-date field data helped them to enrol even more students than the initial targets of the schools.

*One weakness that we noted, regarding the database is that it is not available on the Internet, but only at the NRC office, so if the mediators correct some data at the field they can not enter it themselves in the database, which makes it impractical to use.*

*We also noted that some of the names repeat a couple of times, because once they were entered by the mediators (during the short period it was available on-line), and second time by the NRC team, which may give wrong conclusion about the frequency of information usage to external observers.*

**Therefore we recommend:**

- *The database to be available on-line;*
- *The old/irrelevant or repeated data to be cleared;*
- *To determine a period for data upgrading and responsible person to check it on random basis.*

### **Dissemination of information**

The transparency of NRC in disseminating information and sharing their main findings and conclusions is proved by their record keeping of sent data, as well as the load of information available at their web-site.

The NRC also visited the local self-governance of the municipalities concerned, and they all had a meeting of the advisory group, discussing Roma education related questions, however, no specific decisions and/or conclusions were taken. All municipalities have the Roma education incorporated as an objective into their Strategies, however, they do not have budget for implementation of the planned activities.

### **Cooperation with the Faculty of Pedagogy**

NRC within the Project plan pointed out that having more Roma teachers in the primary education, would influence the self-confidence of the Roma pupils, which is why they intent to start cooperation with the Faculty of Pedagogy and lobbying to increase the number of primary Roma educators. However, during the project period not a lot have been done in this area. Only initial contacts were made with the Faculty of pedagogy and these were not sufficient or persistent enough to develop or lead into any specific mutual activities or efforts in reaching this objective.

Through out interviews we asked the visited Roma families if they believe that having a Roma teacher would have positive influence and would be stimulating for their children to be more regular to school. All parents pointed that the teachers have equal treatment to their children and from that aspect it does not really make a difference if the teacher is of Roma ethnic background or not. However, most of the children start school without knowing the Macedonian language, which makes it very difficult for them to follow the classes and to be active, as they need double effort than the other children who speak the language. From this point of view, having a Roma teacher, who when the children do not understand will explain things to them in their mother tongue, it will be easier and good if the teacher is from Roma nationality. Also, this would show

the success of the Roma and would encourage children to try more, and to aim and reach higher goals.

Even the educational institutions' representatives share this opinion, and they support the action that is ongoing, and which concerns having Roma language as elective in the schools. However, the problem here is that the language is given as elective from third grade, which means it is introduced later than needed. The Inspector from education in Kumanovo, Tome Spiroski, pointed out that this question is very sensitive and should be realized, while having all aspects into consideration. According to him, providing assistance for the Roma children is a must, however this may affect the effectiveness of the classes if there are *two teachers*. On the other hand, if this is realized through additional classes than the Roma children may be overburdened. However, one thing is certain - studying in the mother tongue must be offered and used as possibility, because it ensures better results.

### **Celebration of the 8<sup>th</sup> of April**

Preparation of information about the history of the International Roma Day, 8<sup>th</sup> of April, and dissemination to the schools and Universities in Macedonia, as well as in a form of a greeting card, through a daily newspaper, was planned with the Project. The material titled as "The road of success of the Roma, throughout history to today" was prepared and sent to the primary and secondary schools. The reading covers general information about the history and the origin of the Roma, explains the importance of the 8<sup>th</sup> of April (why and since when it is celebrated), presents famous names who have Roma origin, and wraps-up with data about the Roma in Macedonia, and their place and position in the society.

*NRC decided that it is too costly and inefficient to distribute greeting cards for the 8th of April through the newspapers, as initially planned, but instead it gave the story to the media, and they presented parts of it. This is not only efficient, but also effective approach they have chosen, to tackle not only the Roma population, but to educate the society in general.*

### **Preparation of monthly descriptive reports and Constant work and cooperation with the *Media Lobby Group***

NRC cooperated closely with five journalists, who were part of the *Media Lobby Group*:

- Ms. Ines Mustafovska – A1 (national TV);
- Ms. Biljana Stefokovska – Channel 5 (national TV);
- Ms. Ljubica Grozdanovska – independent reporter;
- Mr. Dragan Antovski – Sitel (national TV);
- Mr. Stole Naumov – Channel 77 (national radio).

