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Prepared by:



REPORT

**ON THE EVALUATION OF THE
PROJECT**

**CAMPAIGN FOR ROMA EDUCATION
(ENROLMENT AND CONTINUITY IN THE
EDUCATION PROCESS)**

Ordered by:



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Evaluation of the project “Campaign for Roma education (Enrolment and continuation in the education process)”, which was realized by the National Roma Centrum (NRC) from Kumanovo, in the period of August 2008 to June 2010, in 15 cities in Macedonia.

The aim of the evaluation is to present objectively the project achievements, by comparing the planned vs. the realized activities and benefits for the target group, especially concentrating on the level of improved access and quality of education for the Roma population in the cities covered with the project.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Roma Centrum from Kumanovo, in the period from August.01.2008 to June.30.2010, realized the project *Campaign for Roma Education (Enrolment and continuity in the education process)* in the primary schools of 15 cities:

- 11 old - Kumanovo, Prilep, Skopje (without Suto Orizari), Bitola, Tetovo, Kriva Palanka, Vinica, Kocani, Kavadarci, Veles and Stip, and
- 4 new - Berovo, Delcevo, Gostivar and Kratovo.

The project **mission** was “Complete inclusion of Roma pupils in regular elementary education, by promoting the social responsibility for the implementation of education policies on one hand, parental responsibility for the child as a pupil on the other hand, and elimination or minimizing the dropout rate”.

The Project **goals** were the following:

1. To increase the number of Roma children enrolled in elementary education (by improving cooperation with institution on all levels and increasing education consciousness in the Roma community.
2. Expanding the database, which will serve as the main tool to the educational institutions, for creating policies for improving Roma education and monitoring the progress of already enrolled children through previous project activities.
3. Improving school success of Roma first-grade pupils by assistance at home and in school.
4. Enabling equal treatment of all children, by committing to eliminate stereotypes and discrimination.
5. Proposing changes in national education policies for the support of compulsory pre-school education.

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

1. Gathering and analysis of secondary data,
2. Gathering and analysis of primary field data, and
3. Report writing phase.

For the evaluation purposes we covered representatives from the various stakeholder groups (project management team and mediators, parents, school officials, representatives of State Educational inspectorate, representatives from the media and the lawyer engaged by the project). The interviewed stakeholders were randomly chosen, and they were from 8 municipalities (6 old – Skopje 2 municipalities, Bitola, Kumanovo, Tetovo and Kavadarci, and 2 new – Delcevo and Gostivar).

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. For that purpose we measured the project effectiveness, by comparing the performance targets initially set with the target indicators to the actual results that were achieved. So, we looked into the Expected outcomes and based on the defined Measurement indicators we presented our Findings whether we consider the output to have been achieved or not.

In the second part of the chapter 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 the project's relation to the institutions, families and media. We provide objectively our findings regarding the work of the mediators (the assisting in the classes and the work with the Roma children and families), the relations with the schools and the inclusion of the Roma parents in the schools, the evening meetings, the debates, the educational material distributed to the children, the database, the personal documentation that the Project provided, and other actions and benefits that were organized and delivered to the target group.

In regards to the project achievements we consider the Project to have made serious steps forward towards better education for the Roma children. Based on the official school records for the school year 2008/2009 and 2009/2010, 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 2.343, which is 94% of the targeted 2.500 students. Based on the official school data, that we worked with, from the total number of 1.249 first grade enrolled students in the school year 2008/2009 46 have dropped-out from school, which is 4% from the total number, and this means that NRC has successfully met the target indicator, to have a drop-out rate lower than 10%. The only town for which the drop-out rate is above 10% for the school year 2008/2009 is Bitola, and the percentage rate here is 18%. In 2009/2010, from 1.094 enrolled students, 89 have dropped out from school, so that drop-out rate has increased to 8%, but is still lower than 10%. However, during this year, there are 3 towns which are above the indicative value of 10% and these are again Bitola with a serious drop-out rate of 41%, Kocani with 19%, and Skopje with 11%.

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 are well corresponding to the working environment.
- 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. However, being responsible for more than 50 children, and some of them being responsible to cover the territory of two towns, affects their job effectiveness.
- The training as a method for job inception should continue in the future, but it is not enough, as 15 out of the 23 mediators were changed at some point of the project.
- The mediators work with the Roma children resulted with better school attendance of the Roma children and improved school performance, but for long-term positive change to be achieved it is necessary for the mediators to work more intensively with the parents.
- As a result of the mediators' work, the parents are more regular at school, attend the parent meetings and often go to ask about the progress of their child.
- The school material is a practical incentive for both the parents and students, and should continue to be provided.
- NRC provided personal documents for the children who do not have it, and as a result could sign into school.
- NRC initiated and took active part in the preparation of the handbook against discrimination in education, which will be used in the primary education, as a tool that will prevent children from being discriminated in the schools.

- Significant effort was made by the project to stop the segregation of the Roma children in the towns where it occurs. Success was achieved in Kumanovo.
- The data base of NRC is highly valuable, not only for the project, but also for the educational and other national and international institutions.
- The mediators have been very useful as assistants in the technical part of the enrolment process, where they help Roma parents to fill-in the applications for their children,
- NRC shows excellent cooperation with and strong utilization of the media, by working with the Media Lobby Group (MLG). The e-bulleting is a positive step format to diminishing the stereotypes about the Roma, and presenting success stories.

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

- The role of the mediators should be redefined, so to correspond to the legal framework and to what they are actually doing in the field.
- NRC needs to improve the performance monitoring system.
- NRC should enable continuous upgrade of the knowledge and skills of the mediators, by development of proper job induction methods.
- More intensive work and education of the Roma parents.
- The number of children per mediator should be limited to 25, and one mediator should be responsible for one town/municipality.
- The schools should be trained of how to increase the number of Roma parents in the school councils and boards, and the Roma parents should be trained to understand their role, rights and responsibilities as members of these bodies.
- The material support with educational accessories should continue, at least for the children who come from poor families.
- NRC needs to upgrade its database with data from the territory of the entire country.
- The cooperation with the local media needs to be strengthened, and the e-bulletin ONE (EDNO) should be further upgraded and promoted as brand magazine, the contents and information from which could be used by all media from the country.

Given all this, the overall assessment for the Project, and based on the field visits, we concluded that the stakeholders have positive opinion and show appreciation of the Project activities, and so they 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 and through continued and strengthened institutional cooperation.

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 15 cities, in the period from August.01.2008 to June.30.2010.

The project’s **mission** was defined as “*Complete inclusion of Roma pupils in regular elementary education, by promoting the social responsibility for the implementation of education policies on one hand, parental responsibility for the child as a pupil on the other hand, and elimination or minimizing the dropout rate*”.

The Project **goals** were:

1. To increase the number of Roma children enrolled in elementary education (by improving cooperation with institution on all levels and increasing education consciousness in the Roma community).
2. Expanding the database, which will serve as the main tool to the educational institutions, for creating policies for improving Roma education and monitoring the progress of already enrolled children through previous project activities.
3. Improving school success of Roma first-grade pupils by assistance at home and in school.
4. Enabling equal treatment of all children, by committing to eliminate stereotypes and discrimination.
5. Proposing changes in national education policies for the support of compulsory pre-school education.

The project was a continuation of the Roma education campaign that was conducted from February 2006 to August 2008. The campaign continued in the 11 earlier selected cities, i.e. Skopje, Kumanovo, Prilep, Tetovo, Kriva Palanka, Kavadarci, Veles, Bitola, Vinica, Stip and Kocani, and it was extended to 4 more cities (Berovo, Delcevo, Gostivar and Kratovo).

The targeted Project goals were planned to be achieved through applying 3 different **working methods**, i.e.:

1. Work with parents – direct contact and close cooperation,
2. Work with schools and institutions - permanent communication and mutual exchange of information with schools’ staff and local self government employees, and
3. Work with Macedonian journalists – Media lobby group and preparation of monthly e-bulletin.

Primary project beneficiaries are the Roma children and their parents, from the targeted 15 cities. Other very important stakeholders, beside the Project team, are the schools’ staff, the Ministry of education and science and State educational inspectorate, the Ministry of labour and social politics, the local governance and the unit for education within the local governance, the electronic and printed media, and the pedagogical and philological faculties

in Skopje and the pedagogical faculty in Tetovo. The Project in general, has an impact on national level, and serves the general purpose of equal social integration of the smaller ethnic communities, in this particular case the of the Roma, through equal opportunities for access to quality education.

2.2. EVALUATION'S OBJECTIVE

The final independent evaluation should assess the impact of the implemented activities and their contribution to the planned project goals, as well as the project effectiveness. The evaluation report will serve as a ground base to propose improvements for future projects of this type.

The evaluation's objectives are to:

1. 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
2. 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 CT independent team of evaluators, with the assistance and cooperation with the Project team members, i.e. the National Roma Centrum (NRC) office staff and the mediators.

The BASME evaluators' team implemented the evaluation task into 3 stages:

1. Gathering and analysis of secondary data,
2. Gathering and analysis of primary field data, and
3. Report writing phase.

2.3.1. GATHERING AND ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY DATA

During the first phase BASME CT obtained the project application document and based on that and on the Terms of reference for the evaluation assignment, we identified the secondary data that we will need to gather from the NRC office. In this phase we gathered the necessary material to obtain a clear picture on the project goals and achievements, as well as on the realization flow of the project. Some of the documents¹ that were gathered in this phase were the following:

- Reports of the mediators to NRC,
- NRC reports to REF,
- Progress monitoring report,
- Lists of participants, reports and Minutes of meetings and realized activities throughout the project duration period,
- Other relevant information, documents and reports that are related to the project.

¹ The list of all documents gathered from NRC and reviewed is given in Annex 1.

Once this data was gathered, reviewed and analyzed we could continue to the second phase of the evaluation assignment.

2.3.2. GATHERING AND ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY FIELD DATA

The aim of the second phase of the evaluation assignment was to gather direct data from the project beneficiaries and other project participants, in order to measure the project influence, to get a perception on the level to which the project managed to complete the planned goals, and how efficient and effective were the realized project activities.

For that purpose, after carefully studying the gathered secondary data, BASME CT prepared questionnaires for the various project stakeholders.

The questionnaires covered representatives from the following groups²:

- 3 representatives from the NRC office – Project director, project coordinator and project assistant.
- Roma parents and children from 8 municipalities (2 Skopje municipalities: Gazi Baba and Cair, Delcevo, Bitola, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kumanovo and Kavadarci), 6 old and 2 new, which were selected randomly by the BASME team. A total of 25 Roma parents were interviewed.
- 11 mediators covering the field of the selected municipalities.
- 11 representatives of the schools from the municipalities covered with interviews (pedagogues, psychologist and/or school principals).
- 5 inspectors for education at local level.
- 2 educational advisors.
- Lawyer responsible for facilitating the process for issuing personal documents to Roma children and families.
- 2 representatives of the Media lobby group.

Through the questionnaires we obtained quality and quantity data, which gave us a clear understanding for the project efficiency and effectiveness, and provided solid pool of recommendations and corrective measures for future projects.

2.3.3. REPORT WRITING PHASE

Based on the gathered and analyzed data from the previous two phases, BASME CT prepared the evaluation report, while harmonizing and comparing the data from the various sources, in order to present one wholesome picture and understanding of the project, fair and objective assessment of the project works and achievements, and relevant recommendations for future improvement based on the lessons learnt.

² The final list of interviewed representatives is given in Annex 2.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA AND PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

3.1. RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT AND THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES TO THE TARGET GROUP NEEDS

The four action plans under the 2005-2015 Decade of Roma inclusion, that were prepared by the Ministry of Labour and social politics (MLSP), concern development of education, housing, employment and health care for the Roma community. *“Little progress can be reported regarding the Roma. The four action plans in the framework of the 2005-2015 Decade of Roma Inclusion were recently revised and continued to be implemented slowly. State funds were allocated to implement the action plans. Implementation of the Roma strategy and of the 2005-2015 Decade of Roma Inclusion has been placed under the responsibility of a new unit within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and is coordinated by a Roma minister without portfolio.*

However, the commitment on the part of line ministries and of municipalities is still insufficient. The inter-ministerial coordination working group on implementation of the Roma strategy was not operational for most of the reporting period. Adequate financial resources for implementation of the action plans were lacking. The administrative capacity of the office of the Roma minister without portfolio and of the unit for implementation of the Roma strategy and the 2005-2015 Decade of Roma Inclusion needs to be significantly strengthened. Representation of Roma in many areas of public life, at both local and national levels, remained low.

