

MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

*DECREASING VULNERABILITY OF ROMA IN THE
WESTERN BALKANS*

EVALUATION OF THE UNDP REGIONAL PROJECT:
*“Improving Institutional Capacity and Monitoring Capabilities at
Central and Local Level for Decreasing Vulnerability of Roma in
Western Balkans”*

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Mariana Milosheva-Krushe
CREDA consulting

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Project and the Review

The Project “Decreasing Vulnerability of Roma in the Western Balkans” was a strategic initiative of the UNDP Bratislava Regional Center (BRC), developed and implemented together with the UNDP offices in Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia in the period 2007-2010. In practice it was a regional facility that brought together four specific and autonomous sub-projects – one regional and three country components, under a broad framework of common principles and objectives. The Project aimed at expanding the capacities of central and local institutions and redefining the service provision frameworks for adequate responses to the challenges of Roma inclusion, with a particular focus to assist the implementation of the National Action Plans for Roma Inclusion (NAPs) adopted within the “Decade of Roma Inclusion”. The Project was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in total EUR 2.698,000 (or 3,959,061 USD).

The purpose of this review was to assess the Project’s relevance, effectiveness of achieving planned results and outcomes, their sustainability prospects and to systematize the lessons from practice that can service possible future interventions of UNDP in this area. The main focus was on the assessment of the effectiveness and emerging impacts resulting from the work in the country components, as well as how effective were the regional coordination and support services, provided by the BRC. The programmatic part of the regional component was not a subject of in-depth assessment, as this would have required a different methodology and a broader scope of respondents and field work.

Strategic Relevance

The Project was a timely and relevant response to the critical need to increase the institutional capacities for practical implementation of Roma inclusive policies in the region. It worked within institutions, not substituting but assisting them for inclusive policy development, based on the active interaction and involvement of Roma communities’ representatives at both the local and central levels. This was approached differently in the three countries, depending on the local contexts and the identified strategic niche within the country developmental agendas.

The Component in Montenegro was a targeted strategic response to key priority areas as defined in the NAP. It worked for increasing access to social welfare and employment services of the domicile Roma Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) in three municipalities in Montenegro (Berane, Niksic and Bar). The strategy was clearly designed in two priority directions. The first was the *upgrading the social service provision* of the Social Welfare Centres (SCs) by developing a social data base on the domicile RAE in the targeted municipalities, supporting RAE communities to “enter” the service system by assisting the issuance of personal and civic documents and expanding the RAE access to other services provided by the local authorities. The second area was increasing the RAE access to employment and incomes by: 1/ growing the capacity of the Employment Agency’s (EA) local branches to assist RAE with vocational trainings and mediation with potential employers for finding jobs; 2/ stimulating RAE women’s empowerment for increased access to employment and 3/ developing pilot projects supporting RAE small businesses.

A major strength of the strategy was that its design was rooted in the good knowledge base and well established functional partnerships of the UNDP country office with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare through the Social Welfare Centres (SCs) and with the EA through local Employment Bureaus (EB) in the three municipalities, as well as with local RAE civil society organizations.

The Kosovo component was in response to the need for a systematic policy development and implementation for RAE inclusion. The aim was to assist the policy capacity development at the central level and local levels for drafting the RAE Social Inclusion Strategy and local action plans and to pilot new locally based models for RAE social inclusion policy implementation, especially in the area of income generation. Locally, the Project envisaged work in two municipalities – Prizren and Ferizaj, with special attention to the increased participation of RAE in the decision making by establishment of local

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interactive structures— Municipal Project Development and Implementation Committees (MPDIC), as well as small grants to RAE NGOs or community groups for job creation and community development.

While generally relevant, a major challenge of the initial strategy design was that it was ambitious but broad and unrealistic; it “seemed like it wanted to do it all” for two years, as initially planned. Some core partnerships, like the one with the RAE NGO FORUM umbrella network was also not realistic and could not materialize. The lack of clarity on the focus and missing shared understanding of the initial design determined the on-going search for a “new substance” and constant redesign of the strategy.

The component in Serbia emerged as a timely strategic response to continue and expand an already piloted good approach to grow the institutional capacities of the Central Government and in the selected municipalities to meet the challenges of Roma inclusion in a critical time of the implementation of its policy commitments within the Decade of Roma Inclusion. At the central level it aimed at expanding the capacities of the Roma National Strategy Secretariat (RNSS) as a department of the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights to facilitate and coordinate the update of key strategies and National Action Plans (NAPs), as well as the activities during the Serbian Presidency of the Decade. Locally, the strategy was to promote the position of Local Roma Coordinator in 10 more municipalities every year and assist the development of LAPs, by intensive capacity building and small grants for municipal initiatives in priority areas of the NAPs (or LAPs).

The strategy design was rooted in the good core competences of the UNDP country office in the area of overcoming the vulnerability and exclusion and respectively, well developed partnerships with different Ministries, municipalities and Roma civil society all over Serbia.

The Regional Component was implemented by the UNDP BRC. It was of a dual nature: a program of itself with its own set of activities; and a regional facility, providing for the smooth operation of the overall Project and its country components. The programmatic part of the component was in the framework of the broader long-term strategic work of UNDP/RBC for Roma inclusion: It was aimed at assessment of the Decade of Roma Inclusion progress by introducing meaningful monitoring of the NAPs implementation based on clear indicators and data collection processes. A second strategy was with the objective to foster codification of knowledge and exchange of experience on Roma inclusion, thus improving awareness of practitioners about working approaches that can assist the social systems to become more responsive to the needs of the vulnerable groups. The regional coordination and support services were to ensure the effective implementation of the Project with all its components and to provide for sharing the knowledge emerging from them.

Efficiency of Implementation

The efficiency of implementation differed among the country components, depending on the clarity of strategy, the strategic capacity of teams and backstopping of the relevant UNDP country offices, as well as the dynamics of local contexts.

The Project was implemented in a very efficient way in Montenegro and Serbia, following the clear focus and initially planned activity lines. All envisaged instruments – grants, capacity building activities and policy support were applied in a rhythmic and timely manner, based on clear outcome oriented approaches. Changes that occurred in the course of implementation were evidence for good strategic performance, rather than delays. In Montenegro this related to the need for intensifying the support for obtaining and re-obtaining personal documents of RAE, due to the changes of the requirements after the adoption of the new Law on Citizenship in 2008. Many of the people that were already assisted for obtaining IDs had to go through the procedures again. UNDP negotiated with SIDA additional funding for grants and support to the ID issuance process and this activity was expanded until 2011.

In Serbia, the combined application of the different types of assistance activities was modified in 2009 to provide for an expanded geographic coverage. As the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MOLSP) decided to finance new positions of Roma local coordinators, the UNDP project expanded the small

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grants scheme to the 18 new municipalities, supported by the MOLSP and the training - to cover local Roma coordinators and representatives of all municipalities with local Roma coordinators. Later in 2009, *the Provincial Government of Vojvodina approached UNDP for cooperation in adopting the model of local Roma coordinators, and coordinators from the Province were also involved in the trainings.*

In Kosovo, the *implementation was marked by struggling with constant delays and under spending, on-going changes of planned activities and budget reallocation.* At the end of 2008, when the Project in Kosovo had to be finished, it had \$377,683 or 40% of the overall component budget in unspent funds. As a result it was implemented for four years instead of two years, with two no-cost extensions agreed with SIDA. The grants scheme and introduced accompanying trainings in the two municipalities became an objective by itself. With the good intention to be “developmental” rather than “easy money”, the grantmaking came out geographically wide spread and short term, varying from a very heavy and slow proposals selection, in some cases taking longer than the projects themselves, to fast track disbursement to finally spend the funds at the end of the project. Throughout implementation, it also faced serious organizational problems, very high staff turnover and activity-led rather than strategically driven management.

The Regional coordination and support service provided by the BRC was assessed highly by the national teams in terms of both efficiency and substance. Support was timely and facilitative. The regional team was very helpful in providing knowledge from practices in other countries, as well as good support for the advocacy for the needs of the relevant country project components, providing for their legitimacy as part of a regional effort. The implementation challenges within the Kosovo component increased the workload of the regional team. The monitoring visits to Kosovo were 13, which was two times more than the envisaged ones, with periods when the regional manager had to be there almost on a monthly basis. As the decision making on the components was of the competence of the relevant UNDP country offices, the regional team could not be very instrumental in direct problem solving related to the programmatic and staff tensions in the Kosovo component.

Effectiveness and Key Outcomes

Each of the country components brought visible outcomes at different levels, in the case of Montenegro and Serbia much beyond the initial plans and in the case of Kosovo with the constant changes of activities - in other areas than the initially planned ones.

1. In Montenegro The Project brought the following outcomes and emerging impacts:

(1) Visible change of the institutional approach and practice of the social welfare and public employment service provision in the three municipalities

Both the SCs and the EBs in the three localities have increased their capacities to reach out to the RAE communities and include them effectively into the service system. The number of eligible RAE families covered by the social welfare system, has grown to 90%, but will be close to 100% by the end of the Project. The number of people registered with the EBs has increased to 67% from the beginning of the project.

There is a much better quality of service, based on the beneficiary oriented approach of work with RAE families that has been tested and adopted, as well as a new type of attitude and service skills of local workers in both institutions. It is rare, at least in our region, to see such teams of people working within institutions with real concern and motivation to serve RAE communities as equal clients and to assist them get out of extreme poverty.

There is also growing inter-institutional cooperation and improved sensitivity of local authorities to the problems of RAE communities. Active cooperation among local service institutions and RAE civil society has brought for developing LAPs for RAE inclusion, adopted by the municipal assemblies in Nikcis and in Herceg Novi, and in process of finalizing in Kotor and Tivat.

(2) Growth of RAE NGOs as important, civic actors advocating for the interests of their communities and effective partners of local institutions.

Seven NGOs have increased capacities to effectively serve and represent the interests of the RAE communities. The supported initiatives of these seven NGOs were not just projects. They were effective direct service of benefit to the local RAE communities. The facilitation for the ID issuance has increased the trust of the community members served in the usefulness of their NGOs to represent their interests. Due to their effective work and growing capacities, the RAE NGOs have growing legitimacy with the local and central institutions.

(3) Visible increase of the equal access of RAE communities to social services and support systems in the targeted municipalities.

Nearly 800 RAE community members from the targeted municipalities who got personal documents and have obtained or are obtaining Montenegrin citizenship became eligible for access to all the public social security, health and employment mediation services. They got the first precondition to become visible to the social system – to have documents and citizenship.

With entering the social security and support system the RAE families made the first important step out of extreme poverty and exclusion. The Project has contributed for the next step out of poverty—becoming proactive job seekers, motivated to gain new skills and new income generation opportunities; 105 or 23% of the targeted RAE registered with the EA gained new skills and certifications for new occupation and 107 of targeted Roma registered with the EA have been employed during the implementation of this Project.

(4) New opportunity for RAE women by opening a new vision out of their complete exclusion that they live in.

Within the RAE who registered with the EA, 202 were women, 59 of them successfully attended vocational trainings and got certificates for new occupations, and 28 got jobs. Over 80 RAE women, involved in the supported NGO initiatives got access to completely new experience out of the narrow perspective of the traditions and isolation. Some of the initiatives brought for new self-organizing of women to continue working for communities interests – like the new women’s NGO in Berane. Others, like the initiative of SOS Niksic gave birth to a new social enterprise like the first Roma Women Craft Cooperative, which gave a completely new perspective of living for the participating women.