We interviewed three of them, two from national TV and one from national radio, and they all agreed that NRC is a valid source of information for them, that through well organized approach towards the media, tried to influence the negative stereotypes about the Roma population. The journalists are satisfied with the cooperation with NRC and the feedback, reaction and initiation of topics they receive from them, as part of the Project. However, all of them confirm that unfortunately for the Macedonian reporter, just as for the reporters in general, the bad news are more attractive and they sell easier. What they appreciated in the NRC approach was that they presented solutions

to the negative situations, and tried to stimulate positive approach and presentation of the good examples, as well. The common conclusion from the journalists was that they need more success stories, and the NRC and its mediators are valuable source for that.

*The project was often present in the media and the journalists from the Media Lobby Group are well informed about its goals and work, and would like to continue the cooperation with NRC and similar projects in the future.*

*The cooperation with the media is well coordinated by NRC and the usage of national media is at high level. What we recommend in **more intensive utilization of the local media**. They are inexpensive way to promote the project activities and the entrance is easier than in the national media. Therefore the **mediators** could be fed with information by NRC or just check the information to be presented with the main office and to be **active in the field as informers about the ongoing and planned activities**.*

### **Editor meeting**

One-day meeting with editors from various media was organized, as planned, as they influence if and how the information will be published or presented. This once again shows that NRC is able to well define the core of the problem and target well the solution.

Through the interview, the management team of NRC pointed out that they knew how important this meeting will be, especially because they wanted through it to influence more realistic and more responsible way of informing. Even though the media have interest for the Roma issues, many times they present them in a way that gives wrong conclusions and creates bad perception at the general public.

*With this meeting other perception has been given to things, and we recommend this type of round tables or forums to continue in future, as well.*

### **Organizing press conferences**

NRC prepared 5 press releases for the activities realized with the Project. They were published at MIA (Macedonian Information Agency) and Makfax, from where the reporters who were not present at the event could take over the news and publish it. Through the open and transparent way of informing the non-Roma population was targeted as well and their awareness that the Roma should and want to get educated is raised.

*NRC shows excellent results in the field of cooperation with the media, and it should continue in this progressive direction.*

### 3.2b Match of performance targets initially set

At this part we are going to present whether the **Expected outcomes** have been achieved, by comparing the defined indicators for each output, to the actual results that were achieved by the Project in the period from February 2007 to August 2008. Based on this in the follow-up chapters we are going to present the *Overall assessment* about the Project achievements, Conclusions and Recommendations.

**Expected outcome 1** – Increased number of enrolled Roma pupils

**Measurement indicator** - 3.000-4.000 Roma pupils enrolled in the elementary schools in 11 cities

**Our findings** - Based on the official school records for the school year 2007-2008, that we received from NRC, and which the mediators have gathered from the school officials, the total number of enrolled Roma pupils in the primary education was **5.816** (see *Table 1*). From these, 52% or 3.052 were male and 48% or 2.764 were female students, from which we may conclude that the access to education based on gender, among the Roma population is balanced. **Having 5.816 students enrolled, the set maximum target of 4.000 students was surpassed by 45%.**

	Male	Female	Total
<b>Kumanovo</b>	380	335	715
<b>Kocani</b>	162	154	316
<b>Prilep</b>	427	406	833
<b>Bitola</b>	282	248	530
<b>Stip</b>	244	199	443
<b>Vinica</b>	120	93	213
<b>Veles</b>	147	138	285
<b>Kavadarci</b>	62	50	112
<b>Skopje</b>	974	914	1888
<b>Tetovo</b>	185	163	348
<b>Kr. Palanka</b>	69	64	133
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>3052</b>	<b>2764</b>	<b>5816</b>