Roma continued to be the most disadvantaged ethnic group. Unemployment among Roma was still the highest (as high as 73% compared to around 30% among the general population). Roma continued to have the lowest incomes (about 63% live below the poverty line) and the highest mortality rate. An estimated two thirds of Roma households live below the poverty line. The number of Roma children attending school was still low and the drop-out rate high. Segregation of Roma pupils was still practised. The practice of sending Roma children with learning difficulties to special institutions for mentally disabled children continued. The number of Roma street children is growing... The number of some 1000 street children has not decreased, 95% of them are Roma...

... The introduction of compulsory education for children aged up to 18 is thought to have contributed to diminishing social exclusion. Steps were taken to reduce the high drop-out rate in the early years of education. A project implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy enabled 243 Roma children aged 4 and 5 to be included in pre-school education. However, many Roma children, rural girls and children with disabilities still do not complete their education...

...Attendance in primary and secondary schools has increased, accompanied by increased investments; 94% of primary school pupils go on to attend secondary school. However, disparities persist, affecting children from vulnerable groups. Roma children have the lowest literacy rate and still a very low rate of enrolment, attendance and completion of both primary (61%) and secondary education (17% according to recent study in 2008)....

...The authorities have taken practical measures to address the issue of social inclusion of Roma, but with limited results so far. Between 3,000 to 5,000 Roma, ethnic Albanians and ethnic Turks still lack personal documents, such as birth certificates and medical insurance or employment cards, which are necessary to benefit from social insurance, healthcare and other social services...³

³ European Commission Progress Report on the Republic of Macedonia 2009 (www.sep.gov.mk)

The above points to the relevance and the priority of the issues that NRC decided to work on with this project. It is evident that the issues related to enrolment of Roma to school, the high drop-out rate of Roma students and the lack of personal documents, are the same that were identified by the European Commission as issues that should find its place on the top the national agenda. So, with the project, NRC only addressed the issues outside of the conventional system, while without excluding the institutions, but becoming an ally with them to overcome these common problems. To do this, NRC engaged 23 mediators which worked directly with the Roma community and the educational institutions. The project opened the pathway of the parents to the schools. NRC worked directly with the Roma families and the school representatives from 15 cities. The link between the families and the schools is established and strengthened, and the project contributed to equal treatment of every child in the schools, by diminishing the discrimination and segregation of Roma children, and contributing to break down the stereotypes that are presented to the public through the media.

3.2. ACHIEVEMENTS

3.2.1. PLANNED VS. REALIZED OBJECTIVES (COMPARISON TO THE PROJECT'S INDICATORS)

Expected outcome 1 – Increased number of Roma pupils in the education process (in first grade) verified by official school statistics

Measurement indicator – 2.500 Roma pupils enrolled in the elementary schools in the 15 cities.

Our findings – During the first year of the project (school year 2008/2009), 1.249 first grade pupils were enrolled in the 15 target towns plus some smaller surrounding villages and towns (Trabotiviste, Pehcevo, Crnik, Vataso, Krivolak, Pepeliste, Crveni Bregovi, Negotino, Marena). From these 1.249 students, 622 are male and 627 are female.

The total number of enrolled students in second grade, during the study year 2008/2009, for the same schools was 782, which shows an increase in the number of enrolled students of 60%.

From the 1.249 first grade Roma students, 4 studied in a classroom for children with special needs. All of the students were male, and they are enrolled in the primary school Straso Pindzur in Kavadarci.

The distribution of the children per town is given in figure 1. As shown, the majority of the Roma first grade students in the school year 2008/2009 are from Skopje.

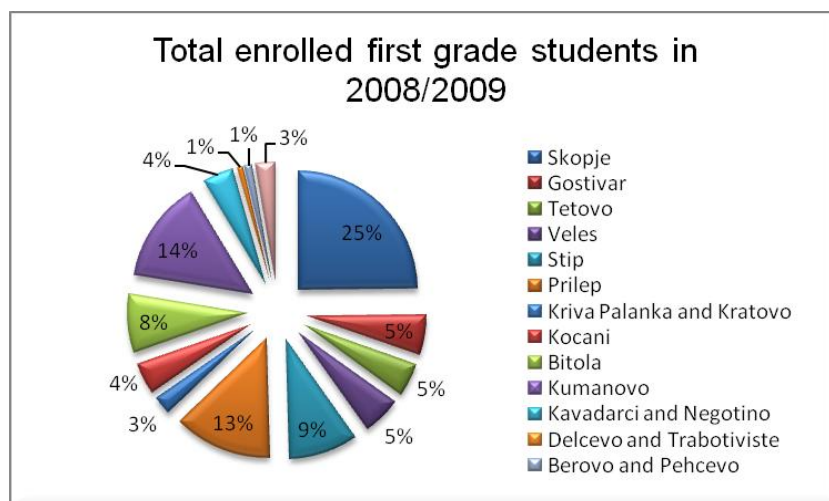


FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION PER CITY OF THE ENROLLED FIRST GRADE ROMA STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 2008/2009

211 or 17% of the enrolled first grade students were not regularly attending school. From these, 109 were male and 102 were female. The dropout rate for the school year 2008/2009 for the first grade students was 3,7%.

81% or 1.010 of the enrolled Roma students showed good educational results and 15% or 190 did not show satisfactory school achievements.

Figure 2 presents the number of recorded children by the mediators who were to sign in for school in the school year 2008/2009, in comparison to the number of children who actually signed in.

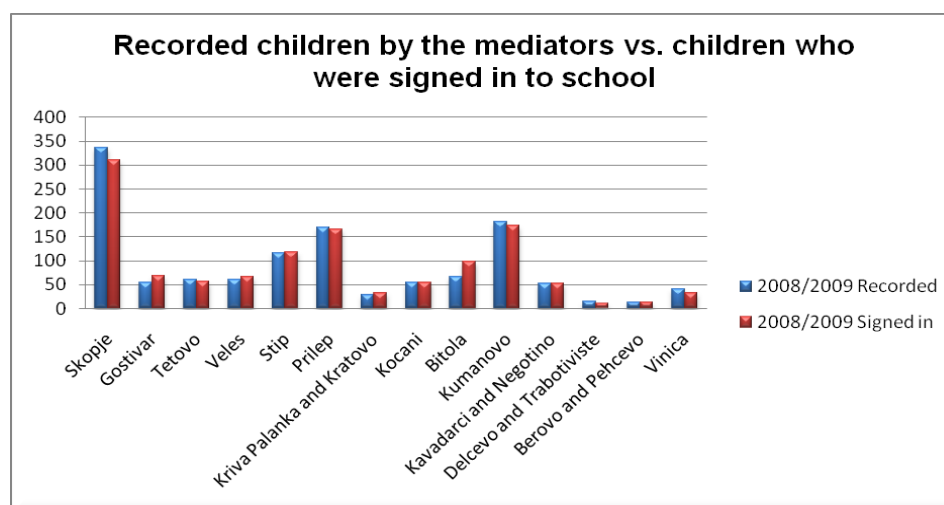


FIGURE 2: RECORDED CHILDREN BY THE MEDIATORS VS. ROMA PUPILS WHO SIGNED INTO SCHOOL IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 2008/2009

Figure 3 presents the difference between the number of signed in over recorded number of children, during the school year 2008/2009. From the figure we may notice that in Delcevo with Trabotiviste, and in Vinica, more children were recorded than those who actually signed in to school. The same applies for Skopje, Tetovo, Prilep, Kocani and Kumanovo, but the ratio here its lower.

On the other hand, the mediators from Gostivar, Stip, Veles, Kriva Palanka and Kratovo, and Bitola did not track down all the children who actually signed in to school.

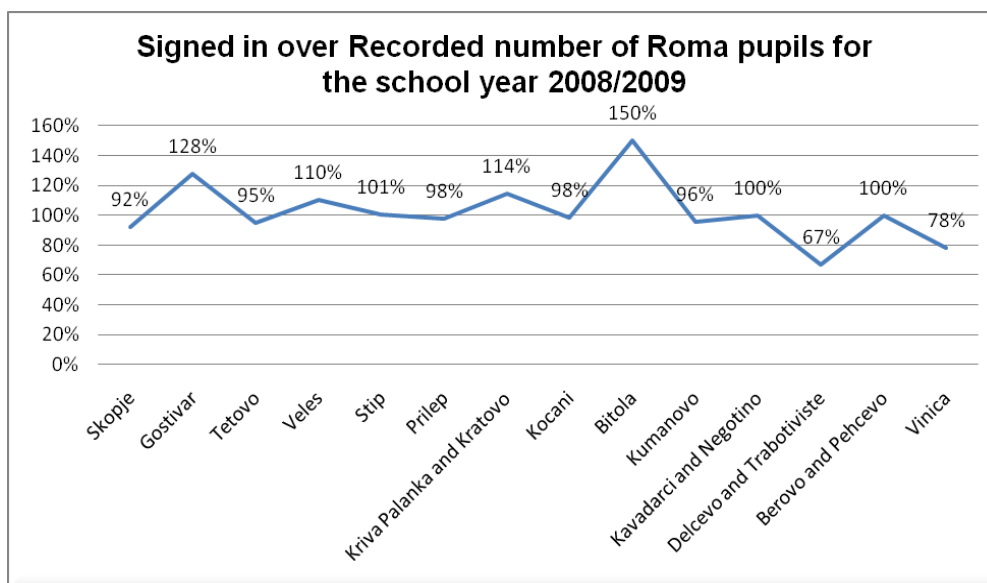


FIGURE 3: ENROLLED OVER RECORDED NUMBER OF ROMA PUPILS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR 2008/2009

The number of children who were to sign in to school in the school year 2009/2010 in comparison to the number who actually signed in is given in figure 4. For the majority of the target towns it is obvious that the number of signed in children is higher than those recorded by the mediators of NRC.

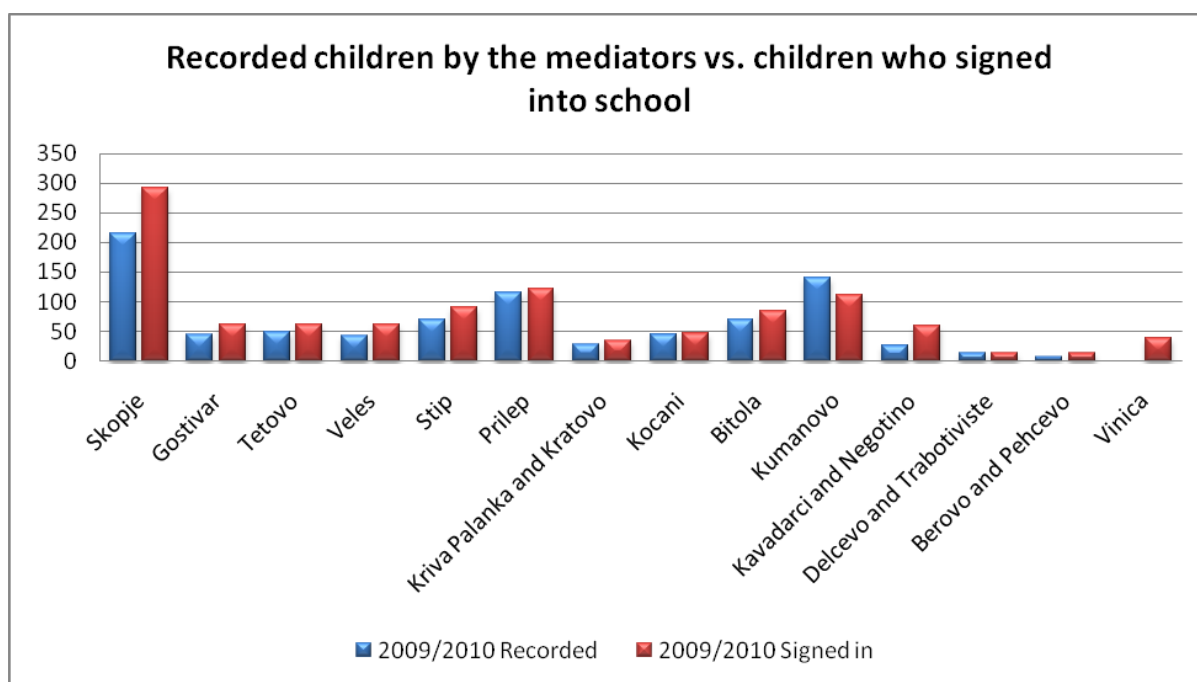


FIGURE 4: RECORDED CHILDREN BY THE MEDIATORS VS. CHILDREN WHO WERE SIGNED INTO FIRST GRADE, IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 2009/2010

Based on the provided data by the schools, on enrolled number of Roma pupils in the two years of the project, we can say that the project has successfully achieved the expected outcome 1, by meeting 94% (or 2.343) of the targeted number of 2.500 enrolled first grade students for the two years.