2. The Kosovo Project Component:

The various activities have brought for direct results in the time of their implementation, but it is challenging to assess how these interrelate and bring together summative outcomes and longer term impacts. Though the Project “*did a lot*” on an activity level, it failed to find a relevant framework to grasp the evolving “*so what*” answers on the strategy and outcome level. Within the limitations of this review the outcomes and challenges can be outlined in several levels:

(1) The Project has contributed to the capacity growth of institutions at central and local level.

The support to the Ministry for Community Returns (MCR) has expanded its institutional capacity to understand and address the issues of RAE communities. There is more clarity on its role and concrete responsibilities as a key actor for RAE integration. The project has demonstrated the effectiveness of a partnership institutional approach to Roma inclusion, especially through the practice of the RAE Scholarship Program, developed and implemented jointly by the MCR and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST). Inter ministerial cooperation is currently underlined in adopted RAE integration strategic documents as critical for the effectiveness of interventions. The Scholarships will continue as a key practical measure, as a broader collaborative effort of MEST with other supporting stakeholders (MCR included).

By establishing the MPDIC the Project has increased the capacity of the Municipal Community Offices (MCOs) as key municipal departments on dealing with RAE issues in Ferizaj/Urosevac and in

Prizren. The project stimulated the linkage between the central and local level institutions which has contributed to a better understanding of the diversity of situations and local issues in the process of policy formulation at central level, and has supported local institutions' access to central institutions and programs.

(2) The Project has failed to effectively expand RAE community participation in the process of decision making

Activation and consolidation of RAE civil society for participation in the drafting of RAE integration strategic documents (Strategy and Action Plan), as well as later the Local Action Plans was led by other key stakeholders, especially the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society. The UNDP project complimented these efforts sporadically at the central level by bringing RAE representatives at MCR workgroups in the framework of the RAE Action Plan development, and more consistently at the local level by efforts to stimulate RAE NGOs coalitions and interaction with institutions, especially in Prizren.

The MPDIC failed to be a well functioning model for participation of RAE in the decision making on sub-projects for social inclusion. Though most of the members were RAE representatives, based on the interviews, the committees were “a place for discussion, but not for decision making”. The decisions were taken by the UNDP project management, “often acting like a barricade to stop funding of proposals voted by the committee”.

(3) Expanding the RAE communities capacities which can lead to more social inclusion

An achievement of the project is that it has expanded “the common ground” among the three groups – Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, which traditionally have been divided and in conflicting relations. The local RAE NGOs have increased their capacities through training and through the practice of implementing their projects. The RAE community members – the students with scholarships or participants in NGO projects, have started gaining new individual life and knowledge skills.

But the impact potential of the achievements at the RAE communities' level was reduced by the “arrhythmic” nature of the way the grants support was allocated. The longer term effects in term of improved wellbeing of communities will depend on the ability of local civil society and institutions to continue the work for providing community members with access to opportunities and skills that in turn will bring for more access to mainstream society and service.

3. In Serbia the project has contributed to:

(1) Increased capacities of the key actors at the central level to identify and address the complexity of Roma exclusion

The Roma National Strategy Secretariat (RNSS) positions were systematized as part of the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights (MMHR). The RNSS has demonstrated good coordination capacities in the process of strategic documents drafting, promotion and adoption, as well as in the planning and implementation of the events during the year of the Serbian Presidency of the Decade. The redrafted and adopted Government Strategy and NAPs for Roma inclusion were developed by a broad consultative process with the input of over 1500 representatives of different stakeholders.

The progress towards NAPs implementation is still at a very initial stage. There is a number of capacity challenges at the central level. They relate to financial shortages and budget cuts, insufficient human resources, fragmentation of coordination and fragility of consistency of the efforts of the Central Government, and among the different line ministries within the dynamics of frequent political changes and under the pressure of the growing economic crises. The developed within this Project framework for practical monitoring of the implementation of the NAPs, based on using the resource of the Local Roma coordinators in 55 municipalities, has remained a general political wish and has not been used, due to the lack of enough capacities and resources by the MHMR and its department the RNSS.

(2) Increased capacities of the local stakeholders and institutions to identify and address the needs of Roma communities

The project has contributed to expanding the number of municipalities that have adopted the *Roma inclusive model* for development and implementation of the Decade plans. Before the project there were 19 municipalities with local Roma coordinators as part of their administration. At the end of this project they have grown to 55, and an additional 11 municipalities in Vojvodina are in the process of adopting the initiative. The majority of the local Roma coordinators continue working in their municipalities, and are paid by municipal funds on a service contract or on a permanent contract as part of the municipal staff.

There is a visible growth in the capacities and skills of the local administration in the 55 municipalities to translate in practice the priorities of the NAPs at the local level. Before the Project only 8 of the 55 municipalities had LAPs for Roma inclusion, while by the end of the project already 31 of them have adopted such plans in at least one of the priority areas from the NAP.

Many municipalities have been consistently allocating budgets within the feasibility of their scarce resources. Though small, the municipal funds allocated for the LAPs priorities are being used as “seed” money to attract additional resources from line ministries or international donors programs. The issues of Roma inclusion are increasingly becoming part of the overall municipal development policies and strategies. Especially in poor regions, where both the majority and minority population are suffering economic deprivation the efforts for the improvement of the Roma population are linked with the overall effort for overcoming the poverty in the municipality.

There is an evolving network of the 55 municipalities from all regions in Serbia that have adopted the Roma local coordinators positions in their administration and have started more pro-active policies for Roma inclusion. The network was not a planned outcome. It resulted from the consistent approach to training, on-going mentoring and support to link the local Roma coordinators from all municipalities. Though the project is over, this network continues to function informally. This relates both to the Roma local coordinators, as well as to the representatives of local self-governments from the relevant municipalities. Based on the interviews this is one of the most valued outcomes.

The Regional component:

The work of UNDP in the area of data gathering and monitoring of the actual impact of the adopted policies for Roma social inclusion has raised the importance of these issues on the agenda of the Decade. There is already a developed methodology and country assessment frameworks in five of the Decade countries - Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia, however, none of their Governments has started regular monitoring of progress based on the elaborated indicators.

Creating the culture of results-based policy implementation and public accountability on progress achieved will be a long process in all Decade countries, requiring coordinated efforts of various country stakeholders – the Decade teams at the Central government level, line ministries, Roma civil society and the media. Major challenges in this direction include the unstable policy commitment for the adoption of sound monitoring systems and the insufficient coordination and missing capacities of both institutions and civil society for its effective application. A sustainability factor is that the UNDP BRC is continuing this work with successfully raised EU funds.

The Project has made initial steps for consolidating practical knowledge among the variety of approaches to Roma inclusion. The Roma Developmental Practice Portal is a good start for a “one-stop-shop” for practices of various development actors. However, its effectiveness was hampered by a number of technical issues, as well as the limited approach of the BRC. Gathering of practices remained confined only in research of the sites of key donors and their grantees. The published substantial information on what actually works and what are the real bottlenecks in overcoming marginalization and exclusion of Roma communities is very fragmented. More in-depth knowledge gathering required more resources to invest in a pro-active and interactive gathering of working practices.

Looking Forward: Lessons for Future applications

- (1) It will be important to continue the practice of regional initiatives with country based components as a good approach to addressing the issue of Roma inclusion. The problems of Roma are of dual nature – they are country issues, but also a regional priority, especially in the framework of the Roma Decade. The regional network of country offices of UNDP and their in-country partners can be a valuable asset in this direction.
- (2) Priority areas suggested for follow up work included:
 - data collection and monitoring of progress of implementation of policies for Roma inclusion, and repetition of the Roma survey from 2004 to provide for comparative analyses of the situation of Roma in the region;
 - focused work for expanding the capacities of local governments and institutions for practical implementation of the measures envisaged in the relevant NAPs for Roma inclusion;
 - targeted work in addressing the issues for civil registration of Roma, re-integration of returnees from Western Europe,
 - identifying new initiatives in the area of income generation and employment, combining targeted assistance for access to jobs and incomes for Roma, with area based development approaches, especially in localities/regions which are economically deprived.
- (3) The experience of this Project provides a number of lessons that can serve future regional programming of UNDP.
 - *Joint design of the overall project and ownership of the design of the country components by the UNDP country offices can bring for more effectiveness and targeted outcomes during the implementation.* Critical for the effectiveness of the initiative is that all components have a clear focus and priority issues defined by feasibility work and agreed partnerships prior to the project, including the participation of partners in the design. If some of the country components will be in a new thematic area or location, it is better to have a formative stage within the strategy design, which will be providing space for exploring what approaches can work better.
 - *More clarity on the competencies and channels of supervision in a regional project modality, involving BRC and UNDP country offices can assist better performance.* The way the project was organized was efficient and effective, but not prepared for problem solving. BRC needs to carefully study the experience with this project. Though the UNDP country offices have the lead in decisions and systems of supervision in regard to programs in the country, if this is a component of a regional UNDP effort, part of the backstopping function of UNDP BRC should involve provisions on problem solving, including assistance with decisions on difficult issues. Otherwise, delays and problematic performance in one of the project components can jeopardize the overall project, as well as the image of the UNDP network.
 - *Capacity building by application of different instruments – training, grants and networking, is more effective if these instruments are applied in an interrelated way, complementing each other and led by the desired outcomes of the project intervention.* Targeted grantmaking with clear priorities and with clear vision on what is the capacity development objective of the small grants proved to be more effective. Otherwise, grants can turn into an objective by themselves and the strategic focus may be lost. Trainings bringing together local institutions and civil society from different locations around practical tasks for learning and exchange of experience proved to be very effective not only for airing skills, but also for the emergence of joint initiatives and networks.
 - *Codification of development knowledge emerging from practices for Roma inclusion can be further fostered by more pro-active approaches to developmental learning* for example by organizing discussions or pro-active outreach to various actors– donor, civil society or government. More meetings and direct forms of sharing which are well recorded around clear learning outcome areas

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can bring for better systematization of developmental knowledge emerging from different projects applications. The facilitation of such processes by the BRC will require more resources – raised for a specially targeted project for studying practice for Roma inclusion, and/or integrated as part of future regional initiatives.

Introduction

1. The Project

The regional project *“Improving institutional capacity and monitoring capabilities at central and local level for decreasing vulnerability of Roma in Western Balkans”* was designed and implemented in 2007-2010 by the UNDP Regional Center in Bratislava (BRC) in partnership with the UNDP country offices in Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia. The project was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in total of EUR 2.698,000 (or 3,959,061 USD).

The Project’s main goal was to decrease the vulnerability and human security risks that Roma are facing through improving their access to social services and developmental opportunities at the local level. For that purpose the Project aimed at expanding the capacity of both the local and central level institutions and redefining the service provision frameworks, with a particular focus on assisting the Central Governments in their efforts to implement the National Action Plans for Roma Inclusion adopted within the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” initiative supported by UNDP. The two major priority areas of the Project included: 1/ Expanding the institutional capacity and policy support at the national level and 2/Improving the infrastructure for social assistance through expansion and redefinition of the existing support frameworks.

The Project has been a part of a long-term consistent involvement of the BRC and the participating UNDP country offices in initiatives for decreasing vulnerability and social exclusion in the region. It had four components: a Regional Component, implemented by the BRC; and Components in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, implemented by the relevant UNDP country offices. Each of them translated the overall goal and priority areas of the Project through specific objectives responding to the regional and country specific needs, as well as the priority strategy of each of the leading partner. In practice it was a regional facility that brought together four specific and autonomous sub-projects under a broad framework of common principles and objectives.