**Table 1: Enrolled Roma students in the primary schools from the 11 cities covered with the Project**

Place	8-year primary		9-year primary	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Kumanovo</b>	63	64	51	52
<b>Kocani</b>	21	17	15	26
<b>Prilep</b>	78	55	35	49
<b>Bitola</b>	46	39	40	45
<b>Stip</b>	35	23	35	32
<b>Vinica</b>	21	17	15	11
<b>Veles</b>	20	17	21	22
<b>Kavadarci</b>	8	7	7	7
<b>Skopje</b>	127	124	119	113
<b>Tetovo</b>	19	22	17	16
<b>Kr. Palanka</b>	10	7	3	7
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>380</b>

**Table 2: Roma pupils enrolled in first grade**

From the total number of enrolled students **1.578** (see Table 2) or 27% were first grade pupils, including both, those having 9-year education (738 pupils) and those having 8-year education (840 pupils). From the 738 pupils enrolled for 9-year primary education, 49% are male, and 51% are female, while as from those enrolled according to the old program for 8-years primary education 448 or 53% are male and 392 or 47% are female.

**Expected outcome 2** – Decrease the rate of drop-out pupils enrolled with previous projects

**Measurement indicator** - Improved monitoring system and acting in time when problems arise (over 90% of the enrolled students continue their education).

**Our findings** - Based on the official school data, that we worked with, from the total number of 5.816 enrolled students, **601** (10%) were **irregular** at the classes and **252** (4%) **dropped-out** from school, which means that approximately **96%** of the total enrolled students continued their education, i.e. NRC met its targeted aim.

Place	Male			Female			Total		
	Enrolled	Irregular	Dropped-out	Enrolled	Irregular	Dropped-out	Enrolled	Irregular	Dropped-out
Kumanovo	380	42	2	335	39	1	715	81	3
Kocani	162	10	11	154	9	11	316	19	22
Prilep	427	30	14	406	23	9	833	53	23
Bitola	282	48	41	248	33	35	530	81	76
Stip	244	21	1	199	17	0	443	38	1
Vinica	120	25	2	93	14	2	213	39	4
Veles	147	29	1	138	9	7	285	38	8
Kavadarci	62	4	0	50	0	0	112	4	0
Skopje	974	136	62	914	96	48	1888	232	110
Tetovo	185	0	2	163	0	1	348	0	3
Kr. Palanka	69	8	1	64	8	1	133	16	2
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>3052</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>2764</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>5816</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>252</b>

**Table 3: Total number of enrolled, irregular and dropped-out Roma pupils in the 11 cities**

From the data given in Table 3 we may note that from the total of 601 irregular Roma pupils, 353 or 59% are male and 248 or 41% are female. The number of drop-out students among the male is also higher, and it equals to 137 or 54%, while as the number of female who dropped-out was 115 or 46% of the total.

Table 4 presents the total number of enrolled, irregular and drop-opt students in first grade, from the primary schools in the targeted 11 cities. There it can be seen, that from total 840 pupils enrolled in first grade, according to the old program for 8-year primary education, 43 or 5% were irregular male and 38 or 4,5% were irregular female. The number of dropped-out male is 22, same as the number of dropped-out female, and it is 5% of the total enrolled students in first grade.

738 Roma children were enrolled in first grade in the 11 cities, for 9-year primary education. 50 of them were irregular at school, out of whom 23 or 3% were irregular male and 27 or 4% were irregular female. The number of dropped-out pupils is 39 or 5% from the total 738 enrolled pupils. From these, 23 or 3% were male and 16 or 2% were female.