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

Measurement indicator – Improved monitoring system and acting on time when problems arise (over 90% of enrolled pupils continue their education).

Motivated and aware Roma parents willing to enrol their children in school and to control the dropping out rates through *tete-a-tete* meetings.

Our findings – In the first year of the project out of 1.249 enrolled first grade students only 3,7% dropped out from school, and the other 96,3% continued their education. From the 46 pupils who dropped out from school, 25 were male and 21 were female. The biggest number of children who dropped out from school was from Bitola, 18 students or 39% of the total number of student dropouts. This is also the only town that did not meet the target indicator of outcome 2, i.e. the continuation rate was 82% out of targeted 90%. As main reasons for dropping out from school the pedagogues mentioned the seasonal work of the parents towards the end of the school year, and there is also a significant number of pupils who leave school as the families migrate abroad.

The continuation rate during the second year was 92%, which means that the dropout rate was 8%, which is below the target indicator value of 10%. However, what worries is the fact that the drop-out rate have increased in comparison to the first year, which is mainly described as consequence of the visa liberalisation, which caused a number of Roma families to move abroad, but also the parents sign-out their children from school, due to seasonal work. The dropout rate is above the indicative value for three of the 15 towns covered with the project, i.e. Bitola – 41%, Kocani – 19% and Skopje – 11%.

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

Measurement indicator – 23 trained Roma mediators in permanent contacts with all stakeholders.

Reduced rate of non-educated Roma in Macedonia, by their active participation in the educational process.

Trained parents as members of Parents' councils and school boards.

Our findings – NRC planned to engage 23 mediators in the 15 towns it targeted with the project. The mediators were planned and actually engaged per town as given in the table below.

Town	Kumanovo	Prilep	Skopje	Kavadarci	Bitola	Tetovo	Kriva Palanka and Kratovo	Kocani	Vinica	Veles	Stip	Delcevo and Berovo	Gostivar
Planned and actual number of engaged mediators	3	2	6	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF PLANNED AND ENGAGED MEDIATORS PER TOWN

The NRC office decided to terminate the contracts to some of the mediators at some point of the project, and they were replaced with new ones. The table below presents the mediator who has been replaced, the period of replacements, town that he/she covers and who has been the person replaced with.

Initially hired	Date of replacement	Place	New mediator
Erdzan Saliev	2/1/2009	Skopje	Sami Sejfula
Denis Ademovski	10/1/2009	Bitola	/
Erol Nuka	After the training	Skopje	Aida Mustafovska
Sali Memet	After the training	Skopje	Senad Memet
Edie Ali	11/1/2008	Bitola	Ramadan Rustemov
Ipek Bajramovska	After the training	Bitola	Ahmed Demirov
Ristem Muslievski	4/1/2010	Kumanovo	Marjan Asanovski
Mirvet Muslievska	4/1/2010	Kumanovo	Selman Sakipovski
Enis Osmanov	9/1/2009	Vinica	Eliza Osmanova and Nazim Ridarov
Nazim Ridarov	12/1/2009	Vinica	Eliza Osmanova
Nervije Idic	2/1/2009	Kocani	Sedzan Idic
Nesime Selioska	2/1/2009	Prilep	Denis Redzeposki
Denis Redzeposki	4/1/2010	Prilep	Bilent Kjazimoski
Minaver Skenderi	9/1/2008	Gostivar	Gjulfer Toci
Fadil Useinov	3/1/2009	Delcevo	Mersid Mustafov

TABLE 2: LIST OF MEDIATORS WHO WERE INITIALLY HIRED AT THE PROJECT AND THEIR REPLACEMENTS

Also, we noticed that for some mediators even though the contracts have not been terminated, they were removed from certain regions that they were supposed to cover. This is the case with Senad Memet who remained a mediator for Skopje, but was replaced in municipality of Cair, for the children attending the primary school "Vasil Glavinov", by Sami Sejfula.

We noted that the new or latter engaged mediators did not go through proper training, but the regular meetings with the mediators were used as orientation meetings, where the mediators were introduced to their responsibilities. Still, not having introduction training makes them to some extent insecure about their approach towards the various stakeholders. During the two years of the project duration period there were 15⁴ changes of mediators. Though most of them left due to personal reasons, still we recommend for NRC to reconsider the selection procedure, whether the training satisfies the expectations of NRC for good job introduction and are the mediators paid accordingly to their obligations and responsibilities.

We can confirm that according to the official statistical data of the schools the Roma inclusion in the education is increasing, but we could not measure to what extent is this as a result of this project's activities, as there are many projects that are realized for the Roma and their education, and also the state is undertaking certain measures to stimulate better education for the Roma. However, what is evident is the appreciation of the school staff of the work of the project to bring the Roma children and their parents in the schools, and all who were interviewed acknowledged that this is a great success of NRC.

NRC did not organize formal training for the Roma parents who are members of the school councils, but from the interviews with some of the parents we found that the mediators had individual meetings with them.

⁴ 10 mediators decided to leave the position as mediators due to personal reasons, while as 5 were replaced by NRC, as they did not fulfil the agreement terms.

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

Measurement indicator – Data-base of information available.

Our findings – The database, together with the mediators, are evaluated as the most valuable resources of the project, and NRC as organization who owns them. The database is recognized as important resource also by some national institutions and foreign organizations, which demand and use the data. Therefore, we recommend for the data to be extended to the entire territory of the country and to be charged for, which will contribute to the sustainability of the organization.

To achieve this, NRC will need additional resourced to upgrade the data keeping system and the data collection system.

Expected outcome 5 – Strengthened institutional cooperation.

Measurement indicator – Institution representatives taking active role in debates, dissemination of information and making transparent the educational policy.

Our findings – The debates which were organized by the project were all attended by the educational inspectors of the Municipalities where the debates were organized, and also by the school staff. Also, the project had presentations at the Philological faculty in Skopje and the Pedagogy faculty in Tetovo.

Through the process of preparation of the handbook, the Project further strengthened its relationship with the Ministry of Education and Science. It has well established cooperation with the media and is considered as valuable source of information, when it comes to issues related to the Roma community of Macedonia. Certain progress has been made in the cooperation with the Ministry of labour and social politics.

Except for this, NRC has a well developed network of institutions and organizations it cooperates and works with. In conclusions, NRC has build and maintains a huge network of cooperation with various institutions and organizations. Through the project it cooperated with 96 schools. .

Expected outcome 6 – Diminishing stereotypes, prejudices, segregation and discrimination towards Roma children.

Measurement indicator – A prepared handbook through which quality education will be provided.

Mitigation and control over creation of pure ethnic classes and enrolment of children regarding regionalization decisions.

Active media campaign (press conferences, descriptive reports, debates, monthly e-bulletin, etc.) – improved education.

Our findings – The handbook against discrimination is prepared in its draft version and is signed by the Minister, but is still waiting for improvement by the Government. The methodology was changed from how it was initially planned, but still NRC managed to achieve the final output.

NRC made a great effort towards mitigation of the pure ethnic classes and enrolment of children according to regionalized decisions. Very positive example of their successful work is Kumanovo, where by providing transport for the pupils, they managed to sign them in equally, not only in the school that is closer to the Roma settlement, but in the other schools of the town.

Significant effort towards achieving the same was made in Prilep and Bitola. The project had great support by the municipality of Prilep, which was willing to participate in preventing the segregation of

the Roma children to only one school but despite of the common effort, not a lot could be done to change this, as the Roma parents did not support the initiative. The same situation applies for Bitola, with the only difference that in Bitola it is not only the parents who did not support this, but also the school staff from the various schools, even though NRC and its mediators tried to make a positive change.

The visibility of the project is apparent, and the project and the organization are recognized in the public. Hence, for the period of the project there have been 20 press releases on press conferences on various topics (not necessarily related to this project). The summary of those is given in table 3.

Month and year	Number of announcement
September, 2008	2
October, 2008	3
December, 2008	1
January, 2009	1
April, 2009	2
July, 2009	3
September, 2009	1
October, 2009	2
January, 2010	1
March, 2010	1
April, 2010	2
May, 2010	1
Total	20

TABLE 3: NUMBER OF PRESS RELEASES OVER THE PROJECT DURATION PERIOD OF THE PROJECT

However, there are certain discrepancies from the initial project planning. Hence, from the e-bulleting which was planned to be prepared monthly, in a period of 18 months, 13 issues were released, 4 of which were double issues. The summary of the publication of the e-bulletin is given in the table below, and from here it is evident that the e-bulletin was not prepared monthly, as planned. What is very good is that all issues of the magazine, and the interesting topics they cover, can be found at the web-site ednomagazine.com.

Month and year	Issue No.
December, 2008	1
March, 2009	2
April, 2009	3-4
June, 2009	5-6
October, 2009	7
December, 2009	8-9
February, 2010	10
April, 2010	11
June, 2010	12-13

TABLE 4: NUMBER OF RELEASED ISSUES OF THE E-BULLETIN

Expected outcome 7 – Increase of the number of Roma children in pre-school education.

Measurement indicator – NRC's database will serve for intensifying the inclusion of Roma children in pre-school institutions.

Our findings – NRC had difficulties to establish cooperation with the Ministry of labour and social politics (MLSP), due to the lack of willingness from cooperation by the Ministry. However, in the last

couple of months, NRC and MLSP exchanged information on the number of children each of the two has in their data keeping system. The table below presents the number of Roma children who are on the list of MLSP in comparison to those that are recorded by NRC.

Place	Recorded children by MLSP	Recorded children by NRC	Children on MLSP list who NRC cannot find	Dropped out children who should be enrolled	Children from the MLSP list who are too young for school	MLSP children young for school that NRC cannot find	Total number of children for enrollment
Delcevo	11	12	0	0	0	0	12
Traboviste	2	2	0	0	0	0	2
Vinica	19	39	1	2	0	0	42
Prilep	31	59	13	0	0	0	72
Stip	23	71	15	0	5	4	81
Gostivar	26	68	1	0	1	1	68
Kocani	21	51	1	0	0	0	52
Kumanovo	19	81	0	0	0	0	81
Gazi Baba	21	39	1	0	0	0	40
Karpos	15	64	5	0	0	0	69
Tetovo	11	56	1	7	0	0	64
Bitola	25	83	2	2	0	0	87
Centar Skopje	6	24	4	0	0	0	28
Kicevo	40	0	0	6	0	0	46
Suto Orizari	46	0	0	6	0	0	52
Veles	11	39	10	3	0	0	52
Cair	26	85	14	0	0	0	99
Berovo	11	11	0	0	0	0	11
Total:	364	784	68	26	6	5	958

TABLE 5: ROMA PUPILS RECORDED FOR ENROLLMENT IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 2010/2011 BY MLSP AND NRC

From the table is evident that NRC has a lot more children (more than 50%) on their lists than those they received from MLSP, even though they do not collect data on children from Suto Orizari and Kicevo. So, if we exclude these two places, NRC has recorded 784 children for enrollment, while as on the lists of MLSP there are only 278 children, which is 35% of the total number of children who are on the lists of NRC.