The intervention strategies in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo involved a different combination of instruments supporting capacity building and practice initiatives at the central and local level to respond to the different contexts. In principle, at the central level it worked with the relevant government institutions related to Roma inclusion, as well as representatives of Roma civil society. Locally, the Project was working with the local institutions and representatives of Roma communities in selected municipalities to test innovative approaches that will increase capacities and constructive interaction of local stakeholders for Roma inclusion. This involved a variety of capacity building initiatives, combining training for local stakeholders and small grants to support local initiatives for Roma inclusion. The number of targeted municipalities and the concrete capacity building approach and modalities differed in each of the country components depending on the chosen country strategy in response to the specifics of the local contexts.

The regional component was of dual nature – a program by itself and a regional modality providing for the smooth operation of the overall Project. The programmatic part aimed at stimulating more targeted, effective and efficient actions for decreasing Roma poverty and exclusion. Specifically, this involved activities to expand the shared knowledge base, as well as developing a methodology and testing of monitoring and indicators related to the implementation of the plans and commitments in the framework of the Decade. The regional coordination and support services were to ensure the effective implementation of the Project with all its components and to ensure sharing of knowledge emerging from them.

2. The External Review

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The purpose of this review was to assess the Project's relevance, effectiveness of achieving planned results and outcomes and their sustainability prospects, as well as to systematize lessons that emerged from its practice that can serve possible future interventions of UNDP in this area. Its main focus was the assessment of the effectiveness and emerging impacts resulting from the work of the country components. Another task was to get the views of in-country partners on the effectiveness of the regional coordination and support services, provided by RBC. The programmatic part of the regional component was not a subject of in-depth assessment, as it would have required a different methodology and a broader scope of respondents and field work.

The evaluation's approach was participatory, based on the facilitated reflection of the variety of stakeholders involved at the regional, country and local levels. The methodology involved activities in three main areas:

- Desk review of the regional project documentation, progress and monitoring reports, key publications, and internal project documents of the different components;
- In-depth interviews with the UNDP BRC and the project teams of the UNDP country offices in Serbia, Montenegro and in Kosovo;
- Field trips to Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo for direct interviews with different stakeholders at the central and local levels – participants and beneficiaries, as well as other actors in the area of Roma inclusion.

The review was implemented in two stages: 1/. information gathering (documentary analyses and field work in November – December 2010, and follow up analyses, additional documentary review and 2/ report drafting in January 2011. Following the participatory nature of this review all phases were implemented in close consultations with the implementing partners. The field trips were organized in the period 29 November – 23 December, 2010 with the assistance of the BRC and the relevant project officers in the UNDP offices in Serbia, Montenegro and in Kosovo. In total 82 respondents were interviewed, 41 of them were representatives of stakeholders in the municipalities directly involved in the in-country components.

- *Field work in Serbia* included 31 interviews: individual interviews with 23 respondents and two group interviews – one with UNDP project officers, and one with representatives of the UN Roma Theme Group. Locally, the interviews involved representatives of local self governments and the local Roma coordinators in 7 out of the 28 directly involved in the project. Sample was done based on criteria like: duration of involvement of the municipality in the Project, type of initiatives supported, emerging innovative practice, geographic distribution and feasibility of the site visits for the short time frame provided for the evaluation field work. The visited municipalities were from two very different regions of Serbia – the Vojvodina Province and South Serbia.
- *Field work in Montenegro* included interviews with 23 respondents, including representatives of the relevant government institutions, national Roma networks and with the UNDP office; and with representatives of local institutions and RAE NGOs in two of the three targeted by the Project municipalities. Due to the flooding in December 2010 the municipality of Berane could not be visited.
- *Field work in Kosovo* included interviews with 21 respondents - representatives of the central level institutions and other stakeholders; as well as members of the Municipal Community Offices, local RAE NGOs that received small grants in both targeted by the project municipalities. The Project manager and most of the members of the team (from the various stages of the project) were also interviewed. A major challenge in organizing the field work was the timing – it was right after the latest elections. Another challenge for the assessment was the fact that many team members changed over time, the institutional memory of the project was quite fragmented and emotionally loaded and the project documentation was not well organized. This required additional information gathering

and phone interviews with some of the other Project team members, who could not be met for direct interviews during the field work in Kosovo.

List of people who participated in the review is in Annex 1.

The review was done by Mariana Milosheva from CREDA consulting (Creative Development Alternatives) with over 15 years of experience in evaluations, civil society development and Roma inclusion issues. She was assisted by David Krushe (from CREDA consulting) for part of the field work, and in drafting and editing the report.

Special thanks to Jaroslav Kling and Andrey Ivanov (the BRC regional team), Jelena Tadic (UNDP Serbia project officer) and Bogdanka Tashev (former project coordinator in Serbia), Igor Topalovic (Project coordinator, UNDP Montenegro) and Angela Mazer (UN Volunteer at UNDP Kosovo) for their help and time to assist the review in grasping the meaning and the outcomes of the initiatives.

3. The Report

The report is organized in four separate chapters, following the structure of the regional project and its sub-components. Each of the three country components chapters explores the key areas that were at the focus of the study: *strategic relevance* – or to what extent the strategy design was responsive to real needs and was clear and adequate; *effectiveness of implementation* – or the extent to which the sub-project was implemented according to the initial strategy and the planned outcomes were achieved; *sustainability prospects and follow-up*– what from the achievements will have longer-term meaning and what needs to continue; and *lessons for future in-country and regional applications* – or what from the experience of the country sub-project provides for learning both programmatically and content wise that can serve for follow up initiatives.

The regional chapter elaborates on the effectiveness of the regional coordination and support services, as well as on the codification of knowledge initiatives. It summarizes some lessons from the country components that can serve regional programming.

Chapter 1. PROJECT COMPONENT IN MONTENEGRO: EFFECTIVENESS, OUTCOMES AND LESSONS

I. Strategic Relevance

1. Strategy Niche and Priority Issues

The Project component in Montenegro was rooted in years of consistent work of the UNDP country office that has assisted participatory policy development and testing approaches for overcoming social exclusion and poverty as one of key issues on the EU pre-accession agenda of the country. Based on previous efforts, like the NGO Capacity Building Program (2001-5) UNDP has facilitated the growth of Roma Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) NGOs from the less developed regions. Through grants and training it has assisted them to effectively work on searching solutions for problems of their communities, to better interact with government and to participate in the design of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the development of the National Action Plan for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.

A major start-up asset for the project design were the good working relations with government, and especially with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MHLSW), which was the main institution responsible for the pro-poor strategies and hosting the national coordinator of the Decade; as well as established partnership with the RAE civil society and well analyzed practice of previously supported RAE community –based projects. All this served as a partnership and knowledge base for clear identification of the strategic niche for this intervention.

Among the numerous needs within the vicious circle of RAE exclusion in the country a clear prioritization of issues was done based on their importance as an ‘entry point’ to social inclusion and the potential for feasibility of the action in view of the existing partnerships, envisaged project timeframe and resources:

- ***Targeting only the domicile RAE population in three municipalities Berane, Bar and Niksic.*** The overall RAE population in Montenegro is 11,000 people¹, out of which about 7000 are domicile (native) and about 4000 IDPs, living in 8 out of the 21 municipalities in the country, with the largest share of RAE living in Podgorica. UNDP selected to focus the work in the three municipalities with relatively significant RAE communities (in total 1,557 people². The decision was based on a careful assessment of the feasibility of making a difference with the available project resources, which were not enough for effective work in Podgorica.
- ***Focusing the work in clearly identified key issues to be addressed in two priority areas: 1/ the need of increasing the access of the RAE communities to the Social Security and Welfare System.*** Major issues identified in this area were: the lack of identification documents (IDs) as a barrier to access to basic services ; the need of increasing capacity of the local Social Welfare Centres to effectively work with the RAE communities and increase gender sensitivity of service provision in regard to the disadvantaged position of women in these communities.; ***2/ the need to address the high level of RAE communities unemployment, especially drastic among women (reaching above 90%).*** Identified key issues to be addressed were in two directions: a/ overcoming

¹ According to the official data from the last census there are 2 601 RAE. The above data is according to the research project of MONSTAT done in partnership with the Coalition Roma Circle in 2008. Project was supported by the MHLSW to establish RAE database as a task foreseen in the Strategy for Improving Position of RAE Population in Montenegro 2008-2012.. Their socio-economic situation is worse than the average. The poverty level is around 36%, unemployment rate over 50% and illiteracy rate of around 70%, stated the press conference.

² Data is from the MONSTAT research, and the number includes the municipality of Ulcinj, neighbouring to Bar and served by the Social Welfare Center in Bar. Breakdown per municipalities is the following: in Niksic municipality there are 671 domicile RAE, in Bar municipality (including Ulcinj) 648 and in Berane municipality there are 238 domicile RAE.

employment barriers within RAE communities: lack of access to employment service due to lack of IDs, their hard-to-employ categorization by both labour offices and by employers due to illiteracy and missing labour skills, and b/ filling the gap of limited practice and experience of the Employment Agency and its regional and local branches for effective targeting RAE unemployment.

2. Brief Outline of the Initial Strategy

The Montenegro country component was designed as a two year initiative with an overall budget of 682,844 USD or 502,231 euro. Based on the significant change in the environment with the introduction of the New Law on Citizenship (2008), an additional \$342,694 (260,105 euro) was provided by SIDA for continuation of the work on issuance of Montenegrin ID for domicile Roma in 2009-2011.

The main goal of the Project was to reduce the poverty of the domicile RAE population in three selected municipalities with 25-30% ensuring improved and sustainable social inclusion, better employment and development opportunities..

The approach, as noted above, was *targeted*: geographically in three municipalities in Northern (Berane), Central (Niksic) and Southern (Bar) part of Montenegro and beneficiary wise – to work only with the domicile RAE in these localities. It was *clearly focused* in the identified two priority areas for strategic intervention: 1/Social welfare and 2/ Employment. For each of them, key institutional partnerships were involved: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare through the Social Welfare Centres (SCs) and the Employment Agency of Montenegro through local Employment Bureaus (EB) in the three municipalities. Local RAE NGOs were envisaged as key partners to local the SCs and EBs in the implementation of both areas. The *approach was integrated*. The numerous envisaged activities were to be conducted simultaneously and in a mutually supporting manner. A crosscutting functional task in both areas was to stimulate interaction of local stakeholders – SCs, EBs, local authorities and representatives of RAE communities for effective joint work, which in turn would bring for sustainable solutions towards the goal of the project.

The first priority area aimed at a more RAE inclusive Social Security and Welfare System involved two key strategies:

- 1) *Upgrading the capacities of the Social Welfare Centres* in the three municipalities by provision of needed equipment and capacity building activities together with other local stakeholders (the EBs and Roma NGOs).
- 2) *Upgrading the social service provision of the SCs* by activities in three main directions:
 - *Developing and maintaining social data base on domicile RAE in local communities, in cooperation with local RAE NGOs;*
 - *Supporting RAE communities to “enter” the service system through assisting the issuance of ID documents service system.* This was foreseen as a key task for the RAE NGOs to be done with the support of the Social-Welfare Centres (SCs) and local EBs, as well as of the Ministry of Interior (MoI). Concrete approach within this strategy line was designed based on a previously supported by UNDP small, pilot project in Berane in 2005.
 - *Improved performance in integrated social service provision* through expanding the RAE access to social benefits to the scope of local authorities provided services like housing and education by direct work with socially disadvantaged RAE families and upgrading the capacities of RAE NGOs to enable them to assist community and gender sensitive social services

The main anticipated outcome *was equal access of RAE communities to improved social security and support services that would improve their quality of life, and contribute to social inclusion and poverty reduction.*

The Second priority area aimed at increasing RAE access to employment and had several interrelated strategies:

- 1) *upgrading of capacities and service provision of the local branches of the EA* to effectively reach out in these communities, to increase the potential for employability of RAE through vocational trainings, as well as mediation and advocacy with employers for finding jobs of community members with upgraded skills
- 2) *RAE women empowerment for increased access to employment* engaging partnership of the EAs, the SCs and the RAE NGOs
- 3) *Testing new approaches to income generation* through developing pilot small business, entrepreneurship loan modalities and similar stimulated job/economic opportunities for Roma.