PLACE	8-YEAR PRIMARY						9-YEAR PRIMARY					
	Male			Female			Male			Female		
	Enrolled	Irregular	Dropped-out	Enrolled	Irregular	Dropped-out	Enrolled	Irregular	Dropped-out	Enrolled	Irregular	Dropped-out
Kumanovo	63	5	1	64	6	1	51	2	1	52	3	0
Kocani	21	2	1	17	1	1	15	1	2	26	1	1
Prilep	78	0	0	55	0	0	35	0	0	49	0	0
Bitola	46	10	13	39	7	11	40	6	3	45	6	4
Stip	35	2	0	23	1	0	35	1	0	32	3	0
Vinica	21	2	1	17	2	0	15	1	0	11	0	0
Veles	20	7	1	17	0	0	21	0	0	22	2	0
Kavadarci	8	1	0	7	0	0	7	0	0	7	0	0
Skopje	127	14	5	124	20	8	119	12	16	113	11	11
Tetovo	19	0	0	22	0	1	17	0	0	16	0	0
Kr. Palanka	10	0	0	7	1	0	3	0	1	7	1	0
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>

**Table 4: Enrolled, irregular and dropped-out pupils in first grade in the 11 cities**

**Expected outcome 3** – The information gap Roma parents – education institutions improved

**Measurement indicator** - 15 trained Roma mediators in permanent contacts with all stakeholders, 4 kinds of informative brochures disseminated.

**Our findings** – Instead of the initially planned 15 Roma mediators, 19 were selected, trained and engaged to cover the field work of the Project. The mediators were in permanent contact with the stakeholders. The figures presented to support the expected outcomes 1 and 2, and the measurement indicators, also indirectly support the success of the mediators' work.

As we have already concluded from the earlier-presented statements of the involved stakeholders, through the field work of the mediators the regular attendance of the students have increased considerably and the number of drop-outs has decreased. The mediators worked closely with the schools and the parents, and whenever there were problems they intervened.

The school officials confirm that this has significantly improved the situation; however, they suggest even more intensive work and education of the parents. They believe that if the parents understand the importance of education, they will be more persuasive towards the children to be regular at school and to achieve better results, instead of giving various assignments and obligations around the house, such as taking care of younger brothers or sisters, working and/or helping to the parents with their daily activities.

On the other hand, the school officials have to be more proactive as well. They need to put extra effort in the education of the Roma children and to help them outside the regular classes, as many of the parents lack the necessary education, to be able to help their children.

Regarding the brochure, instead of 1.000 copies, for reasons given earlier in the chapter, NRC published 5.000 copies, and disseminated it via mail and directly to the parents through the mediators.

*Hence, we may conclude that based on the defined indicator<sup>5</sup> for Expected outcome 3 there are deviations from the original planning. As evaluators we noted that NRC*

<sup>5</sup> The opinion of the stakeholders, regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of the promotional material, were elaborated earlier in this chapter.

*had sufficient argument to justify the increase in the number of mediators, as they are the key to success of the Project.*

*As many times mentioned now, the mediators are of great importance for the project. Therefore in order for the good results to continue and further increase, we **recommend** the following:*

*- Continuous **upgrade of the mediators' knowledge**, to satisfy their need to overcome the potential weaknesses in the area of:*

- Negotiation techniques,*
- Making and accepting compromise, and*
- Training in Lobbying and advocacy for NGOs, as this is important part of their work;*

*- Improved **job performance monitoring**, through introduction of more effective and detailed reporting system.*

**Expected outcome 4** – Analyzed, structured and completed findings related to Roma involvement in elementary education

**Measurement indicator** – Database of information available

**Our findings** – The database is high-value output of the Project, not only for NRC, but it is recognized as such also by the educational institutions and schools. The well planned and successfully realized activity of data gathering had direct impact on the Project success, the achievement of the first 2 Expected outputs, and on the overall project success. However, as we elaborated before, one weakness that we noticed, and causes deviations to the Expected outcome, is that it is not available on the Internet, and it can not be administered by the mediators, but it is done centrally. This causes problems such as repetition of registered children, delay in upgrade and most importantly inefficiency.

Therefore, it is crucial the database to be available and adjusted for update via the Internet, as soon as possible, as any success in case of continued Project activities, is directly dependant on having accurate database.

**Expected outcome 5** – Strengthened institutional cooperation.

**Measurement indicator** – Institution representatives taking active role in debates, conferences, dissemination of information and making transparent education policy.