From the children recorded by MLSP, NRC was not able to find 68. The reason they cannot be found, according to NRC, is that many families moved abroad in the last couple of months, with the visa liberalization, but there are also country migrations that are not recorded.

From the children on the MLSP list 6 are too young to be enrolled to school, 5 of whom cannot be tracked down by NRC.

Expected outcome 8 – Improved cooperation in relation NGO sector, Roma parents and education institutions.

Measurement indicator – Roma parents involved in education parent councils, education institutions apply findings from the field and NGO recommendation, all stakeholders take part in education policy development.

Cooperation and lobbying of state educational institutions to work on the improvement of education of Roma in Macedonia.

Make the government institutions aware about the problem and engage them to accomplish the signed Roma Strategy and Action plan as part of the Decade for Roma inclusion.

Our findings – The table below presents the number of Roma parents per town, who are members of school councils and/or school boards (Data source: NRC). However, not many of those are active, sometimes because they are not clear about their role, and other times because the council itself is not active.

Town	Members of school councils	Members of school boards	Active
Delcevo	1	0	/
Bitola	8	1	/
Gostivar	1	1	All active
Tetovo	4	0	All active
Kavadarci	0	0	/
Kocani	4	0	0 active
Kriva Palanka	4	0	2 active
Kratovo	0	0	/
Prilep	12	0	/
Stip	2	0	1 active
Veles	3	1	All active
Skopje	25	0	8 active
Kumanovo	3	0	0 active
Berovo	/	/	/

TABLE 6: ROMA PARENTS MEMBERS OF SCHOOL BOARDS AND SCHOOL COUNCILS (DATA SOURCE: NRC)

NRC cooperates closely with MES and other relevant institutions. This year they had a common activity with the Directory for development of education in the mother tongue of the ethnic minorities, where they make an effort to introduce the Roma language as optional in the primary schools, for the pupils who are in third grade. NRC, with its mediators, works on this activity with the Roma parents, and the schools.

All these activities contribute to the fulfilment of the national Roma strategy and the Action plan, that are part of the goals of the Roma Decade.

Expected outcome 9 – Roma pupils receiving accessory support

Measurement indicator – Provided and shared:

- 2.000 accessories (notebooks, colour pencils, rubber sharpener and drawing pad).
- 8.000 notebooks.

Our findings – the planned number of school accessories to be distributed to first grade Roma pupils was 2.000, but according to the data we received from NRC the total number of distributed school accessories is 2.908.

Figure 5 gives the distribution of the school accessories per town. What we noticed is that there were no school accessories given to the pupils from Berovo, and that even though the majority of the children enrolled are from Skopje, the vast majority (43% of the total or 1.235) of the school accessories were distributed to the pupils from Kumanovo.

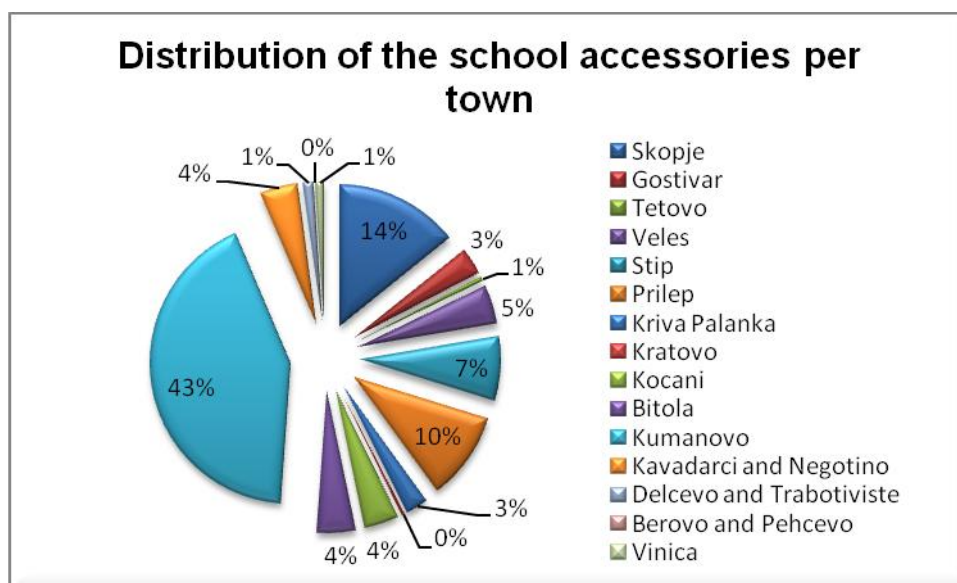


FIGURE 5: DISTRIBUTION OF THE SCHOOL ACCESSORIES PER TOWN

3.2.2. ACHIEVED BENEFITS FROM THE REALIZED ACTIVITIES FOR THE TARGET GROUP

3.2.2.1. PARENTS AND CHILDREN

3.2.2.1.1. 23 Roma Mediators

From the interview with the Project director we found out that position for the mediators was advertised through the REF network electronically and there was one open call presented at A1 (private national television). 42 candidates answered the call, by submitting their CV and motivation letter. Sebihana Skederovska interviewed the candidates on the phone, and at the interview also Ashmet Elezovski and Slavica Curcinska were present. Based on the interview, 23 candidates were selected and were trained at the initial training for mediators. From the 23, 3 were excluded immediately after the training and replaced with new persons who answered the call earlier.

The recruitment procedure could be improved by increasing the visibility of the job advertisement for mediators, as it might be the case that not many people who have the credentials to do the job, have Internet access and even if they do, it is not guaranteed that they are receiving e-mails from the Roma Virtual Network or that they visit regularly the NRC web-site. The second issue is the way the interview was conducted. A telephone interview cannot tell us a lot about the candidate, and it is crucial to have direct personal contact with the candidate before making a decision to employ one. This is also proved by the fact that to 3 out of the 23 primary selected candidates the contract has been terminated immediately after the training and they were replaced with new ones. This also shows that NRC should always plan to train more candidates or to have a job induction plan for the newcomers, as all those who joined latter the team did not have sole knowledge of their role, neither they had the necessary skills and knowledge to finish their work successfully.

There were mediators covering two towns, so the mediator from Delcevo was also responsible for Berovo and made additional visits to Trabotiviste, Crnik and Pehcevo, the mediator from Kavadarci covered also Negotino and Krivolak, with the smaller surrounding villages, and the mediator from Kriva Palanka covered Kratovo, Rankovce and Probistip.

The time we spent in the field, interviewing the relevant stakeholders brought us to the conclusion that the mediator from Delcevo cannot cover Berovo, because the towns are away from each other 40km, and there is no regular transport, so Berovo was only partially covered with activities. Our conclusion is that despite of the good will of the mediator it is not practically possible for one person to be responsible and effective for such a big region. The situation does not differ a lot in the other towns where one person is responsible for more than one town (no matter the size of the town), and the same applies for Skopje, where we found that one mediator is responsible for too many schools that are scattered around and are not easy to reach.

Another problem related to the effectiveness of the mediators, which was pointed to us by them, is the number of children they cover. Each mediator is responsible for 60-70 children on average, and some that have less have to cover a very big region. Being responsible for that many children they cannot visit them all regularly and follow their progress.

Since the mediators are responsible to make 25 family visits per week, we suggest the number of children per mediator to be limited to 25, so that they could visit every child once a week. Also, we do not think it's necessary for all the children to be visited, but they could be only monitored, while as the mediators could focus on working with the children that have greatest need for support, as pointed out by the teacher.

The project conducted initial training for the selected candidates for employment which took place in Kocani. The training was also attended by representative from the municipality of Kocani, which was a good exercise for the mediators, as they could practice communication with institution representatives. The training covered the following topics:

- Communication techniques to be applied with the target groups,
- Ways to promote the project in front of the target group,
- Techniques for field work with the Roma community,
- Report writing, and
- Practical exercise for communication with the institutions and for problem solving.

After the training three out of the 23 selected candidates did not continue, as NRC concluded that they could not fulfil their task. For this reason they selected new candidates who were introduced to their job by their more experienced colleagues, by joining the colleagues for one day in their field work and observing what they do. The NRC office was open for support and communication to all the mediators, at all times.

The latter selected mediators found to be very helpful that they could learn from their colleagues in the field, but this was not sufficient, as they lack certain skills which could help them to do their job better.

We recommend for NRC to develop a job induction program for the mediators. Also, we do not think it's necessary for the office to recruit new mediators with each project extension, as some of them proved to be very successful at their work, and the direct continuation of their contract is good for development of mutual trust and for the motivation of them as employees, since it will show to the mediators that they are appreciated as resource of NRC.

NRC planned with its project for the mediators to assist the teachers in the classroom, in their work with the first grade Roma children. The activity as planned is not in accordance to the national laws, which state that the only other person who could attend classes, except for the children and the teacher is the state educational inspector and the educational advisor. However, NRC managed to overcome this issue by obtaining a letter from the Ministry of education and science (MES), which granted them access to the schools and the classrooms, as the project was recognized as important for the Roma community in Macedonia.

However, observing the situation in the field, and considering the active laws, we recommend for the role of the mediators to be redefined, in order to better adjust it to the needs and the actual conditions in the field. This means that the mediators should not be there to translate to the Roma children, as this rarely happens anyway (none of the interviewed mediators said that they do this) and even if they do it, it most probably affects the attention of the rest of the children in the classroom. Therefore, they could discuss in detail after the class with the teacher if the children have any specific difficulties that they will need to pay attention to and work on (this is already done by some of the mediators, for example the one from Bitola). Another possibility is for the mediators to be present at the classes as observers (which is actually what most of them do now).

Either way, the mediators will need a special training that will prepare them to communicate with the school personnel and will define a unified working approach by all mediators, which is something they lack at the moment. In case NRC decides for the mediators to continue to attend classes it should be only as observers, for which a couple of day training has to be organized for the mediators with the teachers together, so that both parties know what to expect and to decide of their role and approach, without affecting the work of each other and in the classroom.

The mediators set up a positive example in the school not only for the Roma children, but also for the Roma community in general. All mediators have developed a very good and trustful relationship with the schools and they are described, accepted and appreciated as unique bond between the school and the Roma parents.

The role of the mediators to introduce the Roma language, culture and history in the curriculum was understood differently by the mediators in comparison to how it is described in the project application document and how it was defined to us by the NRC office. According to NRC, the mediators were supposed to *introduce* the Roma language, culture and history at the classes, and also to affect the Roma parents to enrol/to motivate their children to study Roma language as second elective language from the third grade. Some of the mediators have done this year some work on introducing Roma language as second elective language from third grade for Roma children, from next year, and they work very closely on this issue with MES. However, there are also mediators and parents who believe that this may lead to segregation of the Roma pupils and do not see why this should be encouraged.

Another role of the mediators is to link the Roma parents to the schools and this is something that all of them have done very successfully, for which they are highly appreciated by the schools. This we see as the crucial and strongest part of the project, where in future NRC should invest more, to further strengthen it and to develop it. It is especially important to do this, not only because it is recognized as useful by the schools, but also because the schools see the parents as the most important segment in the education of the Roma children. The schools expressed their need, but also readiness for more intensive work with the parents for their better and more active participation in the education of the children, for which the mediators have proven to be very important.

Both NRC and the mediators agree that the regular annual meeting between them is good and beneficial practice. NRC planned to have 2 annual meetings with the mediators (one per year, for the

2-year duration period), but they organized 4, without exceeding the planned budget⁵ for this activity. According to the two parties, these meetings are good as the mediators learn about each other's work, exchange experiences and based on that they improve their working methods, and consequently their field results.

This positive practice can further be improved by structuring the meeting as a training, not only a forum for exchange of experience and practice, but training for improvement and development of certain skills and knowhow that are important for the mediators to be able to do their job, and which will also serve as job induction methods for the mediators who joined the team latter.