The main anticipated outcome was “*facilitated access to the public employment services, stimulus incentives and skills upgrading trainings, acknowledging active labour market approaches, achieving Roma increased job opportunities and higher employment rate, particularly of women, and improved opportunities for income generation, facilitated by public EA in close partnership with Roma NGOs.*”

3. Relevance

Based on interviews with all respondents in Montenegro, the UNDP project was a good strategic response of relevance to the countries developmental agenda. It was well focused on critical issues in key priority areas of RAE social inclusion as defined in the NAP.

Its strategy as designed had several major strengths:

- *Design was based on good partnership and knowledge base developed prior to the project.* This involved good relations with key institutions and RAE civil society and they have participated at the design stage with suggestions and/or consultation
- *It was clearly focused with targeted action lines that can bring tangible results.* Additional evidence for the clarity of strategy is that all interviewed partners at both the central and local level had a shared vision about what this project was about, clearly articulating objectives, initial assumptions and anticipated outcomes
- *Approach was integrated:* based on optimizing activities to complement each other and stimulating local partnership and cooperation of all stakeholders in order to increase impact and ownership
- *Project was foreseen as an integrated part of the overall work of UNDP for social inclusion.* Synergy with other efforts (for example the program for urban planning) were also envisaged.

Main challenges as outlined in the interviews included:

- *Changes in the environment and especially the new provisions for Montenegrin citizenship after the adoption of the New Law in 2008.* This jeopardized all the successes achieved until then by the Project. But due to good partnership with SIDA and the obviously good approach of UNDP and its partners on the ground in facilitating ID issuance for RAE, the implementation of the project was supported by additional funding and extended.
- *The pilot character of the work for employability and income generation in a changing environment of economic crises.* While the approach and actions in the first priority area – Social welfare system were in a more “known field”, including the ID issuance, the second priority area was very challenging. There were very scarce practices in addressing this key area for social inclusion, not only in Montenegro, but also in the region. With the economic crises that affected all the economy, some of the planned results especially in the area of support to RAE small businesses and decreased rate of unemployment were too optimistic for the timeframe of the project.

II. Effectiveness of Implementation

1. Functional Project Infrastructure and Organizational setting

A key factor for the effective implementation was the well thought out project infrastructure. Project strategy served as the practical instrument for organizing the project. The functional roles, responsibilities within the UNDP team and with partners, were outcome driven. They were organizational translation of the specific tasks for each of the project stakeholders, as well as the needed interaction and partnership among them.

Relations with key partner institutions the MHLSW and the Employment Agency were regulated in signed letters of agreement based on concrete project proposals from the two institutions with clear objectives, key activities and allocated teams with clear roles and responsibilities. Based on this, the Social Welfare Centers in the three municipalities allocated teams of its social workers with concrete tasks for implementing the strategy in the first priority area of this Project. The Employment Agency established a working group consisting of a coordinator at the central level and one coordinator in each of its local branches – the Employment Bureaus in the three municipalities. The EA coordinator was responsible for coordination and reporting to UNDP, as well as for supervision of the work of the three EBs coordinators, who in turn were coordinating the local level activities, and activating the assistance of other EBs team members to motivate and select RAE persons to participate in programs of active employment policies.

Within the UNDP office the project was coordinated by a small team of a project coordinator and assistant, supported by good supervision and implementation back up from the UNDP staff involved in other projects. For this reason, though in 2008-9 the project coordinator changed, this did not affect the effectiveness of implementation. A good approach was promoting the project assistant to take the project coordinator position, which provided for continuity of the effort.

The RAE NGOs were the other key actors envisaged as key partners in both priority areas of the project. This was institutionalized by inviting the leader of the Romski Krug coalition as member of the UNDP Regional Roma Project Board. Partnership with RAE civil society was clearly outlined as an objective among the tasks and activities in the contracts with each of the key institutional partners. This was also fostered by the way the small grants support was provided. UNDP had three public calls for proposals with clearly stated priorities based on the key strategies and the action plan of the Project³. NGOs could apply with more than one project. The selection was done by evaluation committees, comprised of UNDP staff (not only the project team members but also with active participation of the colleagues from other projects) and based on clear selection criteria. As a result throughout the project seven NGOs were supported with 29 grants. Based on the interviews with NGOs, UNDP was considered a partner rather than a donor. The process of providing grants was open and competitive, but also flexible to assist the growth of good initiatives that could make a difference in local communities.

Throughout the Project there were also regular joint coordination meetings among key partners in each municipality – the social centers, the employment bureaus and local NGOs, as well as coordination meetings of all partners, organized by Project staff. Based on the interviews with all local stakeholders the main success factor for the effective implementation of the Project was the good functional cooperation and shared commitment of all partners involved, who acted as joint team for a common cause.

³ First call in 2007 with priority for NGOs initiatives in the area of social security and facilitation of personal documents issuance; second in early 2008 opened to initiatives in both priority areas social security/ID and issuance and women empowerment for employment and third call in 2009, after SIDA's approval of additional funds for initiatives for (re)obtaining ID/personal documents under the new Law for Citizenship

2. Increasing RAE Access to Improved Social Security and Support Services

2.1. Upgrading the Social Welfare Centers' (SCs) capacities:

The capacities upgrade of the SCs was provided in two directions. First, based on the needs assessment of the three centers the Project provided IT equipment, furniture and support for minor reconstruction repairs⁴, desperately needed for normal functioning. In all centers, but especially in Berane, IT equipment was slow, old and insufficient.

The second capacity building activity were a series of trainings/workshops organized in 2007-2008. They were targeting different topics, related to increasing the effectiveness of service provision to RAE beneficiaries.

- Four of them were organized jointly for representatives of SCs, the EBs and RAE NGOs from the three municipalities. Conducted by the EA they were focused at increasing the awareness on problems and needs of RAE population, on existing strategies and projects in this area, as well as to exchange experience among institutions and to discuss together with RAE NGOs on working methods and approaches that can make a difference within communities. This involved discussions on many issues related to education, social care, vocational trainings, employment opportunities, housing, prejudices, etc.
- Two other joint workshops for the three SCs were organized in 2008, involving all their teams and their directors, as well as representatives of the RAE community. One was focused on developing/writing projects based on local partnerships, which later resulted in drafting joint projects with local authorities and RAE NGOs, some of which were approved by government funds for the implementation of the Strategy. The other workshop increased knowledge on the tradition and culture of the RAE population, specificities of RAE families, and discussed approaches that can be effective to improve the situation, and discussions on concrete cases from practice and search for problem solving.

Based on the group interviews with two of the SCs, trainings were assessed as very valuable due to their practice orientation, interactive character and the possibility to bring together local service provision institutions from the three municipalities together. As noted by respondents, participation and discussions with RAE representatives and NGOs during the trainings contributed to a better understanding of these communities, as well as finding practical solutions of problems in everyday work.

2.2. Upgrading Social Welfare Centers Services

2.2.1. Development and maintaining data base on RAE families in the three municipalities;

This project addressed in a very practical way a major issue related to service provision - the lack of accurate information on the number of RAE. The development of a database of RAE families in the communities was among the initial tasks of the SCs. It was done as a door-to-door campaign by the SCs teams in cooperation with local RAE NGOs. Together, they visited all RAE families in each of the municipalities and collected various information needed for the social records of the RAE population in these municipalities: number of families and family members, their age and gender structure, living conditions, type of SC services they receive, education level, number of children included in regular school system, etc.

In 2008, the database of the three centers was consolidated. It was hosted by the SC in Niksic, and the developed software provided for update of the information from each of the centers. The database was updated on a monthly basis based on on-going meetings with RAE families, done by the social workers. As outlined in the interviews with social workers, the database as a process and result was a very good experience not only for improvement of the knowledge on the beneficiaries to be served. The process of

⁴ This was done in Berane, where the center was missing basic infrastructure, like room for counselling. With beneficiaries, including Roma.

doing it together with RAE NGOs contributed to partnership work on other initiatives, too. The direct outreach and visit to communities was “capacity building” in practice for better outreach and beneficiary focused service. The practice of doing it as a network of three social centers contributed to stimulating cooperation among service provision centers from different municipalities.

2.2.2. Increased effectiveness of social service provision

The Social Welfare Centers in cooperation with local RAE NGOs were very effective in reaching out to RAE families. Based on targeted and regularly updated data, meetings and visits to each family they have resolved a number of cases related to lacking documents, raising awareness in families on the importance of education of their children and health issues. They were also an effective mediator for community problem solving with other relevant instructions in the area of housing, infrastructure and education. It can be said, that the practice of the three SCs was a good advancement to value added and client oriented case work that was contributing to integration of RAE communities into the support service system.

The evidence of the effectiveness of work of the social centers can be illustrated by the visible growth of families enrolled in the social service system, which in turn was making them eligible for various social benefits and support. Based on the data from the progress reports, there was a visible increase of social service coverage of Roma families in the course of the project. As it can be seen from the table below it differed in the three locations, depending on local context (local economic situation, number of families with no documents and the process of obtaining these documents supported by the Project).

Growth of number of families included in the social service provision system

Location	Number of Families covered by social service		Increase in %
	Oct. 2007	April 2009	
Niksic	112	164	45 %
Bar, including Ulcinj	63	75	18,8%
Berane	59	87	47,4%
Total in the three municipalities	234	329	

2.2. Facilitation of issuance of personal/identification documents as a precondition for eligibility to social and employment services

As noted in all project documentation and in all the interviews, the lack of documents (personal ID and various personal documents) was a major barrier for entering the service system. RAE community members who did not possess documents were in practice out of the system. For this reason, the Project invested a lot of resources (time, cooperative effort of local stakeholders and funds) to assist the process of issuance of personal documents, which in turn brought for opening the access to basic rights and respectively to available services. The approach to this issue was developed based on a pilot small project in Berane, and supported by UNDP in 2005⁵. Based on this the Project provided grants to local RAE NGOs that worked on ID and personal documentations issuance in close partnership with the Social Welfare Centers and in cooperation with local authorities. The ID/personal documents facilitation initiatives were done in two phases:

1. The first phase (2007-2008) included seven grants to six Roma NGOs given in two rounds.

⁵ It involved a local NGO a facilitator (Enfants NGO) that assisted local community members with information and help for documents’ issuance, including interaction and advocacy with relevant local institutions.

Three of the grants in 2007 supported the work of NGOs in the three selected municipalities, and the four grants in 2008 to continue this work, and to expand in two more municipalities - Herceg Novi and Bijelo Polje. The total amount of the six grant was 35000 EUR. (size varying between 4,500-7,500 EUR each, and the duration of projects was between three to seven months.

The supported NGOs were “Pocetak” (Niksic), “Enfants” (Berane and expanded work in Bjelo Polje), “Center for Development of Community” (Bar), “Romski Krug” (coalition of 25 RAE NGOs) and “Mladi Romi” from Herceg Novi. Work of supported initiatives was very effective involving direct outreach to RAE community members to raise awareness why obtaining documents was important and to provide information and assistance on meeting requirements and procedures; as well as good interaction and cooperation with local authorities, as well as with local authorities in Serbia and Kosovo, where some of the documents have been originally issued.