**Our findings** – The cooperation of the Project with the educational institutions, directly and especially through the mediators was at high level, and so were the achieved results in this area.

As already noted, the Project entered the institutions by providing Letter of support from all the relevant factors who could influence or hinder the field work.

The mediators had regular visits and communication with the educational institutions. Building trust and cooperative linkages was a process that took time, and as such it is still developing.

The institutional representatives were invited to the 35 debates that were organized by NRC, and to the Conference organized for the *Campaign*.

The field issues are brought forward to the institutional representatives and through common effort they are resolved, or at least the negative effects from them are

lowered. And not only that the project contacts the institutions, but also there are requests from their side as well. They recognize and appreciate the added value that the project brings to their work and speak of NRC as an organization which has achieved many specific results that are beneficial to the society in general. The Project provided valuable information and support to the school officials and “... *without it, the processes that began will stop and destroy the good deeds and effects*”<sup>6</sup>.

**Expected outcome 6** – Raised education awareness in the Roma community

**Measurement indicator** – Active media campaign (press conferences, descriptive reports, debates, etc) – improved education.

**Our findings** – From the material that we reviewed and the interviews that we took with the journalists for the Media Lobby Group, we may conclude that the project had good and frequent communication and cooperation with the media. It represents a valuable source for them and brings new perspective to issues – NRC gives solution to the problems.

*We **recommend** the frequency of communication with the **national media** to continue, by “feeding” them with **more success stories about the Roma** to promote the positive examples, and so break the stereotypes. In the next period the **local media** have to be **targeted and properly utilized**, by being guests at informative shows and by promoting the mediators and the project as valid and valuable source of information.*

**Expected outcome 7** – Improved cooperation in relation NGO sector, Roma parents and education institutions

**Measurement indicator** – Roma parents involved in education parents’ councils, education institutions apply the findings from the filed work and the NGO recommendations, all stakeholders take part in education policy development

**Our findings** – From the 6 primary schools that we visited approximately 10 Roma parents are representatives in the Parents’ council of the school. One problem that we recorded though is that the parents in general (not only Roma) who are in the Council are not well informed about their role and are not very active. Another issue is that very few of the other Roma parents know who the elected representative in the Council is.

*Regarding the implementation of findings, better results could be achieved if there is a **stronger cooperation and coordination between NRC and the other NGOs** working on Roma educational issues.*

*To strengthen the **application of the findings and recommendations**, we suggest the following:*

- Capacity building in **Lobbying and advocacy**;*
- **Networking** with other NGOs to increase the negotiation and influence power towards the decision makers;*

<sup>6</sup> Ms. Ljubica Taleska - Pedagogue at “Dobre Jovanoski” - Prilep

**- Follow-up of taken initiatives and recommendation documents send to the institutions (schedule meetings with relevant parties, take issues at higher level, be more persistent).**

As additional point of importance to achieve the Expected output is the he mediators' work and effort, which were crucial to directly raise the awareness about education among the Roma community.

**Therefore, we recommend more intensive work within the Roma community and the parents. The mediators' efforts should be even more directed towards bringing closer the institutions and the parents, and more activities (the debates and informative meetings) should happen in the Roma settlements.**

**Expected outcome 8** – Roma pupils receiving accessory support

**Measurement indicator** – Provided and shared:

- 4.500 accessories (notebooks, coloured pencils, rubber, sharpener and drawing blocks)
- 10.000 notebooks
- 3.000 picture books

**Our findings** – As explained earlier in this chapter, the following materials were distributed:

- 4.500 accessories (notebooks, coloured pencils, rubber, sharpener and drawing blocks), to first grade children enrolled in the 11 cities covered with the Project – deviation from original plan to distribute them in three periods only in Kumanovo, Skopje and Prilep;
- 3.000 school bags distributed to first grade children enrolled in the 11 cities covered with the Project – deviation from original plan to print on the bags the mascot and message of the Project;
- 10.000 copies of the notebook with the mascot of the Project, printed and distributed as planned;
- 3.000 picture books – not printed due to technical obstacles (explained earlier).