The success of the mediator is measured by their mandatory weekly reports, and there are some mediators who send information on daily basis to the office of NRC. The mediators are linked on a common e-mail, so all of them have an insight in the progress of their colleagues' work. The NRC team expressed their opinion that the e-mail is not used as much as they would like to, meaning not that the mediators do not use the e-mail, but if they have questions to address to the office, other than those covered by the report, they rather use the mobile phones than the e-mail.

From the interviews with the mediators we found out that they read the e-mails of the other mediators and they find them to be quiet beneficial to them.

We evaluate the e-mail system as positive practice and would encourage further use of it.

However, it is our opinion that NRC should develop better progress monitoring system. Analyzing the contents of the reports submitted by the mediators we believe that its contents could be structured in more efficient and effective way. Instead of having this excessive report forms, the mediators should only fill-in data tables from where NRC could extract data important for their reports towards REF. A proposed format of the monitoring report towards NRC is given in Annex 3.

The mediators will fill-in the report based on data provided by the teacher. In this way he/she will know what exactly they should work on. So, if the child is absent from school the mediator will focus on communication with the parents, if the child is mastering the program well on his/her own, the mediator will just inform the parents of the good work, so that they continue to work and motivate the child to keep-up the good work. If the child is not doing well at school, than it is the mediator who will assist this child, and will work parallel, with the children and the parents, so that there will be some sustainability in this process.

This reporting method is more efficient for both parties, and we hope that it will build stronger trust between them, as due to the lack of proper monitoring system NRC gives more tasks to the mediators, believing that they have the time to finish all that.

Sometimes some of the mediators have too many activities to finish, which are outside of the project framework. These are given to them either by NRC or mainly by the schools. Some of the activities given by the schools, refer to taking care of the absences of children in the higher grades (above fifth), which is where most of the absence problems start to occur. Having these extra tasks, the mediators have less time to finish their project activities, and sometimes it affects their achievement of the initial goals.

Therefore we recommend for the activities that are given to the mediators by the schools, and which are outside of their job description, to be reviewed by NRC and some of them to be incorporated as official responsibilities of the mediators, while as others to be excluded, while having NRC to explain to the schools what is it exactly that they can use the mediator for.

⁵ BASME CT did not look into the budget, as it was not part of our Terms of reference, so the above written is according to the statement of the Project director, Mr. Ashmet Elezovski.

3.2.2.1.2. *Visits and work with Roma Families*

At the beginning some of the mediators had trouble gaining the trust of the parents. This is a consequence of the fact that there are too many projects in the field that promise a lot and do nothing. However, the present situation shows that all mediators are well accepted in the homes by the parents, and they have the parents' trust.

Most of the parents who we interviewed said that the mediators visit them regularly and they discuss that it is important for the children to go to school every day, but also for the parents to be more active in the school and to show interest about the performance of their children.

The field experience shows that mediators brought the school closer to the Roma parents, but also vice versa, the Roma parents got closer to the school. This positive perception is shared by both, the parents and the school, and it justifies the name mediator, as they are indeed the link between these two.

Some of the parents go regularly to the parent meetings, other go even more than that, while as there is also a big number of parents who do not go to the school, due to the economic situation. A parent from Bitola who is not regular at the school, and said that would like to go more often, explained that this is as a result of him not feeling comfortable to discuss issues with the teachers, as he is not educated, and he believes that he will be better understood if there was a Roma personnel at the school. Except for this situations, where there is interest but there are no means to go to the school, there are also parents who are not interested to go to the school, as they do not value education (since they do not have any), and do not know why their children go or should go to school.

According to the school representatives and the interviewed educational inspectors, the parents are the crucial link to better education of the Roma pupils. However, the parents cannot be active in the school life of their children, as they are unemployed, living in sub-standard conditions, and significant number of the Roma parents are not educated or are fully illiterate.

The school representatives said that it is limited and varies to what extent the parent can contribute to the school success of the child, but the parent is very important for the child's regular attendance at school, and this is where some important number of the parents fails. Some of the parents do not send their children to school and do not try to motivate them, and when the school undertakes certain measures to prevent or stop this, the parents find excuses for their children's unjustifiable absences.

Some of the pedagogues covered with the interviews, explained that this is where they have biggest use of the mediators, not only for the first grade students, but also for all Roma pupils studying in their school (even those above fourth grade). They use the mediators to give them an invitation for the parent whose child is not regular at school.

The pedagogues explained us the legal measures that they should undertake once a child has been absent for more than a week, without having the parent to announce the absence. Some of them, knowing the socio-economic circumstances of the Roma families, said that they are hesitant to undertake the final measure, which is to submit a felony entry against the parents, for which the parents might be charged with a penalty of up to 1.000€.

However, even though they show understanding of this, still they do not justify the parent's actions. On the contrary, they explained that NRC is doing an excellent field work through its mediators, but they need to further improve the structure of their work. The pedagogues explained that the only way to improve the education of the Roma children is to work intensively with the Roma parents. Not all of them think that the approach which is currently applied by NRC at this moment is the best for this purpose.

Couple of the interviewed pedagogues suggested that instead of having the mediators to assist the children in their homes, to do this outside the homes, in an equipped classroom for more children, where they will have the necessary studying conditions, and where parents can attend as well.

The same thing was demanded by some parents too, who had similar experience in the past with other projects. Both, the pedagogues and the parents explained that in this way not only the regularity of the children at school will be improved, but also their school performance.

Even though we believe that this might be a good approach towards better school performance, still we suggest the assisting in the homes of the Roma children to continue, but in a revised form. They should be mandatory only for the children who do not have satisfactory school results. In order for this to give positive results, the number of children per mediator should also be decreased to 25. In this way, each mediator will cover all the children he is responsible for in a week, and will be able to work closer with them. Also, instead of having the mediators to assist at class, they should only follow the situation with the teacher and monitor the progress of each child they are responsible for.

3.2.2.1.3. Organizing evening meetings with parents

The success of the evening meetings that were supposed to be organized with Roma parents in their homes is moderate, as well its contribution to the overall project purpose and goals. The evening meetings were organized in a different way by most of the interviewed mediators. Some of them organized them as planned with the project, others did it in their own homes or rented space in the cities they cover, simply because the Roma families did not express readiness to accept many people in their home, due to their living conditions, but also because of some other reasons, such as bad neighbour relations.

The evening meetings, as explained by the mediators from Bitola, were organized in families where the children are not regular at school, so the motivation was discussed with the parents, but also with parents' whose children achieve good school results, so that they could motivate them to continue the good work.

However, even though the meetings were organized, and there are certain effects from them that contribute to the project objective, still we think it is important for the project's effectiveness to stay focused on fewer things, which is why we recommend for this activity to be omitted with similar future projects and to be replaced with more time for individual work with the parents.

3.2.2.1.4. Presenting filmed footage in Roma homes

The project planned presenting a film, which was prepared in the schools, so that the parents could get an idea about the course of the class, children stay at school and the way teachers take care of them. Most of the parents we interviewed have not seen the movie, and even some of the mediators were not informed about it. Few parents saw it during the debates that took place in the schools or during the evening meetings, and they could only vaguely remember its contents.

3.2.2.1.5. Training of parents – members of school boards

The training for Roma parents who are to become or are members at school boards or councils, was not organized by NRC as planned with the project, i.e. to train 20 parents from all 15 cities, who will then continue to spread the idea for inclusion into schools to other Roma parents.

The Project director explained to us that during his visits to the towns he had separate meetings with some of the parents who were selected by the schools to be members at the school councils. We found out that some parents became members of the school councils through positive discrimination, while as other (very few), have been proposed and voted by the parents, both Roma and non Roma.

There are very few members of school boards. For the most of the parents who are members in either body, according to the school staff their role is not really clear to them, so they are not really active, but this is not only the case with the Roma parents, but with most of the other parents, as well.

As evaluators, we believe that training is better than organizing a personal discussion with the parents. However, what we recommend is for this activity to be replaced with 2-day training for the school staff (teachers and other employees), on why it is important to have Roma parents at the school councils and finding ways to achieve this. After that, training or forum for the Roma parents, where some school staff will be present as well, will be useful for introducing the purpose of the school council to the parents, and their role within it.

3.2.2.1.6. School packages and campaign material

Regarding the school material, all interviewed parties agree that this activity should continue, as it has positive impact on the parents and the children, whose economic situation is very unsatisfactory. According to most of the interviewed parents, the mediators and even the school staff, this activity should continue, as the children are better motivated to go to school, but it also helps the poor family budget.

We support this opinion, and we believe it will be positive if school material continues to be distributed to the children, but in a more unified and better structured way. Namely, some of the materials were given to the children by the mediators, in their homes, while others received them at school, and there might be other non-Roma children, whose financial situation is as bad, so this does not feel good to them. That is why we suggest for the materials to be distributed to the children in their homes.

Related to the distribution of the materials, we also found some inconsistencies in the process. Namely, the students from Delcevo who are now second grade, and were covered during the first year of the project duration period, did not receive any school material, since the mediator who was engaged at the project at that period decided that there is a better way to distribute the materials, and according to the list of distributed material that we received from NRC, we noted that the students from Berovo did not receive any school material. As defined by the parents, this is a motivational activity, but when asked what type of support will be better appreciated by the families, the schools and the parents mentioned the following:

- Financial support,
- Clothing,
- Food for the children who go to school, for the time they are at school,
- Transport, to and from the school,
- Hygienic packages (soap, washing powder, toothpaste, etc.)
- Additional classes to improve the school performance of the children, as the parents said that if their children are good at school they want to go, but if they do not know or understand anything they are ashamed to go,
- Work with the parents who do not read or write, to help them to support their children in the educational process.

Regarding the motivation of the children, one positive example that we noted is something that is practiced by one of the mediators from Skopje. He carries some school material (pencil, pencil sharpener or notebooks) that he purchases from his own budget. He gives this material to the children, when he visits their homes, but only after they finish successfully some tasks that he gives them. He explained this to be inexpensive method that has positive influence on his relationship with the child and on the motivation of the child to try harder and to achieve better results.

We recommend for the project to have extra fund for some additional material that will be used as reward that the child will receive after completing successfully a given task by the mediator.

3.2.2.1.7. *Creating a fund for personal documents*

Table 7 gives the number of documents that were issued through the project to Roma children, to enrol to school. All documents that were issued were birth certificates, and the total number is 117. From these, 68% were birth certificates issued to children who are at age for regular enrolment, 29% of the issued birth certificates were for children who are older than 7 years and are not yet enrolled at school, and only 3% of the birth certificates were issued to children who are younger than the regular school age.

Place	Birth certificates to children for regular enrollment	Birth certificates to children who are older than 7 yrs. and are not enrolled at school	Birth certificates for children younger than school age
Kocani	12	2	/
Kumanovo	17	5	3
Kavadarci	3	/	/
Skopje	/	1	/
Bitola	4	3	/
Prilep	44	18	/
Gostivar	/	5	/
Total:	80	34	3

TABLE 7: DOCUMENTS ISSUED TO ROMA CHILDREN

This is a very important activity that is realized by NRC, since it brought 117 children, who did not exist for the state, to the schools.

The unregistered children are referred to by the media as ghost children or even families. As there is considerable number of these families, we recommend for NRC to advocate in front of the state institutions for regulation of the status of these families. This is a process and it takes time to see the results, but NRC through its many years of work is on a good way on making positive change, and we recommend for this activity to continue. So, even though the fund for personal documents can be maintained, it is also necessary for more lobbying and advocacy activities to be undertaken, towards the state institutions, and to define common and more systematic way towards the resolving of this issue.

3.2.2.1.8. *Analysis of accomplishments*

NRC has a rich database of children who are at school age. The Ministry of education and science, as well as other national and international organizations and institutions recognize the importance of this data and use it for planning and reporting purposes.

Using this data, the project planned to prepare an analysis in December 2008, which will present the results on enrolment of first grade pupils, attendance at school and dropout rate. This report was to be distributed to and used by respective ministries, local and state inspectorates, bureaus and other relevant institutions.