As a result, out of 731 people lacking personal documentation that were identified in the covered municipalities, 625 of them (or 85%) were assisted and obtained over 1200 documents (IDs and various other documents⁶).

2. The second phase (2008-2010) involved the support for obtaining and re-obtaining of personal documents after the adoption of the new Law on Citizenship from 2008, when the requirements completely changed.

As explained both in the Project documentation and by respondents the new regulations were much more complicated, requiring more documents from the country of origin, much longer (from 6 to 18 month) and much more expensive. The various administrative taxes in the country of origin and in Montenegro are in total around 500 EUR, which if calculated per member of family, was impossible to be covered by RAE communities members

The new regulations for personal document jeopardized the achievements in the previous phase of support to issuance of personal documents. Based on the new requirements 37% or 235 people out of the 626 Roma already assisted had to go through the new procedure of issuance of new IDs; 105 more persons from the previous phase who were still with no documents needed to be issued IDs for the first time, since they have no documents at the moment. With newly identified people in the expanded localities of the action, 400 people in total were risking the threat of statelessness and remaining without access to the support service systems.

In response to this, UNDP negotiated with SIDA additional funding for grants and support to the ID issuance process. This helped expanding intensifying the work on (re)obtaining personal documents. Based on an additional call for proposals in 2009, the Project provided 10 new grants to three RAE NGOs that had already a proven record in efficient and effective work on the ID issuance process. The total amount of grants was 195,000 EUR. Grants varied by size between 3,000 – 60,000 EUR, depending on the RAE people covered by the initiative and the duration of the supported initiatives (varying between 3 -15 months). The main share of the grants was covering the high costs for issuance of documents (, as well as travel to the country of origin.

The three supported NGOs were “Enfants” (Berane), “Romski Krug”Coalition and “Mladi Romi” (Herceg Novi). The implementation of their initiatives on issuance of personal documents for RAE people was very effective and can serve as a good case on good civic action and cooperation with institutions. It involved a lot of individual meetings with RAE people, assistance for filling in forms and preparing the needed application documents and intensive work with relevant local authorities and public administration in Montenegro. Key partners for the implementation were the Social centers in the three localities. Good cooperation was established with the Ministry of the Interior.

A major difficulty in the process was assisting people in getting “release” from citizenship from the country of origin. Especially in Serbia this process was taking 6 months or longer. People from RAE

⁶ birth certificates, subsequent enrollment in citizens registry, citizenship certificates, health cards, labor record cards, identification cards, passports, marriage certificates and other certificates / documents.

communities did not have resources to travel to the country of origin. To assist them in the process the RAE activists from the supported NGOs got legal authorization from each person who has entered the procedure for obtaining documents to present them in front of authorities both in Montenegro and in the country of origin. They also mobilized cross-border contacts within the other country components of the Project. For example, UNDP Serbia was trying to assist speeding up the process with advocacy with relevant administration at the central level, and local Roma coordinators in some of the municipalities in Serbia facilitated dialogue and access to local administration. In addition, the supported RAE NGOs in Montenegro activated support and contact of other Roma activists from their networks. UNDP Montenegro was providing support to the NGO partners throughout the process, including joint advocacy with central level institutions in order to speed up the process of IDs issuance.

As a result all of the 400 domicile Roma in the selected and expanded localities that were facing the threat of statelessness have been assisted to submit their applications for Montenegrin citizenship and they are in the process of (re)obtaining IDs, according to the new Montenegrin Citizenship Law. Based on the initiative of the Romski Krug coalition, the three NGOs have developed a “back-up” database of the already issued personal documents (hard copy and scanned version) in order to avoid repetition for the same long process if documents are lost.

2.3. Increasing engagement of local authorities for RAE social inclusion

The Social centers were organizing regular meetings with local authorities to sensitize them on the issues related to the RAE population. This, together with the growing advocacy capacities of partner RAE NGOs has led to much more involvement of local administration in community problem solving. Though the development of Local Action Plans for the RAE population were not an objective within this Project, established local partnerships around the initiatives for improved service provision were an important factor in this direction. The Local Action Plan on inclusion of RAE population 2008-2015 was adopted in Niksic municipality in 2008, based on an initiative of one of the partner NGOs Pocetok (supported by another project). Based on that experience, the “Mladi Romi” together with the municipality of Herceg Novi developed a LAP on RAE inclusion, which was adopted by the local assembly. Shown as a good practice, two more municipalities in the south of Montenegro, Kotor and Tivat, again in partnership with the “Mladi Romi” NGO, started with the preparations for development of their LAPs on RAE inclusion. In Berane the work on LAP development has started by the Social Center and the Enfants NGO. In Bar, there were no targeted initiatives for LAP development yet, but they are anticipated to start. As explained in the interviews with the local SC a major reason is that RAE civil society there is much weaker. They had good partnership with the “Starobarani” NGO, but due to illness of the leader, it has been less active in the past years.

Other evidence for the growing engagement of local authorities were the projects for resolving housing issues of RAE families in Niksic and Berane, developed together by the Social Centers, local NGOs and local authorities. Both were supported by the grants scheme of Government, which supported with resources the implementation of the Strategy for the improving the position of the RAE population in Montenegro for 2008- 2012.

3. Access to Employment Services and Job Opportunities

Activities in this area were in three interrelated directions: upgrading the existing employment services for better coverage and effectiveness in working with the RAE population, stimulating women empowerment for more access to employment and piloting support to RAE business and entrepreneurship development. They were implemented together with the Employment Agency and its branches – the Employment bureaus in the three municipalities, and local NGOs.

3.1. Upgrading EA Services

Joint trainings with the SCs and RAE NGOs in 2007-2008 (described above) were assessed by interviewed local EBs as very useful for their work with RAE beneficiaries. They provided for much

better understanding of the complexity of the issues related to RAE poverty and to develop and to adapt concrete approaches for individual work with people from these communities in applying existing instruments and labor measures to this specific group.

A key effort of the local EBs throughout the Project was to increase the motivation of RAE community members to “enter” the public employment service by getting registered in the employment agency, and to make the step from being “passive” (just registered, but not actively seeking employment) to become “active” job seekers. Based on the interviews with EAs in Nikcis and in Bar, this involved the proactive day-to-day work of informing RAE community members of the benefit to register as unemployed, as well as direct outreach and individual interviews with those already registered to assess their skills and level of motivation and to assist their interest for skills upgrades.

The project supported inclusion of RAE community members in the existing vocational training programs conducted by Employment Agency. In addition, the EA developed new vocational programs with certified standards in five new occupations⁷ to better match the interests of RAE participants with needs in the market. There were no special trainings only for RAE. Selection of participants from these communities was done based on matching the level of interest, potential and existing capacities (education, skills, previous experience) with market needs. A major challenge in organizing the trainings was to raise the interest in joining such trainings, but also to identify enough people who are matching the minimum criteria, especially in regard to basic education. This was especially difficult in approaching women, as the level of education there was much lower, due to early drop out of school/early marriages. Another challenge was how to expand the scope of interest of RAE community members in the type of occupation they want to get skills for. As noted in the interviews, in many cases people were choosing what they already know, or what the others chose. For example, if one wanted to be a car mechanic, the rest of the group was following the same choice.

Following the completion of the training the participants had final exams and received certificates in the relevant occupation. The EBs advisors did a lot of work to assist them in finding jobs. They served as proactive mediators with potential employers. As said in one of the interviews: “we were advocates for the rights of our RAE participants by representing them to the employers”. However, as was shared, there were cases of prejudice, when employers were hesitant to hire people from these communities, or preferred to hire “the ones that are not so dark”, especially in the service industries.

The committed work of the EA and its local EBs advisors within this project brought for very visible and concrete results. Based on the provided data:

- ***the number of Roma registered with the EA in the three municipalities increased to 67%:*** If in 2007 there were 257 RAE registered with the EA, as of September 2010, this number was already 429, out of which 189 or 44% are women.
- ***105 Roma (or 24% of Roma registered with EA) successfully completed vocational trainings,*** out of which 59 (or 56%) are women. They have upgraded their skill and have received certificates for the relevant occupations
- ***107 of Roma registered with EA have been employed*** during the implementation of this Project through seasonal and long-term employment contracts, local public works, and business start ups. Out of them 28 (or 26%) are women.

3.2. RAE women empowerment for employment

Empowerment of RAE women was a crosscutting priority in all activities of both the social and employment priority areas. Each of the above described strategies had as an indicator the level of involvement of women. Women were assisted in getting their personal documents within the related

⁷ assistant chimney sweeper, car washer, tire repair, laundress and assistant car painter.

initiatives, they were part of the intensive work of the Social Welfare Centers with RAE families in the three municipalities. As noted above, as a result of the work of the EBs in the three municipalities 189 women got registered with the EA, 59 of them gained new certified occupational skills, and 28 got jobs. As said, a major issue was the difficulty in including women in the exiting vocational training programs, due to their very low level of education. Many could not meet the requirement to have graduated fourth grade.

As noted by many of the local respondents, work for the social inclusion of RAE women was very challenging, due to traditional norms and ways of living in many RAE communities in Montenegro. Early marriages and parenthood and related to this early drop out from school, and the confined role of mother and house wife, with rare opportunities to go outside the place of residence. For this reason, the path to women's employment needs to go through an initial stage of raising awareness and literacy, and work for empowerment of women to overcome exclusion within their communities.

The Project responded to this need by investing in local NGOs initiatives for empowerment of RAE women through expanding their knowledge, skills and self-organizing, which in turn can bring for more access to services and employment. For the period 2007-2009 eight grants in total amount of 32,200 EUR were provided to four partner NGOs for women empowerment in the three municipalities. The grants varied in size (between 2,000 and 8,000 EUR) and the supported projects were of duration 3-7 months.

Some of the projects like the supported initiative of the NGO Coalition "Rovski Krug" worked in all the three municipalities. It was focused on increasing women's capacities to be more active in resolving issues related to social and health care and employment by forming women focus groups and organizing workshops with relevant local institutions. An outcome of the project was the registration of a Roma women's NGO in Berane which is continuing to work for better access to public services of RAE women in this region. Others, like the supported initiatives of NGO "Starobarani" in Bar and "Enfants" in Berane worked on raising awareness of RAE women of various social issues, employment, health and human rights was supported for an initiative to raise awareness among Roma women on health, employment and human rights issues, by organizing workshops and distributing booklets on social welfare, employment rights and opportunities, as well as on health protection.

- The NGO "SOS Hotline", was supported with an initiative to increase the number of employed Roma women in Niksic. This NGO is a very active women's organization in Niksic, which is non RAE, but has direct outreach to women, increasing their knowledge on their rights and assisting them in communication with local institutions, as well as vocational training and establishment of income generation initiatives. The project involved participatory needs assessment among RAE women, organized courses for assistant hairdresser and assistant seamstress. This was done in close cooperation with the local Employment bureau. Twelve women participated in the training and ten of them successfully passed the final exam. They got certificates for the two occupations and decided to establish the *first Roma Women Craft Cooperative "Rukatnice"*.
- A follow up grant to NGO "SOS Hotline" was provided in 2009 in support of the establishment of this cooperative, which was further supported under the small business pilot program (see below).

3.3. The Roma entrepreneurship/small business pilot support.

The initial intention of the project in this area was to provide business support to Roma entrepreneurs in the form of soft loans to grants. This was following the existing program of the Employment Agency (EA) to support entrepreneurship initiatives of unemployed people, not specifically RAE. Due to the fact that Roma could not provide any guarantee as required for getting a loan, as well as the procedures complexity and the small resources allocated for that (as timeframe and money) it has been decided to provide grants to candidates in the three targeted municipalities with close monitoring by the EA. According to the guidelines of the EA, the candidates were obliged to employ one more person and to register the business activity.