The support with educational material is good to continue at least for poor children enrolled in first grade, as it is stimulating for them to be regular at school, since the financial situation has great impact on the motivation to go to school.

#### **4. OVERALL ASSESSMENT**

Through the evaluation of the separate activities defined with the Project application document and of the Expected outputs and Measurement indicators, we may conclude that the Project **objectives** to increase the number of enrolled Roma pupils,

and to create a database, as a tool to the educational institutions, were in general **successfully accomplished**.

The **stakeholders** have positive opinion, show appreciation of the Project activities and both, parents and institutions, **recommend the project continuation**, as if it stops at this point it will cut the positive changes and processes that have started in providing quality education to Roma children.

As evaluators, **we also recommend the Project to continue**, while considering further strengthening its role in awareness rising for importance of education within the Roma community, through continued institutional cooperation, and to increase its influence in triggering policy changes for improvement of Roma education.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Throughout this Evaluation report we pointed the important Conclusions and Recommendations that arise from the Project's activities.

### **5.1 Conclusions**

NRC managed to well identify and define the problem to be addressed with the project, which is crucial for any Project's success. The defined problem is relevant to the identified needs of the targeted beneficiaries, and the overall planned and applied methods and tools for the identified stakeholders correspond to the working surroundings and conditions.

The successful recruitment, training and management of the mediators, was crucial to the success of the Project. Even though, here there is a deviation from the initial planning of employing 15 mediators to 19, we consider this to be justified by the volume of the field work, the sensitiveness of the assignment, as well as the uniqueness in the approach that was for the first time established in Macedonia. The achievements described in terms of enrolled children, decreased number of absences and drop-outs, represent especially supportive arguments for the introduced change.

The mediators were introduced to their responsibilities through 5-day training, which enabled them to get clear perspective of what is expected from them and how should they act in various situations that they will have to deal with. They strengthened their communication skills and confidence.

The mediators demonstrated good cooperation with the schools and the Roma parents, which was of key importance to their success. By intervening any time a problem occurred in the schools with students who are irregular and visiting the parents, the school absences were limited and the number of school drop-outs was decreased, as the parents were more educated and aware about the importance of education, but also about the legal penalties that would be applied against them, unless their children go to school. The school officials recognize and appreciate this benefit and point out that without the mediators' efforts their power and methods to influence these situations are limited.

The mediators are perceived as valuable link between the schools and the Roma community and supporters for providing better access and quality education for the Roma children. The activities undertaken by them help to bridge the gap between the Roma parents and the schools, and to have better participation by the Roma children.

Hence, according to the school representatives there is obvious positive difference, compared before and throughout the Project period. The number of enrolled children is bigger and the number of drop-outs is decreased, which is as a direct result of the field work of the Project that is especially valuable since the schools have limited access to the Roma community and the parents are not very regular at school, which also changes thanks to the project's effort.

The school material that was provided to the children also had stimulating impact to the children to be regular at school, because many times they are irregular since they do not have the necessary school material, books or clothes, and are therefore ashamed to appear in class.

NRC took the initiative to provide personal documents for the children who do not have it, and as a consequence can not get enrolled to school. They have proved to be very persistent and successful in this area, and made the extra step, to give chance to all the Roma children to get to school. Their success in this area is recognized by the various stakeholders.

Regarding the database that was prepared, it represents valuable tool to identify the Roma children to be enrolled in school. Through the direct contact that the mediators established with the families during the survey, they informed the parents about the changes in the Law for primary education and about the importance of sending their children to school.

However, one weakness that we noted, regarding the database is that it is not available on the Internet, but only at the NRC office, so if the mediators correct some data at the field they can not enter it themselves in the database, which makes it impractical to use. We also noted that some of the names repeat a couple of times, because once they were entered by the mediators (during the short period it was available on-line), and second time by the NRC team, and this may give wrong conclusion about the frequency of information usage to external observers.