After the discussion with NRC we found out that no standard analytical report has been prepared, but only the data from many years has been updated and sent as such to the relevant institutions (MES, European Commission, Centre for European rights in Budapest, schools and other). The data includes information about the number of children at the age from 6 to 15 years who have either dropped out from school or do not attend school at all. This is very important data for the institutions, as MES does not have data for school attendance rate, per ethnic background, in spite of the fact that it is demanded by the European Union for monitoring and reporting purposes.

Having this important and relevant data, NRC could utilize it to push up towards the top of the agenda the issues related to Roma education. Namely, submitting only numbers, without explain them, what they mean and how they could change, is not enough. Therefore, NRC should either prepare Analysis on its own or hire experts who will do this and publish and promote the findings of this analysis, and by doing so they will raise the awareness and bring back the attention to the problems that Roma keep facing with, despite of the Roma Decade activities. So, giving the numbers, while picturing the entire picture will “alarm about the rate of dropping out of Roma children”, as planned with the project document.

3.2.2. INSTITUTIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS (MINISTRIES, SCHOOL, COMMUNITIES)

3.2.2.1. Preparation of handbook on the protection of the children from discrimination in the schools

The preparation of the Handbook against discrimination did not go as initially planned with the project, but it is still successful and fruitful experience for NRC, which gave the desired result.

The project initially planned to organize 2-day training, in cooperation with the Centre from Minority rights from Serbia, and to include educational inspectors, who will work on the preparation of the Handbook. The handbook is intended for school staff, children, and parents and other, and it aims to contribute to developing and improving the quality of education and upbringing of all children. After the publication of the Handbook, 2-day training was to be organized for education inspectors, from all 15 cities, to adopt the implementation process of the Handbook.

However, the Handbook is approved in its final draft version, and was prepared by a working group assigned by the Ministry of education, instead of as initially planned, by a working group comprised by the educational inspectors. The partners from Serbia, Ms. Tunde Kovac, who participated in the preparation of the Handbook for Serbia, transferred her experience in the process. In June 2009 a 3-day working meeting was organized, where representatives from the Ministry of education of Serbia, the Centre for minority right, NRC and the Ministry of education and science of Macedonia discussed the process and the experiences in the preparation of the Handbook.

After this, a working group was formed at the Ministry of education and science, for which the director of the Directory for development of education in the mother tongue of the ethnic minorities, Mr. Redzep Ali Cupi, was assigned as coordinator. The working group had intensive meetings, during which the procedure for the preparation of the Handbook was established. Ms. Katerina Spasevska, was assigned representative from NRC at the group.

After this a questionnaire for the schools was prepared and focus groups were organized, for which 9 out of 10 initially schools were visited. The gathered data was processed and after that the preparation of the Handbook began.

The final draft version of the Handbook is ready and signed by the Minister, for which a press conference was organized together with NRC, where they promoted the Handbook. Together with the Minister of MES, Mr. Nikola Todorov, also the Minister without portfolio Mr. Nedzet Mustafa and Mr. Redzep Ali Cupi were present.

Now, after the final draft version has been prepared, the design is being prepared by NRC and MES is responsible for the proofreading.

Once the Handbook will be brought to its final phase, NRC will publish the Macedonian version of it, and the number of copies will depend on the unit price, as NRC has a total budget for this purpose approved by REF.

The handbook will be a document for integral evaluation of the schools and of the educational process in the schools.

3.2.2.2. Commitment against segregation

There are four towns from those which are covered by the NRC project where there are identified possibilities for segregation or segregation of Roma is actually happening. These towns are:

- Stip - there is a segregated class of Roma in the primary school of Dimitar Vlahov,
- Prilep - children who live in certain area can attend only specific school in that area, and as most of the Roma live in one area of the town they all go to one school,
- Bitola – Roma attend one specific school, and
- Kumanovo – there is a school which is closest to the Roma settlement, so the Roma parents want to send their children there, but NRC has provided transport for the first and second grade students, so the Roma children are now equally distributed throughout the schools in Kumanovo.

NRC said that they are satisfied with the cooperation with the employees of these schools and they said it's a common effort work and process, so even though the progress may not be as rapid as desired, still it is evident.

From our interviews with the school staff, the mediators and Roma parents we did not receive any complaints on segregation, unequal or unfair treatment of the Roma children by their classmates or the teachers. The parents are satisfied how their children are accepted and treated by the personnel of the schools and by the other children. They address the non-Roma as friends and said that they are loved by their teachers.

Only the pedagogue in Kumanovo mentioned that there might be some form of indirect segregation, which may be noticed in the classroom. She said that if one goes in the classroom, he/she may notice that Roma students seat in one part of the classroom grouped, and mostly in the back part of the classroom, but she said that this is not done by the teacher, but the children group themselves in this way, while as the teachers try to break this pattern.

None of the mediators reported any serious segregation or discrimination issues, so it is obvious that there is slow, but certain progress in this area.

However, for this positive situation to be sustained it is important to have a Roma employees at the schools. Therefore, we recommend for NRC to lobby at MES or at local level, for some of the mediators to be employed by the schools, at least in the schools of Bitola, Prilep and Skopje, where the majority of the children are Roma. We believe that this is doable, as the mediators are already recognized as valuable resources that are being utilized by the school.

3.2.2.3. Debates

The debates, which were introduced with an earlier NRC project, were described as positive and useful practice that continued during this project as well. 30 debates were planned to be organized, one per target city, per year, and that is how many were organized. The debates were planned as 1-day events, outside the cities, which will be attended by Roma and non-Roma parents, teachers and other school staff, NRC staff, the mediators, and educational inspectors, nut instead they were organized at the schools, and this proved to be a good practice.

During our field visits we came to various opinions of the different stakeholders who attended/organized the debates. Hence, NRC believes they are good practice that should continue, some of the mediators who expressed their opinion on the debates, thought that they were well organized and evaluated them as positive practice, as well. Most of the schools agree with this, even though there are those who think the structure and the organization of the debates could be improved.

The parents who we interviewed did not attend the debates, and so they did not have opinion on those, while as there were no non-Roma parents who were present at the events.

Therefore, in order for this activity to continue in the future, we recommend the following:

- Defining clear structure and facilitation methodology of the debates,
- The debates should continue to be organized in the schools, as this is a way for NRC to bring the parents to the schools and encourage discussion between them and the school employees,
- Every person who attends the debate should receive a written form of the conclusions, within a reasonable period after the debate.
- The NRC team should plan a follow-up actions after the debate, where at the end of the year they will go back to the conclusions of the debate and will send an informative letter to the participating parties of what has been realized and achieved, so that they show the purpose of this debates and manifest that they are not just a discussion, but a forum where decisions are taken and acted upon.

3.2.2.2.4. School meetings

Representatives of NRC, the Project director and other project staff, accompanied by the local mediator have visited the schools they were going to work with.

The project has well-established relationship with the school staff.

The teachers and pedagogues from the schools trust the mediators and show big appreciation of what they are doing, while emphasizing that after the project the cooperation and communication between the Roma community and the schools is significantly improved.

3.2.2.2.5. Creating a database as a method for contacting Roma children to enrol in schools

The database of NRC, together with its mediators is one of the most valuable assets of the organization. Having this type of data, and being the only organization in the country that has it available for such a long period of time, is perceived by us a tool that can contribute to the sustainability of the organization and its actions. To be exact, this data is currently used by many state institutions and other international organizations, who receive the data from NRC, free of charge.

We recommend for NRC to upgrade the record keeping system, to extend the data coverage range to the territory of the whole country and to offer the data to the institutions at a certain price, thus contributing to the sustainability of the organization.

3.2.2.2.6. Exchange of information about pre-school education with the Ministry of labour and social politics

The NRC has a database that covers all pre-school children, from 11 cities, and it planned to expand it with data from the other 4 cities that the project expended to. The database was to be used as basis

for cooperation with the Ministry of labour and social politics, for intensifying the inclusion of Roma children in pre-school institutions.

This cooperation was difficult at the beginning of the project, due to unexplained factors by MLSP, but MLSP and NRC established cooperation towards the end of the project, where they compared directly the data of Roma children each had. We assume that as the number of registered children by NRC is a lot bigger than those by MLSP (See Table 5 above), that the cooperation will maintain and that it will be further strengthened.

NRC should consider a development of a common project with MLSP on this issue, i.e. targeting the Roma preschool children, covering them with preschool education and preparing them for enrolment to primary school. They have a good argument to be a good partner of MLSP, as they proved to be a valuable and experienced resource of data.

3.2.2.2.7. Assisting in the testing of children for enrolling in the first grade

According to NRC analysis there are many Roma children who attend classes for children with special needs. The opinion of NRC is that this is a consequence of the children not understanding the Macedonian language, as a result of which they have unsatisfactory outcome when they go to enrol in the first grade, and these primary test results lead to having the teacher suggest to the parents that their child is for class for children with special needs.

Therefore, NRC planned an activity where the mediators will assist the children (language wise) during the enrolment at first grade. By translating for the children who do not understand well the Macedonian language, fewer children will be signed into classes for children with special needs.

Regarding this issue, we found out that the pedagogue and the school psychologist are the only ones who can assess if the child is ready to be enrolled in first grade. So, there is no classical testing, since it is only observed how the child develops its relationships within a group of other children, and for example how he or she treats and handles the toys. Having this type of observation, both the pedagogues and the psychologist, explained that there is no need for assistance by the mediators. Also, they said that according to the national laws the children with special needs should be integrated in the regular program with the other children, which is what the schools do, and even if they notice bigger difficulties with some children they are not the ones who can place them in a classroom for children with special needs, but it is a special commission that has to categorize the child for this placement, and it is the parent who should take the child to this evaluation, while as they can only recommend it to the parent.

So, as they explained there are children with minor to mild obstacles in the development, but they are all integrated in the regular classes. For these children, the teacher develops a separate annual program, and follows their progress based on the goals targeted with that specific program.

Some of the pedagogues were explicit, and they said that even if it would be better for the child to attend classes for children with special needs, the parents most often object to it and disapprove it. So, in Kumanovo, there is a first grade student, who is deaf and mute, but she attends regular school, even though her grandfather would like her to attend special school in Skopje, where she will have better chances to learn more things. He cannot send her to the special school in Skopje, due to lack of finance, so she goes in the regular school in Kumanovo.

However, we reported also a negative case in Delcevo, where a healthy child has been put in a classroom for children with special needs, but only because the parents insisted on this, even though the pedagogue did all that was in her power to prevent this from happening. Namely, the pedagogue said that the child was irregular at school, so she had to undertake certain measures to penalize the

parents, as a result of what they decided to transfer the child to another school where there is a classroom for children with special needs, as the absences there are better tolerated. The pedagogue claimed she did everything to stop this, but the parents took their decision and she still wonders how it can happen for a healthy child, who understands perfectly Macedonian, and could be easily an excellent student, be categorized for this type of school. She also explained the parents are normally misled by the believing that their child could be easily employed, as there are state subsidies for companies who employ people with special needs, and also the parents receive certain state help for taking care of these children.

Similar situation was registered in Kavadarci, as well. The mediator from Kavadarci told us that approximately 40% from all Roma the children who go to school for children with special needs are healthy. He explained that it is normally that the parents take this decision as these schools tolerate the absences better than the regular schools (this was explained by one Skopje school pedagogue, as well). The mediators explained that he talks to the parents, informs them about the consequences that their children will face in life as a result of this decision, but it is the parent who decides at the end.

This raises a serious issue about the commissions that are responsible for categorizing these children. Many questions arise here, such as what are the criteria, what is the way around them, how can the schools who have classrooms for children with special needs “recruit” this children, and do they do it just to keep the number, so to be able to maintain the staff? All these are serious issues that need to be addressed by NRC on a high level with the institutions who are responsible for this. Also, it is important for the general public to hear about this, which is where NRC should use the media.

All pedagogues who we interviewed said that there is no need and no possibility for the mediators to assist during the “testing” process of the first grade students, but both the mediators and the pedagogues confirmed that they are very useful in the technical part of the enrolment process, where they help Roma parents to fill-in the applications for their children.