In 2007 and 2008 our project has provided six start up grants of 6000 EUR, to five individual Roma businesses and to the *Rukatnice cooperative*, through one of its founders. Selection of candidates was done by the advisors of the local EBs based on the presented business idea and motivation and skills of the candidates. At the start, the selected candidates were assisted with training for basic knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship and business. Later the local EBs' advisors had regular monitoring of the supported business activities.

Four of the small businesses: two in Niksic (making of national Roma costumes and jewelry; car-cooler repair service) and two in Berane (hairdresser saloon and service shop for repair and maintenance of road vehicles) had to close their businesses because those were not profitable. Major barriers related to difficulties in selling the service or the products. An example, provided in the interviews was the case with the producer of national costumes/jewelry in Nikcis – local RAE families preferred to go to Macedonia or Kosovo to buy them, rather than from this local business. Other challenges were registration of businesses.

Only two out of six candidates who received the start up grants are still operational. The tinsmith in Bar has been successful, hired more people and became the partner of local Employment Bureau in provision of vocational trainings in this area. Based on the interview with him, a major factor for the success was that he has been working all his life, and had concrete technical experience in this business. Also, his market was broader, not only just in the community, and there was a niche in the market as there are not too many competitors.

The first Roma Women Craft Cooperative "Rukatnice in Niksic included a hairdresser shop and sewing facility. Based on the interviews they are a social enterprise of 10 women, recognized as unique for the country and the region. They had been consistently supported by SOS Hotline Niksic for links and marketing. Due to this the women from the cooperative have created working relations with cooperatives in Italy, and have been contracted to do some work for them (bags from recycled sails). Though this will not bring too much profit for the cooperative, the recognition of their work and potential has contributed to their empowerment. The cooperative was also assisted by the advisor in the Employment bureau in Niksic. During the vocational training stage of RAE women she connected them with a specialist from a sewing factory, who was also unemployed. This helped not only the training stage, but he got also involved in the cooperative which helped its further professionalization.

As envisaged in the strategy these were pilot projects. Their further in-depth study, including those that did not work will be of help for design of such interventions.

II. Outcomes and Sustainability prospects

1. Key Outcomes and Emerging Impacts

The Project Component in Montenegro was a very effective and well organized systematic action with visible achievements in key areas of importance to RAE social inclusion – access to quality social service and access to employment and income generation. As the expanded activities assisting RAE people for (re)obtaining Montenegrin citizenship documents still continue in 2011, the level of results and outcomes will be even higher at the end of the Project.

Based on the provided data gathered from the good monitoring system on outcome level, as well as on the interviews with local stakeholders, the Project's key outcomes can be outlined in three main areas: 1) at the level of approach and practice of local institutions, 2) at the level of growth of RAE civil society and 3) at the level of empowerment of RAE communities for more equal access to services and employment.

1) Change of the institutional approach and practice of social welfare and public employment service provision in the three municipalities

- *The Social Welfare Centers in the three localities have increased their capacities to reach out to RAE communities and include them effectively into the service system.*

A clear indication for this is the growth of the number of eligible RAE families covered by the social welfare system, which for now is about 90%, but will be close to 100% by the end of the Project. *There is a much better quality of service, based on the beneficiary oriented approach* of work with RAE families that has been tested and adopted. It involves a proactive outreach to families to map their problems and issues, on-going individual case work and support for problem solving by activating other local institutions and authorities.

There is also a clearly demonstrated new type of attitude and service skills of local social workers. Clear evidence for this were the group interviews with the two Social Centers in Niksic and in Bar. It is rare, at least in our region, to see such teams of people working within institutions with real concern and motivation to serve RAE communities as equal clients and to assist them get out of extreme poverty and exclusion.

- *The Employment Agency and its local Employment bureaus have increased their effectiveness in including RAE communities' members in the public employment services.*

Clear evidence is the growing number of people registered with the EBs which have increased to 67% from the beginning of the project. Service was client oriented and individually tailored to best serve the interests of RAE community members. Local employment bureau advisors served as a catalyst to open the new vision of RAE people registered with them, to motivate them get new skills and to advocate on their behalf in front of employers.

Like with social workers, the Employment Agency staff – the national and local coordinators have demonstrated a new type of attitude to their clients from RAE communities. Based on the interviews, they all were working with a lot of empathy, concern and motivation to assist RAE people to find new opportunities.

- *There is progress towards a more integrated service support system in the three localities based on increased inter-institutional linkage and cooperation.*

On-going interaction between the SCs, the EBs, as well as other local institutions and local authorities throughout the project has brought closer the different service providing institutions in searching solutions for concrete cases or community issues. It has also *improved the sensitivity of local authorities to the problems of RAE communities.* Other evidences provided are the joint projects developed together with local authorities to address housing issues of RAE families, as well as the cooperation in the framework of the initiatives for issuance of personal documents.

Active cooperation among local service institutions and RAE civil society has brought for developing LAP for RAE inclusion, adopted by the municipal assemblies in Nikcis and in Herceg Novi, and in the process of finalizing in Kotor and Tivat. Despite the economic crises⁸ and very limited budget, the municipality of Nikcis has also allocated 40,000EUR for the implementation of the LAP.

2) Growth of RAE NGOs as important, civic actors advocating for the interests of their communities and effective partners of local institutions

Seven NGOs have increased capacities to effectively serve and represent the interests of RAE communities. One of them is a coalition of 25 RAE NGOs from all parts of the country. Two of them – Enfants and SOS Niksic, are non-RAE NGOs, but actively working for the empowerment of RAE communities and women. Supported initiatives of these seven NGOs were not just projects. They were effective direct service of benefit to the communities, which has increased the trust of community members of the usefulness of their NGOs to represent their interests.

⁸ Based on the interviews, the Municipality of Niksic had to take a loan in order to cover the salaries in the public sector.

Due to their effective work and growing capacities, RAE NGOs have been increasingly recognized as an important partner for resolving the issues of RAE communities. An evidence for the growing legitimacy of RAE civil society is the cooperative efforts for the development and adoption of the LAPs for RAE inclusion.

3) Empowerment of RAE community members that will contribute to their social inclusion

- *There is a visible increase of equal access of RAE communities in the targeted municipalities to social services and support systems in the targeted municipalities.*

Nearly 800 RAE people from the targeted municipalities who got personal documents and have obtained or are in the process of obtaining Montenegrin citizenship became eligible for access to all the public social security, health and employment mediation services. They got the first precondition for being visible and part of the system – to have documents and citizenship.

With the increased capacities of local service provision RAE families have been growingly covered by the social service and respectively by various social benefits. An increasing number of RAE community members who registered with the Employment Bureaus became also covered with health insurance. With entering the social security and support system covered by the project RAE families made the first important step out of extreme poverty and exclusion.

- *Gaining motivation and skills for new development opportunities*

The Project has contributed for the second step out of poverty– becoming proactive job seekers, motivated to gain new skills and new income generation opportunities: 105 or 23% of targeted Roma registered with employment bureaus gained new skills and certifications for new occupation and 107 of targeted Roma registered with the EA have been employed during the implementation of this Project. Though a number of these jobs were of a short term nature (seasonal or local public works), they have contributed to getting access to some income and work skills. What is more important is that they have opened the process of getting out of the passiveness of being just a recipient of assistance (being registered as unemployed to receive healthcare insurance). Those who passed vocational training and found jobs because of that have graduated to a new stage of their individual development. They got empowered by experiencing a new life perspective that development opportunities are possible and there is support for that, if proactive choices to gain new skills are made.

- *Opening a new vision for RAE women out of the complete exclusion*

The Project had provided new opportunities for RAE women by opening a new vision out of the complete exclusion they live in. Within the RAE who registered with the EA, 202 were women, 59 of them successfully attended vocational trainings and got certificates for new occupations, and 28 got jobs. Over 80 RAE women, involved in supported NGO initiatives got access to completely new experience out of the narrow perspective of the traditions and isolation. They gained new knowledge on social and health issues important for them and their families, and got the opportunities to meet and discuss issues with institutions and got a new shared space to discuss their problems. For many of them, meetings and workshops were the first experience of belonging to a different community of active learning and being together with others to discuss common issues. Some of the initiatives brought for new self-organizing of women to continue working for communities interests – like the new women’s NGO in Berane. Others, like the initiative of SOS Niksic gave birth to a new social enterprise like the first Roma Women Craft Cooperative. Based on the interviews with the members of this cooperative, it gave them a completely new perspective of living – being able to work and make some income, but also committed to develop themselves and study.

2. Sustainability of achievements

The Decreasing Roma Vulnerability Project component in Montenegro was an investment in assisting institutions to test and apply systematic approaches in providing service to domicile RAE communities in

the country. From this perspective all outcomes at the different levels – institutional change, RAE civil society capacity growth and empowerment or RAE communities for increased access to services, have “sustainability meaning” – some have achieved results and change that will guarantee that work for improvement of the situation of the RAE population will continue, others have started processes or tested approaches that will bring for sustainable changes in the future.

The main sustainability of Project outcomes is at the level of institutional change – developed approaches and practice are integrated into the work of institutions and there is clear commitment to continue using and expanding them. Based on interviews with local stakeholders, the staff of the SCs and the EBs in the three municipalities continue the intensive work for integrating the RAE population in their services, using learning from the project approach. There is clear recognition of the importance of involvement of RAE civil society in order to increase the effectiveness of integration of RAE communities. Clear evidence is that the Employment Agency has developed a follow up project for equal access to jobs for the RAE population, which is continuing the approach for including domicile RAE into vocational training and assisting them through mediation with employers to find jobs. The project was supported through the Government Strategy for RAE in 2010 and is implemented together with Romski Krug coalition and the Centre for training and education ZOPT.

The project had a clear impact at the level of empowerment of RAE communities. It has provided the entry key to social inclusion to domicile RAE– the legitimacy of being a citizen, with personal documents and experiencing basic human rights – to vote, to be visible to the service support system and to have development opportunities. The effectiveness of the Project in this area has contributed to mainstreaming the approach. The Government has recognized it as a potential to resolve the serious issue of lack of personal documents amongst domicile RAE, by including support to similar initiatives in in the 2010 call for proposals for implementation of RAE strategy in Montenegro. As a result, the Roma Council in Montenegro got support to provide assistance for ID issuance of RAE in Podgorica and other locations not covered by the UNDP initiative. The UNDP partner Romski Krug Coalition will try its best to share the experience and approach to ID facilitation with them.

IV. Looking Forward: Lessons for Future Applications

Based on the interviews, the Project was a very successful step forward, but work for sustainable inclusion of the RAE population is a long-term task and it needs to continue:

1) *In the targeted municipalities by further expanding the integrated approaches for increasing RAE access to service and development opportunities.* In this area the outlined priorities were: strengthening the capacities of institutions and civil society for effective implementation of LAPs; further expanding active labor measures and income generation development support; deepening cooperative community based work of institutions and NGOs with families and especially women for overcoming traditional barriers to social inclusion.

2) *A second need is to expand the work for access to service and development of the domicile RAE population in other municipalities, and especially Podgorica* which has the largest size of RAE domicile communities. As outlined by respondents, this project as a strategy and set of activities can be directly applied in Podgorica, with adding components for more intensive capacity building especially for RAE NGOs to work more effectively with local communities and focused work for adopting LAP for RAE inclusion. This is very much needed, due to the situation of RAE domicile communities, the lack of capacities of civil society working with the communities, as well as the need to assist the relevant local social welfare and employment institutions. Though there had been some efforts they are still fragmented.