NRC shows excellent results in the field of cooperation with the media, and it should continue in this progressive direction. They have established unique method of close work with the media, by providing them direct access to the project, through the Media Lobby Group. The project was often present in the media and the journalists from the Media Lobby Group are well informed about its goals and work, and would like to continue the cooperation with NRC and similar projects in the future.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Job introduction through training is positive experience that needs to continue, especially for the newly employed, who get clear acquaintance with the working procedures and the team, but also for the existing team members, as they build and further develop their work approach, based on exchange of previously gained experience.

The mediators need to have continuous upgrade of their knowledge, and during the workshop with them they pointed out that they feel weaknesses in the following areas:

- Negotiation techniques, and
- Making and accepting compromise.

Also, more improved job performance monitoring, though introduction of more effective and detailed reporting system, needs to be introduced at NRC.

In addition to this, in order to further improve the results and especially to demonstrate more vivid application of the findings and recommendations, we recommend for the NRC team to consider the following:

- Capacity building in Lobbying and advocacy;
- Networking with other NGOs to increase the negotiation and influence power towards the decision makers;
- Follow-up of taken initiatives and recommendation documents send to the institutions (schedule meetings with relevant parties, take issues at higher level, be more persistent).

Additional efforts have to be put in working with the Roma parents. The future mediators' efforts should be even more directed towards bringing closer the institutions and the parents, and more activities (the debates and informative meetings) should happen in the Roma settlements.

NRC should also try to influence directly or through the institutions the language issues that Roma children face with when they first go to school. Also, methods of providing additional help through extra curricular educational activities should be explored and applied.

The material support with educational accessories should continue, at least for the children who come from indigent families and who live in poor living conditions, as this affects the school attendance regularity.

We recommend for NRC to continue working more intensively on providing documents for children and/or sometimes families that do not have them and as a consequence can not use the various social benefits. NRC should explore the possibilities to collaborate on this issue with the state institutions, or even to consider development of a separate project to support these activities fully and to disseminate their experience at various levels, as this is a general major identified issue for Macedonia, that persists for many years now.

Regarding the database, it is recognized valuable output, but NRC needs to correct or introduce the following actions regarding it:

- Make the database available on-line;
- Clear up the old/irrelevant or repeated data;
- Determine a period for data upgrading and responsible person to check it on random basis.

The cooperation with the media is well coordinated by NRC and the usage of national media is at high level. What we recommend is more intensive utilization of the local media. They are an inexpensive way to promote the project activities and the entrance is easier than in the national media. Therefore the mediators could be fed with information by NRC or just check the information to be presented with the main office and to be active in the field as informers about the ongoing and planned activities. Also, bigger exposure of positive examples to break the stereotypes is necessary.

## 6. ANNEXES OF THE REPORT

All views presented at this report are based on the following:

1. Study of the reviewed data, reports and official documents, provided by the NRC main office
  - i. Project proposal document
  - ii. Evaluation report - MAC 029: Campaign for Roma Education (Enrolment and continuity in the education process), June 2008
  - iii. Project Final Evaluation report
  - iv. Narrative report
  - v. Report form and reports submitted by mediators
  - vi. Questionnaire form filled in by mediators
  - vii. Database
  - viii. Original version of the picture book
  - ix. Requests to the Bureau for Development of Education to approve the picture book
  - x. Brochure
  - xi. Notebook
  - xii. Letter of support from various institution representatives
  - xiii. Form of contract signed between NRC and the mediators
  - xiv. Media
    - Invitations for press conference
    - Press releases
    - Press clippings
  - xv. The documentary movie “The key is in your hands”
  - xvi. Conference report
  - xvii. Reading material prepared for 8<sup>th</sup> of April “the road to success of the Roma throughout history to today”
  - xviii. Agenda of training provided to mediators and list of attendants
  - xix. Agendas for the debates
  - xx. Summary documents about the debates
  - xxi. Invoices for number of printed material
  - xxii. NRC poster
2. Questionnaire that the evaluator submitted to the below listed stakeholder representatives
  - i. Project staff