Hence, we recommend for this activity to be redefined in the future, and to be adjusted to the way it has been implemented throughout the project duration period, which proved to be the only way applicable, i.e. as technical assistance to the parents in the process of enrolment of their children in the first grade.

Regarding the enrolment of healthy children in classroom for children with special needs, we believe that cases such as the one in Delcevo should see the light of the day and be spoken clearly about. Therefore we recommend NRC to collect data about this cases and using the media, to raise the awareness of the general public about this issue, while in the same time alarming the appropriate institutions.

3.2.2.2.8. Distribution of information

The stakeholders of the project are well informed of its actions and purpose. They receive the bulletin regularly, but they also receive information letters from NRC whenever there are certain important things happening, and which are related to the project. For example, when the evaluator’s team visited Delcevo and Kumanovo, we noticed the bulletin and letters send by NRC on the table of the school inspector, and this has been the case with other school representatives and school inspectors who we visited. Also, all important information related to the project is available on the official web-site of NRC (www.nationalromacentrum.org). Therefore, we can conclude that the project and NRC are transparent in all that they do, which contributes positively to the positive image of both, the project and the organization itself.

3.2.2.2.9. *Cooperation with the Faculty of Pedagogy*

One presentation and one meeting with the Dean were organized at the Faculty of pedagogy in Skopje. The presentation was about Roma language, culture and history, and it was prepared by Ms. Sebihana Skenderovska, as representative from the Project and Mr. Redzep Ali Cupi, the director of the Directorate and by the Dean, Mr. Vlado Timovski. More than 80 students were introduced with the Roma language and culture, and the interest of the students for the topic is evaluated by the project staff as excellent.

On the 5th of May 2010 another lecture about Roma in multicultural society, was organized at the Southeast University of Tetovo. Mr. Redzep Ali Cupi was present again, together with the Dean of the Philological faculty for languages, culture and communication in Tetovo. The presentation was in front of students, the educational inspector from Tetovo and other audience from the private sector. The participants heard about the experience of the Roma during the Second World War in the holocaust, the issues related of segregation and discriminations towards Roma people throughout history and today. According to NRC, the participants were shocked by the things they have learnt from the presentation.

It is positive that these issues about the Roma community were raised in front of the academic public, however, the initial planning, as described with the project document, was to organize a debate at the Faculty of pedagogy on "how to come up with Roma teaching staff". After this a second debate was to be organized, the topic of which was to be determined based on the conclusions from the first debate, but this was not done. Instead of this, only one of the two initially planned debates that were to deal with Roma language and culture was organized at the Faculty of Pedagogy.

It is important achievement that the Philological faculty in Skopje has opened a study group in Roma language.

3.2.2.3. *MEDIA*

3.2.2.3.1. *Continuous work and cooperation with the Media Lobby Group*

The purpose of the Media Lobby Group (MLG) is to inform, analyze and comment on Roma education issues in Macedonia, and so to diminish stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination towards Roma pupils, while raising the importance of these issues with the rest of the media and journalists from the country.

According to the 2 members of MLG who responded to our questionnaire NRC is recognized as important source of information by the Macedonian journalists. One of the interviewed journalists said that "very often colleague journalists from the media are calling me to give them the NRC contact...and I am glad to see that NRC is recognized by the journalists as one of more important civil society organizations, which works on the protection and improvement of the rights and the conditions of the Roma population from Macedonia".

MLG is trying to promote the needs of the Roma community, as part of the Macedonian society, and so to "open the eyes" of the general public for this issues.

In regards to the segregation it is positive that the media no longer use the discriminative terms for the Roma, such as Gypsy. However, the Macedonian journalism in general is based on the motto that *only the bad news is good news*. So, this does not exclude the Rome either, on the contrary, it puts in the focus the bad economic situation, the poverty, the low education, the sub-standard living conditions, etc. The positive change in the last couple of years is that after all this is mentioned, the media also sometimes give positive examples of successful Roma who are well integrated in the

society and prove that the above given labels to the Roma do not actually define the Roma people, but they are defining the society and the country as a whole.

Still, according to our interviewees “the only way to decrease the stereotypes is to show them, and not discuss them”, and this journalist is doing this by s called “pitching” towards other colleagues, on topics related to the Roma community.

3.2.2.3.2. Monthly e-bulletin

In the period of 18 months, MLG was to be working on the preparation of the e-bulletin. The members of MLG were part of the planning and developing the structure and the contents of the e-bulletin. Together they worked on every issue of the e-bulletin, coordination of the associates who wrote articles for the bulletin, editing, writing and preparation for printing.

The e-bulletin is names EDNO (ONE), as for “one education for all”. It is published electronically and is available on the Internet, but also 200 copies are published of each issue and are sent to the educational inspectors, schools, Ministries, embassies and all other relevant parties with which the project cooperates.

The e-bulletin presents positive examples of world famous Roma people, but also success stories of Roma from Macedonia. The idea of the journalists who are working on the e-bulletin is by presenting this people to stimulate the media to use Roma experts when they discuss on certain topic, and so to give visibility to the successful Roma, and so to diminish the stereotypes and false perceptions about the Roma

The interviewed journalists recommended the number of issues of the e-bulletin to increase, which means an increased number of positive and success stories about the Roma, which will have a direct impact on diminishing of the discrimination towards the Roma people. Also, the magazine could be upgraded into a tool which will enable the journalists from the country, no matter the media they come from, to take the contents and the information from the e-bulletin and to publish it in their media. In order for this system to become functional it is necessary to engage more journalists, photographers, and the Internet site to be upgraded at least once a week.

3.2.2.3.3. Holding press conferences

NRC planned to organize at least 4 press conferences related to the project activities, and the 4 press conferences that were organized, covered the following topics:

- 18.October.2008 – Press conference about the education of the Roma and the problems related to Roma education, including enrolment of healthy children to classroom for children with special needs
- 27.January.2009 – Promotion of the magazine “EDNO – obrazovanie za site” (“ONE – education for all”).
- 03.April.2009 – Press conference in Stip, where a workshop on topic “Equal access to quality education for the Roma”, was held
- 06.May.2010 – Promotion of the Handbook for protection of discrimination in education

NRC has good communication and relation with the media, and is recognized and appreciated source and opinion provider to the media.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. 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, which is supported by the fact that the same issues were treated with the EC Progress report on Macedonia for 2009.

23 Roma mediators were recruited and trained on communication techniques and work with Roma families.

Throughout the project duration period there were many changes of mediators (15 out of the 23 were changed at some point of the project). The new mediators were not properly trained, and this affected the quality of their work at the project.

In some cases two or more towns/municipalities were covered by one mediator and each of the mediators was responsible for more than 50 children, which is too big number that affected the effectiveness of the project.

The mediators are well appreciated by the schools, and are described like "link with the Roma families". They are often present at the schools and have established good communication with the teachers and the rest of the school, and very often they are present during the classes.

They setup a positive example in the schools for the Roma children and Roma community and have developed good and trustful relationship with the schools, which is demonstrated by the fact that the schools' personnel trusts them to deliver information to the families whose children are not from the target group of the project. This is an extra activity that the mediators do for the schools.

The communication between NRC and the mediators, and also among the mediators is well-developed as a result of the group e-mail system that is used. In addition, NRC organized 4 common meetings where the office staff gathered together with the mediators and they got to learn about each others' work, exchange experiences and based on that they improve their working methods, and consequently their field results.

The mediators were responsible to work with the Roma pupils in their homes, and also to communicate with the parents different issues that their children face up with in the schools. The mediators did successfully their work, despite of the fact that the interest for education of some Roma parents remains low. This is as a result of the bad economic and social conditions that they leave in, sometimes due to bad family relations and sometimes because of lack of care.

A positive change that was achieved with the project is that the parents are more regular at school, attend the parent meetings and often go to ask about the progress of their child.

According to the school staff the parents are the crucial link in the improvement of the education of the Roma, so continuous and intensive work with them is necessary.

As part of the activities that were to bring closer the education to the Roma parents and decrease the gap between them and the schools, evening meetings and debates were organized.

The project provided school material to the children and this had stimulating effect to the children to be regular at school, because many times they are not willing to go to school 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 cannot get enrolled to school. By doing this they made an extra step to give chance to all Roma children to get to school. Their success in this area is recognized by the various stakeholders.

The project initiated and took active part in the preparation of the handbook against discrimination in education, which as activity was undertaken by MES. The Handbook is ready in a final draft format, which is approved and is waiting for final corrections, before its publishing. The handbook will be used in the primary and secondary education, as a tool that will prevent children from being discriminated in the schools.

Significant effort was made by the project to stop the segregation of the Roma children in the towns where it occurs. Success was achieved in Kumanovo.

The database represents valuable tool to identify the Roma children to be enrolled in school, and so the coverage of children to be enrolled to school is increased.

NRC exchanged information with MLSP on children who are at preschool age, and the results show that NRC has more detailed data and has made better identification of the Roma children who are at preschool age and who should be enrolled to school.

Regarding the task of the mediators to assist in the testing of children to enroll at the first grade, the school staff confirmed that the mediators have been very useful in the technical part of the enrolment process, where they help Roma parents to fill-in the applications for their children, but there is no need, nor there is possibility for them to assist during the "testing" process.

Through the lecture that took place at the Faculty of pedagogy, at the University St. Cyril and Methodius and at the Faculty of Philology, at the Southeast University in Tetovo, the awareness about the Roma and the issues related to their living, social status and education were raised in front of the academic public.

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 present in the media and the journalists from the Media Lobby Group are well informed about its goals and work, as they took active part in the project, through the preparation of the e-bulleting EDNO (ONE).

4.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The mediators are very important segment of the project, i.e. they are the glue that brings together the parents and the schools, and in order to further improve the results, we recommend for the NRC team to consider the following amendments that refer to the mediators' work:

1. The Roma mediators should not assist in the classroom, as this is against the national legislation, but should have consultation meetings with the teachers at least once a week, where they will gather information about what should be addressed by them in regards to every child that they are responsible for. In this way they will have more time to work with the children and their parents.
2. As part of the redefinition of the role of the mediators should also be considered the tasks that are given to the mediators by the schools, which is something that takes a considerable amount of their time.

3. The work with the child should be focused on having the child to learn the letters and the numbers, as we found out that many children finish fourth grade, without being able to read or write.
4. The number of children per mediator should be decreased and it should not be more than 25, so that the mediator could visit all the children (s)he is responsible for, within a week.
5. According to the teaching staff the children will achieve better school results if the mediators assist them in a well-equipped classroom, where they will gather after school to finish their homework. This is somewhere where parents, who would like to read and write, could come.
6. One mediator cannot be responsible for more than one town (no matter the number of children (s)he covers in this town), as there is no work effectiveness.
7. The mediators need to be provided with some basic technical equipment which will make them more effective in their work. These include: laptop computers, digital cameras and office material, such as paper or fund for printing.
8. The mediators need to have their travel and food expenses covered, as many of them complained that they are not sufficiently paid for their work, which is something that the evaluators agreed with, as well. To be exact, the mediators only receive salary for 9 months, they are not paid in June, July and August, even though they are active until mid June, and they receive only half salary for January, as for the other half of the month the children have their winter holidays. Also, the mediators do not have social or pension insurance paid. Therefore, we recommend equal salary for all mediators, equal share of responsibilities and supplement for the daily food and travel expenses of the mediators. In this way they will be better motivated to do their job more successfully.
9. The recruitment procedure of mediators needs to be improved, so that NRC can select the best candidate for the job. For this purpose NRC might benefit from couple of day training in HR, which will cover recruitment, but also HR management, communication, progress monitoring and team working.
10. Regarding the recruitment procedure, the mediators who have proven to do a good job should have their contracts continued immediately with each project continuation, as they are part of the NRC team, so they should feel as such.
11. NRC needs to develop proper job induction for the mediators, no matter the time they join the team. This includes training on communication skills, as they had, but also half day training during the annual meetings with the mediators on issues that are of importance for better field work.
12. NRC should upgrade the progress monitoring system of the project, so that to be more efficient and effective.