3) *a third need and burning question is how to resolve the issues of the displaced RAE population, especially in Konik camps in Podgorica,* which is among the priority requirements set forward to Government on the road to EU accession.

UNDP Montenegro is a part of the UN task force on this issue. A question asked at the UNDP office briefing meeting at the start of the evaluation was to explore what of the lessons from this project can be of use in this challenging area. Based on the interviews with different stakeholders, this Project was targeted only at domicile RAE and expanding their equal access to service and development. From this perspective it did not have direct activities and approaches related with the specificities of resolving displaced people issues.

However, approaches and lessons from this initiative can serve for a very important aspect related to RAE displaced people - how to prepare capacities of key service providing institutions and RAE civil society for effective work with expanded groups of RAE target constituencies after resolving the political aspects of the issue. As said above, an integrated program for increasing capacities of both institutions and civil society in Podgorica will be of critical importance in this direction.

Based on discussions with local stakeholders some of the lessons emerging from the practice of this project that can serve future programming in future interventions can be grouped as follows:

1. Clear strategy with priority issues identified based on feasibility for change in the envisaged timeframe of the intervention, developed together with the partners for the implementation is critical for the effectiveness of the initiative. This Project's outcome oriented design, functional organization and implementation can serve as an example in this direction. Such an approach will be instrumental for future initiatives in any of the above follow up areas.
2. *Assisting RAE communities to enter and register with the service system requires a proactive approach to effectively reach out to families, based on good interaction and cooperation among service provision institutions and local RAE civil society.* This project proved the effectiveness of such an approach throughout implementation.
 - The proactive community outreach data base development done by the Social Welfare Centers in the three municipalities, can be further systematized as an approach and disseminated in other locations. The practice of the shared database, initiated and maintained by the three SCs, can be further explored and expanded as a common database on social issues of the RAE population among social service centers in municipalities with the RAE population.
 - The work for assisting issuance of personal documents proved its effectiveness with the number of cases solved, and also as cost-effectiveness (based on the interviews it is times more effective and cost effective than other efforts). There are already several RAE NGOs that have developed specialized experience for effective work for ID issuance – in Montenegro and in the country of origin. Together with them UNDP can systematize the practical approach of what works and how it works and provide assistance to other key actors that will be dealing with similar processes.
3. *One institution cannot do it alone – complexity of exclusion requires integrated efforts for problem solving and development.* This project proved in practice this basic principle, which is usually present more on paper rather than in reality. The good partnerships of local service provision institutions and community serving NGOs, that were created led to more effectiveness of community problem solving within the direct scope of the action (social welfare service and employment), as well as on other issues – like housing and raising awareness for the need of education. It also stimulated the engagement of local authorities in RAE inclusion policy development and implementation which resulted in the drafting and adoption of LAPs for RAE inclusion.
4. *RAE community involvement by including community NGOs or groups as a key partner to the relevant service provision institutions provides for better adequacy and outreach of services and respectively for more impact as empowerment of RAE community members.*
 - As noted by local respondents from both SCs and EBs it is of critical importance to identify leaders within the RAE communities that people will trust and listen to. They serve as mediators that can increase the effectiveness of the individual work with community members. Work for inclusion

requires consistent activation of marginalized communities to increase social and civic literacy on rights and responsibilities, and to open a vision for new development options. Supported NGO activities within this project proved the effectiveness of such an approach.

- RAE NGOs and other issue-based local NGOs (working on women or children's issues) proved to be an effective partner and voice of the community. As said, supported initiatives were not just the typical NGO projects. They were effective community oriented service. They proved the increased capacity of NGOs for putting the issues of RAE communities on the local development agenda by resolving burning issues like obtaining the citizenship and other personal documents, or playing the role of a convener and catalyst of the LAPs development in their municipalities.
- The main strength of local RAE NGOs is that they were effective in doing action of benefit to their communities. But this is also increasing the demand and expectations from both institutions and local communities to these organizations. For example, some of the NGOs that were very effective in issuance of documents, have been already increasingly approached by community member or groups for assistance in resolving various other problems. More or less they are seen from communities as their center, where issues can find solutions. Based on the interviews local RAE NGOs need further support in capacity development as organizations and institutions of civil society. Most of them have very promising and committed young leaders, but limited human and financial resources to meet the increasing demand for their community work.
- UNDP may consider in future programming to include support not only for activities, but also for institutional growth of organizations that are key partners. As said, this is especially needed for local RAE NGOs. But it also applies for already established RAE NGO coalitions at the national level, which proved to be a good partner at the national level. Intense activities and projects narrow the time for regular network meetings and may narrow the organizational sustainability as membership base and dynamics among members and secretariat. Assistance for increasing institutional capacity for coalition work at this new stage of development of the RAE civil society sector will assist the better implementation of NAP and LAPs for RAE inclusion. This applies to both old coalitions like Romski Krug and emerging new networks (for ex. the First women's network), as well as to issue-based partnerships formed around solving certain issues.

5. Programs for expanding RAE development opportunities as access to employment and income generation need to be longer-term, with diversified approaches to different segments of RAE communities and combined with community activation and development work

The component in Montenegro was the only one in the regional project that did practical work for addressing one of the most challenging areas of social exclusion. Its major strength was that this was developed and implemented together with the Employment Agency and its local branches and they have real commitment to continue the search for applying active labor measures that can improve the situation of RAE communities. Based on interviews with local respondents the main asset of this Project was that it approached RAE community members as people with potential and they were not treated as the "risky and problematic" group. This is critical for facilitating their growth from welfare recipients to actively working people. It is also to have women's empowerment as a crosscutting objective of all activities, as well as a special component.

Programming needs to diversify approaches to the different segments within different RAE communities and respectively adjust expectations for effectiveness. Based on the practice of this project:

- community members in extreme poverty and marginalization may require more time for social work and assistance on individual or group level. Proactive work within the community together with Social Centers and with NGOs is very helpful. There the realistic outcome is getting them registered with the EA.

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- The group of RAE that is already “in the register” needs focused efforts for creating and growing motivation to make the step out of the passive status of welfare recipient. As noted by some of the EBs, at this stage it is also very important to have assistants and mediators from within the RAE community (people or organizations they trust). There the realistic expectation is that people will join well designed vocational trainings, based on their interest and capability, a well as on market needs. Mediation with employers will assist finding jobs.
- A third group is the one with potential or readiness for their own business entrepreneurship support. There it is critical to carefully assess the potential candidates. It is more likely that they will succeed if they already have some good professional background in the area they come with a business idea. In addition to financial support (soft loan or grant) it is important to also provide training at the start, but also on-going mentoring support assisting their business development. Critical in this direction is assistance for identifying markets of their service and products.
- Using financial support is important for stimulating entrepreneurship. At the start up, it may be instrumental to use grants as a subsidized approach to assist businesses in marginalized RAE communities. But it is important to have a strategy on how in time support to them can help them “graduate” to existing mainstream opportunities – like the fund for entrepreneurship for unemployed people.

Future in-depth study of the success and failures of the small business support pilot grants can help further explore how to diversify business development support instruments: support to individuals and support to groups (the cooperative); flexibility of grants – small start up and follow up, depending on the “readiness” of the client; market of the service or product – within the community or to broader audiences; the issues of registration (legal vs. shadow economy business), etc. The UNDP Regional office in Bratislava can be of help for this exploration, by bringing knowledge on other practices for applying various approaches for Roma employment and income generation in the region.

Chapter 2. PROJECT COMPONENT IN KOSOVO: EFFECTIVENESS, OUTCOMES AND LESSONS

I. Strategic Relevance –

1. Initial Strategy

The Kosovo component⁹ as initially designed was of duration 2 years (2007-2008) with overall budget of \$950,995. The main objective was “*to strengthen capacities of central and local authorities in developing and implementing policies addressing RAE issues, strengthening RAE Community participation in the process of decision making, livelihood stability and strengthening community and municipal capacity through the community initiatives that involve RAE*”.

Geographically, the project was planned to work in two selected municipalities Ferizaj/Urosevac and Prizren. The work with central level institutions was to contribute for its effect Kosovo wide.

The strategy was organized around two priority areas:

1. Institutional capacity and policy support at both central and local levels facilitating preparation of RAE Social Inclusion Plan

Work in this priority area aimed at achieving two main results: 1/. Strengthened capacity of the Ministry of Communities and Returns as the leading institution responsible for minority issues in Kosovo and of FORUM, viewed then as the strongest RAE NGO umbrella organization working on RAE issues at the central and local level in Kosovo; and 2/ RAE Social Inclusion Plan development supported with full participation of RAE Communities.

Envisaged activities involved various types of coordination and technical assistance for growing capacities needed for development of the RAE Social Inclusion plan at both the central and local levels, capacity building activities and some support for the consultative processes.

Locally, the main instrument for growing local institutional capacities was the establishment of the *Municipal Project Development and Implementation Committees (MPDIC)*, consisting of representatives of both the municipality and RAE civil society, of the UNDP project team and MCR. Their task was two-fold: 1/ to assist the participatory drafting of the local Social Inclusion Action Plans and 2/ to assist the identification, funding and monitoring of the supported community projects. To assist their first task, planned activities included capacity building to organize consultative processes with the RAE communities and other stakeholders related to identification of gaps and needs, as well as the development of local strategies and plans for social inclusion.

The main anticipated outcome from this priority area was that “*the MCR and FORUM will be empowered with an adequate expertise and minimum administrative support to perform the role of coordination, monitoring, advocacy, implementation and reporting on the human security/rights issues in Kosovo, ensuring a systematic approach in addressing vulnerability and opportunities for consensual decision making that involves RAE communities at the central and local levels*”.

2. Improvement of the infrastructure for social assistance through expansion and redefinition of the existing support framework

The aim was to expand local capacity to address the problems faced by the RAE communities through identification and implementation of community-development sub-projects. The initially envisaged set of

⁹ It is present in the project document as the RAE (Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians) Livelihood Improvement and Empowerment project

activities were in three main directions: 1/ *RAE communities needs assessment*; 2/ *building the organizational and institutional infrastructure for labor intensive projects that would provide cash incomes, training and reintegration into the labor market opportunities with particular focus on unemployed RAE youth; and 3/ implementation of the public works and community-based economic activity schemes*. This was seen in two stages: first round of "job creation small grants" in 2007 was to identify the viable local partners and capitalization of the scheme; second "scaling up" stage was planned for 2008, based on a mid-term evaluation of the impact of the scheme and recommendations for modification prior to scaling-up.

As said, the MPDIC, with the assistance of UNDP, had to play a leading role in launching the opportunities for support, selection of the most promising initiatives and monitoring of the effectiveness of provided grants. This was to be done by assisting the establishment of local community groups that would be implementing the small projects (including legal registration); training of municipal authorities in organizing a transparent tendering process and design of an impact assessment and monitoring scheme for "reintegration into labor market through small local projects" initiative.

The main anticipated outcome in this area was the improved wellbeing of RAE communities through identification and implementation of sub-projects that address RAE needs and challenges reflecting social and gender dimensions.