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Place</b>
Ashemet Elezovski	Project manager	NRC office Kumanovo
Sebihana Skenderovska	Junior project assistant	NRC office Kumanovo
Ljatife Shikovska	Mediator	Skopje
Ristem Muslievski	Mediator	Kumanovo
Hasan Idrizi	Mediator	Tetovo
Memet Memet	Mediator	Skopje
Erdzan Ramadanov	Mediator	Veles
Irfan Martez	Mediator	Kumanovo
Enis Osmanov	Mediator	Vinica
Nesime Salioska	Mediator	Prilep

ii. Roma Parents

<b>Interviewed parent's name</b>	<b>Child name</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Mediator</b>
Bekiri Zenije (mother)	Abedin Bekiri	Skopje	Ljatife Shikovska
Jasharova Aneta (Mother)	Serman Jashari	Skopje	Ljatife Shikovska
Kadrievski Erdogan (father)	Aldijana Kadrievska	Skopje	Ljatife Shikovska
Mirsada Dzeladin (mother)	Sulejmani Elma	Skopje	Ljatife Shikovska
Bjramovska Nazmija (mother)	Fabiola Bajramovska	Skopje	Memet Memet
Menite Destan (mother)	Alen Destan	Skopje	Memet Memet
Baftijar Shermine (mother)	Baftijar Kjama	Skopje	Memet Memet
Shetru Bajram (father)	Bjramsha Mandzukaj	Tetotvo	Hasan Idrizi
Kurtishi Mersiha (mother)	Alisa Osmani	Tetotvo	Hasan Idrizi
Rozita Durak (mother)	Suhamet Durak	Tetotvo	Hasan Idrizi
Saliova Sermna (mother)	Derijas Saliova	Vinica	Enis Osmanov
Kjfaet Brink (mother)	Afrodita Brink	Vinica	Enis Osmanov
Saliova Emirhan (mother)	Saliov Dzem	Vinica	Enis Osmanov
Elmira Skenderovska (mother)	Selma Mecanovska	Kumanovo	Ristem Muslievski
Iseni Memet (father)	Jasmina Iseni	Kumanovo	Ristem Muslievski
Aeries Sahit (mother)	Leonardo Mecanovski	Kumanovo	Ristem Muslievski

iii. Institution representatives

<b>Interviewed person</b>	<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Place</b>
Sabina Redzepova	Ministry without portfolio, responsible for the Roma decade	Chief of cabinet	Skopje
Zoran Jovanoski	„Goce Delcev”	Pedagogue	Tetovo
Jocko Dimitrievski	„Andreja Savevski – Kikis”	Director	Tetovo
Enver Bekiri	Unit for education, culture and sports	Head of unit	Tetovo
Demir Osmanov	Local governance Vinica	Coordinator for minority rights	Vinica
Nada Dimitrova	„Slavco Stojmenski”	Primary school teacher	Vinica
Zika Krstevski	Local governance Kumanovo	Head of unit for education, culture and sports	Kumanovo
Arsovska Jadranka	„Hristijan Todorovski – Karpos”	Psychologist	Kumanovo
Qubinka Mladenova	„Hristijan Todorovski – Karpos”	Pedagogue	Kumanovo
Tome Spirovski	Ministry of education and science – State educational inspectorate	State educational inspector	Kumanovo
Tome Stojanov	Ministry of education and science – State educational inspectorate	State educational inspector	Kumanovo
Qubica	„Dobre Jovanoski”	Pedagogue	Prilep

Taleska			
Nikolina Koneska	„Dobre Jovanoski”	Social worker	Prilep
Marjan Matrakoski	Local governance Prilep	Advisor for education, culture and sports	Prilep
Velika Gjosevska	“Vasil Glavinov”	Pedagogue	Skopje
Sanja Adzaip	“Vasil Glavinov”	Psychologist	Skopje
Ines Mustafovska	A1 – National TV	Journalist	Skopje
Biljana Stefkovska	Channel 5 – National TV	Journalist	Skopje
Stole Naumov	Channel 77 – National radio	Journalist	Skopje