The evening meeting and the filmed footage that was to be presented during those were planned to increase the awareness of the Roma parents about the importance of the school, and how they could be more active in the education of their children. Still, due to the living standards of the Roma families, not all meetings could be organized as planned. This, but also the need for the project to remain focused on fewer things, so that better results could be achieved, led us to the recommendation for this activity to be replaced with more time for individual work with the parents.

There are Roma parents who are part of the school councils, and fewer who are members of the school boards. However, very few of them are active, sometimes because these bodies are not active, but other times, because the parents do not understand their role within the bodies. Therefore, we recommend 2-day training with school staff, so to find way for Roma parents to be members of the

school councils and boards, and to define the role of the parents in these bodies. After that, a second training should be organized together with the schools, for Roma parents who are selected members in these bodies, so that they can get a better understanding of their role, rights and responsibilities within them.

The material support with educational accessories should continue. For children who come from indigent families and who live in poor living conditions, the following types of support should be considered, as well:

- Financial support,
- Clothing,
- Food for the children who go to school, for the time they are at school,
- Transport, to and from the school,
- Hygienic packages (soap, washing powder, toothpaste, etc.)
- Additional classes to improve the school performance of the children, as the parents said that if their children are good at school they want to go, but if they do not know or understand anything they are ashamed to go,
- Work with the parents who do not read or write, to help them to support their children in the educational process.

We recommend for NRC to continue working on providing documents for children and/or sometimes families that do not have them and as a consequence cannot 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 major identified issue for Macedonia, that persists for many years now.

NRC should utilize the unique and relevant data that it has, to prepare an Analysis through which it will raise up the issues related to Roma education, that Roma keep facing with, despite of the Roma Decade activities.

One way to improve the Roma education situation is if the school employ some of the Roma mediators. This will be positive in two ways:

1. The mediator will do the same work that s/he does, but as school employee, which will make it easier for may Roma parents to go to school and communicate with the staff there, as there will be a Roma employee, who they believe will understand them better.
2. Employing Roma people in public institutions will be a positive example for the Roma community, that education truly matters and the better educated the person, the better the chances for employment.

The debates are an activity that needs to continue, as it is a form for the Roma parents to express their opinion and to be heard by the school staff. However, these could be improved by:

1. Defining clear structure and methodology of facilitation of the debates,
2. ,
3. Every person who attends the debate should receive a written form of the conclusions, within a reasonable period after the debate,
4. The NRC team should plan a follow-up actions after the debate, where at the end of the year they will go back to the conclusions of the debate and will send an informative letter to the participating parties of what has been realized and achieved, so that they show the purpose of this debates and manifest that they are not just a discussion, but a forum where decisions are taken and acted upon.

The database of NRC is valuable asset that can contribute to the sustainability of the organization and its actions. Therefore, NRC needs to upgrade the record keeping system, to extend the data coverage range to the territory of the whole country and to offer the data to the institutions at a certain price.

Having this data base, NRC could consider working on a common project with MLSP, to enroll Roma children in preschool education, and by doing so, to prepare them for enrolment to primary school.

Regarding the role of the mediators during the “testing” process of the first grade students, but both the mediators and the pedagogues confirmed that they are very useful in the technical part of the enrolment process, where they help Roma parents to fill-in the applications for their children, which is how this activity should be redefined in the future – “technical assistance to the parents in the process of enrolment of their children in the first grade”. And concerning the enrolment of healthy children in classroom for children with special needs, we recommend NRC to collect data about this cases and using the media, to raise the awareness of the general public about this issue, while in the same time alarming the appropriate institutions.

The cooperation with the media is well coordinated by NRC and the usage of national media is at high level. Bigger exposure of positive examples to break the stereotypes is necessary. One way to do this is by upgrading the magazine ONE (EDNO) into a tool which will enable the journalists from the country, no matter the media they come from, to take the contents and the information from the e-bulletin and to publish it in their media.

To summarize, the **sustainability** of the entire action depends on 3 segments, which have to be further improved or strengthened:

1. Internal capacity of the organization,
2. Stakeholder analysis and their engagement, and
3. Proper utilization of the available resources.

1. Internal capacity of the organization

NRC is an organization which enjoys great positive image and has recognized influence when it comes to issues that are related to the Roma and their living in Macedonia. Still, this project was very complex; we even evaluate it as a program that is comprised of few different projects. This makes the project very complicated for management and requires special skills to be applied by the main NRC office, as the entire project success relies on the capacity of NRC to manage the project and the complex processes that are carried on within it.

In these types of projects, NRC has to manage the communication, coordination and even implementation process with its employees, both in the office and in the field – the mediators, but also with the institutions and other external organizations – school, ministries, media, municipalities, etc.

So, the sustainability of the action will depend to a great extent on the level to which these processes (communication, coordination and implementation) are upgraded, so that they can flow impeccably.

Therefore, we recommend for NRC to consider the following capacity building activities, which will ease the project implementation and will bring better end results:

- Development of *communication procedures* within the team and with external parties that will be applied not only for specific project implementation, but also for the general functioning of the organization.
- Training in *human resource management*, including communication, task and responsibility delegation, implementation progress monitoring and employment procedures.
- Establishment of multi annual and annual activity and budget planning.
- Development of internal monitoring and evaluation procedures and practices.

2. Stakeholder analysis and their engagement

With the project NRC has well identified the relevant stakeholders and planned activities that apply to each of them. However, except for the identification of the stakeholders, for the success and sustainability of the project, it is important to define their roles, interest and influence on the project, so that to be aware of the risks and possibilities that each of the stakeholders carry with them.

Once NRC has analyzed the stakeholders, considering all the details that are to be considered, they will be able to plan activities that are of importance for the beneficiaries and that will bring the best result for the available resources and time that they have available.

It is good that most of the planned activities are about the parents, as they are seen by all stakeholders as the most important link in the improvement of the education of the children. However, this project is dealing with a complex process, where no rapid changes can be achieved, as every process depends on many variables and among other it includes change of consciousness, habits and the social functioning in general.

NRC has contributed greatly to the positive change in the process for providing better education for Roma children and thus achieving equal integration of the Roma in the society. That is why it is important for the support for this process to continue, as if it does not, there is a risk that all the positive impact that was achieved, will stop, and instead of going forward, the process will be returned to where it was.

According to our opinion, for the process to continue, it is not only necessary for the support to continue, but also the relevant stakeholders to be included adequately in the implementation of the process. Therefore, we recommend for NRC to focus its effort on work with the families (just as it does), through the school, but together with the municipalities and the Ministry of education and Ministry of labour and social politics. Integrating the project practices as practices of these institutions is crucial for the project's success and sustainability.

3. Proper utilization of available resources

As mentioned throughout the evaluation report, the mediators and the database are two resources that can contribute to the sustainability of the project.

By engaging the mediators, NRC planned and developed a resource that is valuable not only for them as organization, but for the schools and the municipalities, as well. So, finding a way to employ some of the mediators in the municipalities, where they will be responsible for identifying, recording and bringing to school the Roma children, who are to be enrolled in first grade, will be a great success of NRC. In this way NRC will transfer the ownership of the mediators to the institutions (the municipalities), and by doing so they will allow sustainability of the project action. To achieve this it is important, as already mentioned, to cooperate closely with and to lobby to the municipalities. Also, this process and its progress greatly depend on good political will

The second resource that was developed with this project is the database. Following the earlier given recommendations in the project, regarding the database, we believe that NRC has to extend the data records to the entire territory of the country, and being the only organization which has available this type of data to offer it to the institutions that currently demand it and use it free of charge, at a certain price. This will contribute to the sustainability of NRC as organization.

5. ANNEX

5.1. ANNEX 1 – LIST OF GATHERED AND ANALYZED SECONDARY DATA

1. Project application document
2. List of mediators
3. List of schools with school staff contacts
4. List of enrolled children in first grade in the school year 2008/2009 and 2009/2010
5. Records of enrolled, irregular and dropped-out students per school with data for school performance
6. Weekly report format submitted by the mediators to NRC
7. Evaluation report - MAC 029: Campaign for Roma education (enrollment and continuity in the education process); June, 2008 – Roma Educational Fund
8. Report on Campaign for Roma education prepared in March, 2010
9. Press release materials available at the NRC web-site (<http://www.nationalromacentrum.org>)
10. Signed contract format with the journalists from the Media Lobby Group
11. Signed contract format with the Lawyer
12. Signed contract format with the Mediators
13. Plan for lecture on history class for the Roma, prepared by Sebihana Skenderovska
14. Agenda, presentation and list of participants at the presentation at the Faculty of Philology at the Southeast University in Tetovo
15. List of participants at the presentation about Roma history, at the Faculty of pedagogy in Skopje
16. Plan for preparation of the Handbook against discrimination in education
17. Reports from the meetings held by the working group responsible for preparation of the Handbook against discrimination in education
18. List of children to whom the project helped in the issuing of personal documents
19. Minutes of the meetings with the mediators
20. Agenda of the training for the mediators and list of participants
21. Magazine ONE (EDNO), all issues are available at the web-site: www.ednomagazine.com
22. List of recorded children to be enrolled in first grade in the school year 2008/2009 and 2009/2010
23. Comparison list of children recorded by MLSP and NRC, to be covered with preschool education
24. List of mediators who were replaced at some point of the project and the name of their replacements
25. Narrative reports from NRC to REF
26. Implementation plans
27. Draft format of the Handbook against discrimination
28. Summary report from the debates
29. List of distributed school materials
30. Report, list of participants and agenda from the Debate at the Philological faculty
31. Other.

5.2. ANNEX 2 – LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS, COVERED WITH THE INTERVIEWS

The initial interview was with the NRC staff, with its Project director Mr. Ashemt Elezovski. During the interview, also Slavica Ivanovska, Katerina Spasovska and Sebihana Skenderovska were present.

Town	Parents	School	Mediators	Educational inspector	Other
Bitola	3	1 psychologist	2	1	/
Skopje – Cair	3	Pedagogue and psychologist	2	/	2 members of the Media lobby group
Skopje – Gazi Baba	3	Pedagogue and psychologist	1	1	
Kumanovo	3	Pedagogue	2	1	1 lawyer
Kavadarci	3	School principal	1	/	1 Educational advisor
Tetovo	4	School principal and pedagogue	1	/	1 Educational advisor
Gostivar	3	Pedagogue	1	1	/
Delcevo	3	Pedagogue	1	1	/
TOTAL	25	6 pedagogues 2 School principals 3 psychologists	11	5	2 educational advisors 1 lawyer 2 members of the Media lobby group

The total number of conducted interviews with the representatives of the stakeholders is 58.

5.3. ANNEX 3 – MONITORING REPORT FROM THE MEDIATORS TO NRC

National Roma Centrum

Campaign for Roma Education

- Enrollment and continuity in the education process –

Weekly report

Period of reporting:

Mediator:

Location:

Student name:					
	1	2	3	4	5
Understands Macedonian language					
Speaks Macedonian language					
Recognizes colors					
Can count					
Recognizes forms					
Recognizes numbers					
Recognizes the letters of the alphabet					
Class activity					
Overall school performance					
Number of school absences (weekly)	Justifiable ____		Unjustifiable ____		
Other remarks by the teacher:					
Comments by the mediator:					

(Mark with 1 (one) for each correct answer: 1 – fail to understand or know; 3 – average knowledge and understanding; 5 – excellent knowledge and understanding)

Summarized weekly report for all children

	1	2	3	4	5
Number of children who understand Macedonian language					
Number of children who speak Macedonian language					
Number of children who recognize colors					
Can count					
Recognizes forms					
Recognizes numbers					
Recognizes the letters of the alphabet					
Class activity					
Overall school performance					
Number of school absences (weekly)	Justifiable ____		Unjustifiable ____		

(Indicate the TOTAL NUMBER for each correct answer: 1 – fail to understand or know; 3 – somewhat knowledge and understanding; 5 – excellent knowledge and understanding)