3. Relevance

Focused on expanding capacities of institutions for addressing RAE issues in a sustainable manner, the initial project strategy was relevant to key developmental needs in Kosovo. It was a timely response to the need for systematic policy development and implementation through support to meaningful local initiatives for RAE inclusion. Based on the interviews and the review of project documents, two main aspects of its strengths and potential can be outlined:

- *First, the project was aimed at practical capacity building of both central and local institutions for addressing RAE inclusion issues.* It was working within institutions assisting them for inclusive policy development based on active involvement of RAE communities and RAE civil society representatives at both the local and central levels. The in-depth work in the two selected municipalities for testing and growing local community initiatives could provide learning for policy implementation in key areas for RAE inclusion, like income generation and employability, education; and this way serve as a model Kosovo wide.
- *Second, the project design was broad and open.* It was outlining key strategy priorities, but broad enough to provide space for flexibility and adaptation of activities to better fit the realities in the local contexts and the dynamics of the environment

At the same time, the above aspects of the Project potential were also quite challenging:

- *The project was rather complex and "seemed it wanted to do it all".* It was combining different types of actions at both the central and local levels, like support for policy development (RAE Inclusion Strategy and local action plans), capacity building for policy implementation based on direct involvement of RAE communities, development of new type of local interactive structures – the MPDIC, searching for new approaches to employment through public works as well as a small grants scheme to support local projects in a challenging area like income generation, as well to other community development projects.
- *The main shortage of the initial design was the two year timeframe planned for such a complex initiative.* It was not realistic to anticipate that this could be done in two years and to plan that 60% of the activities budget could be spent in the first year of implementation. Most of the anticipated results and outcomes required much more time for the process of testing and expanding interventions, as well as a strategic framework to integrate and adapt learning into the implementation process.

- *The initial strategy's ambitious design required a good strategic management and variety of capacities of the implementation team, including knowledge and practice related to various areas of social inclusion and especially an income generation community-based model and approaches, understanding community development and activation approaches, and design and implementation of developmental grants schemes. It also required capacities for pro-active collaboration and expanding strategic partnerships with all stakeholders and other actors and donors involved in efforts for RAE inclusion.*

II. Effectiveness of Implementation

1. The challenge of putting the initial strategy into practice

The implementation of the Kosovo component of the Regional Roma Project was marked by evolving changes in terms of strategy and planned activities, budget allocation and duration. The Project was implemented for 4 years instead of 2 years, based on two no-cost extensions agreed with SIDA. A major issue throughout implementation was under spending, on-going reallocation of funds and new under-spending as some of the newly suggested activities costed less, or could not happen/or continue. As a result, at the end of 2008 (which was initially the end of the project) the Kosovo component had \$377,683 in unspent funds. They were allocated for activities in 2009-2010.

Some of the planned activities were not implemented, others like the initially planned labor intensive and income generation community sub-projects was modified into small grants facility for RAE NGO projects. At the same time new initiatives were added, in some cases coming as a request from local stakeholders or in response to other identified needs in the environment. As noted by one respondent "we had to shape the project on the run while learning with people involved how to better respond to the reality".

Based on the review of project documents, as well as some of the interviews the dynamic and substantial redesign of the Project over the years was due to a variety of interrelated reasons:

- Some relate to *the dynamics of the local context* – the on-going process of institutional building and defining of structures and responsibilities at key partner institutions at the central and local levels in regard to RAE issues and inclusion strategy development; and lessons and changes of representatives of central and local stakeholders that the project was working with.
- Others are linked *with the situation within RAE communities and civil society organizations* – the lack of actual representation of the RAE FORUM umbrella organization, initially anticipated as a key project implementation partner, the low quality of proposals coming from the local RAE NGOs and a need for more assistance in developing local project implementation capacities.
- A third group of factors are related to *the late start of the project and internal organizational issues* – difficulty in staff recruitment, management approach and on-going staff turn over, while working under the constant stress of dealing with under spending, delays and redesign of activity plans.

From an evaluation point of view, the redesign of activities and implementation are not a problem, as far as all changes of the Kosovo component were done in discussions and agreement with the core RRP donor (SIDA). A flexible and responsive approach is often more adequate than a rigidly structured strategy, trying to "fit" local environment into initial assumptions, especially when working on issues of social inclusion. The main issue is to what extent the changes in implementation were done *as a "damage limitation"* to cope with delivery delay and under spending, or if they were done *in a strategic way* to better respond to local realities and optimize impact of the action. A challenge to learning and assessment of the effectiveness of work done by the Project in Kosovo is the way modified old and added new activities were documented. Throughout all years of implementation, progress reports were following the initial strategy structure with initially stated outcomes, outputs and activities. This makes them quite

incomprehensive documents, as due to the changes, reported activities were often in complete discrepancy with the planned ones.

2. Institutional Capacity and Policy Support at Central and local levels

2.1. Expanding institutional capacities for RAE inclusion policy development and implementation at central level

2.1.1. Work with the Ministry of Communities and Returns (MCR)

The main objective of the work at the central level was to increase the institutional capacities for addressing RAE issues in a systematic way by providing support and direct work with two main partners - the Ministry of Communities and Returns (MCR) and the *Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Forum – KRAEF*. The MCR was the key ministry tasked with the protection and promotion of communities and their members. The Forum (KRAEF), while not formal was perceived as the strongest RAE NGO umbrella organization with 13 members. Work with these two partners, as well as good interactions with key stakeholders for the development of the RAE Strategy, like the Prime Minister's Office for Good Governance (OGG) and international organizations, was to contribute to the drafting of the Kosovo RAE Social Inclusion Plan, based on active participation of RAE communities in the central level working groups.

Following the signing of a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) in July 2007, the Project team was located at the premises of the MCR. The team did a lot of work for establishing and maintaining good working relations with the ministry. This involved numerous meetings with political and administration staff, capacity needs assessment, and design and implementation of training in different organizational areas. Based on the interviews and the progress reports two main challenges were affecting the effectiveness of the work with the Ministry. First, the awareness on RAE communities issues and the overall organizational skills of the MCR staff were quite low. Second, frequent change of political leadership of the ministry was often hampering the consistency of the capacity building efforts and instead of building upon already created good momentum, the work for re-establishing commitment and good work relations had to start from scratch.

A good momentum was built by the end of 2007. The project assisted the drafting of the first RAE Action Plan of the MCR Community Department for 2008. The organized workshop with 14 MCR staff was considered as a very valuable experience. This work was interrupted by the political instability within the Ministry in the first half of 2008, when the Minister was changed twice¹⁰. This required additional efforts and a new series of meetings with the Community department director and staff to reactivate support for the project.

Since the second half of 2008, the work with the MCR was put on a more systematic basis, also due to the consistent support from the Deputy Minister, appointed in the spring of 2008. He also got involved as member of the RRP Project Board. Being a former mayor he was very committed to the purpose of the project and its approach to link central and local level institutions. Based on the interview with him, the project was very valuable for the Ministry in many aspects. It was practically oriented to assist the needs for developing skills of the ministry staff in addressing the issues of RAE communities. Organized study visits to Macedonia, Slovakia and Montenegro contributed to expanding the vision by learning from other countries practices. What was very valuable was the approach of the Project providing for direct linkage with the RAE communities by involving MCR staff in discussions on community projects; it was a developmental and real partnership effort with a lot of flexibility to respond to emerging needs. The professionalism and high commitment of the Project manager in her efforts throughout the project was very appreciated by the interviewed representative of the MCR.

¹⁰New Minister came in January 2008 in result of the elections, and resigned several months later

The envisaged cooperation with the other main partner the *Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Forum – KRAEF* did not materialize. As it occurred in practice this was not an active structure able to mobilize participation of RAE communities at central and local level. The Forum (KRAEF) did not provide proof of their representative nature of many RAE NGOs (statute and membership list) as was requested by UNDP. This challenged the objective of strengthening the RAE civil society advocacy and policy development capacities, as the project could not identify other Kosovo wide RAE civil society partners. Instead, the project searched for a more bottom-up approach by gradual involvement of RAE NGOs from the two municipalities, some of which were members of the Forum.

2.1.2. Support for the development of the Kosovo RAE Social Inclusion plan

The main challenge in this area was the delayed process of the finalization and adoption of the *Strategy for Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities*. The lead stakeholders for the development of the Strategy for the Integration of RAE were the Office of the Prime Minister, the OSCE and the Kosovo Open Society Foundation (KFOS). Instead of anticipated finalization and approval in 2007, the Strategy was adopted by government at the end of 2008, and officially launched by the OGG and KFOS in March 2009.

Based on Project documentation the Project made efforts for coordination with the above key stakeholders and to offer support, but was “left out” of the process. UNDP had tried offering support to the OGG in 2008 and based on their request re-planned some of the funding within of the RRP to finance the establishment of the Secretariat for the Implementation of the RAE Strategy at the office of Prime Minister, once it was adopted. This support did not materialize as the Secretariat has yet to be established.

The Project was effective in providing assistance to the process of finalizing the draft action plan for the Strategy for RAE integration. It worked closely with the working group on RAE at the MCR, which was established on January 2009. It organized three workshops with support of UNDP Bratislava Centre, as well as of the consultant hired within another UNDP Capacity Building Project, supported by KFOS and Norwegian Government.

In 2010 some of the remaining project funds were targeted to support a representative household survey of the *socio economic situation of RAE in Kosovo, being implemented by a local research company*. It is responding to the need for updated data that can help the more targeted implementation of government measures envisaged in the strategic documents, especially in the area of employment and income generation.

2.2. Growing local institutional capacities for RAE inclusion policy development and implementation in the two selected municipalities

2.2.1. Establishment of the MPDIC and their functions

Following the signing of a MoU with the Ferizaj/Urosevac and Prizren Municipalities in July 2007, the local project team members - one municipal coordinator in each were based in the municipal premises. A *Municipal Project Development and Implementation Committee (MPDIC)* was created in each of the municipalities at the end of 2007. The composition, role, functions and procedures of their work were defined in an *Operation Manual of the MPDIC*, developed in consultations with local RAE communities and local institutions. Based on this document the MPDIC were:

- *local partnership structures* of local authorities and RAE communities’ representatives in the framework of the implementation of this project, but also a broader model for inclusive partnership model of work;
- with *functions in two main directions*: 1/assisting the development of local plans for RAE social inclusion by ensuring consultative processes and input of communities in collaboration with other stakeholders and 2/ acting as a local board to identify, select, monitor and evaluate community projects supported by the small grants scheme.

- *composed of five members with voting powers, and two with an advisory function.* Some were permanent and others temporary members. The permanent members included representative of the UNDP Project and a representative of the MCR (with advisory function), a representative of the MCO and of the Municipal finance office (advisory function) both officially nominated by the municipality. The temporary members were the representatives of each of the three RAE communities, based on a nomination process from the RAE communities. They could be replaced every six months. The committees had to meet every month. The RAE representatives were paid for meetings (20 euro).

The first RAE representatives in the MPDICs in Ferizaj/Urosevac and in Prizren were selected in late 2007 by a broad consultative processes and direct involvement of the RAE communities. This involved a pro-active information campaign at community meetings, approaching RAE leaders and organizations, dissemination of nomination forms to community members, who could suggest and vote for their representatives in the committees. Following the regulations for rotation of temporary members, this process was repeated in 2009 when new representatives were nominated by the RAE communities.

The MPDICs in both municipalities worked intensively, meeting on almost a monthly basis in 2008-2010. Their work was dominated by the demanding tasks related to their grants selection and monitoring function. The MPDIC were not able to fulfill the expectations for their pro-active role in ensuring input and organizing forums directly linked with the local action planning process. The committees did organize numerous meetings with the RAE communities (in total 69 meetings in the two municipalities for 2007-2009¹¹). Though these meetings were continuously reported under the outcome indicator “number of round tables/debates for the local inclusion plan development”, there is no documented evidence of how results of these meetings were systematized and later integrated into the planning process. In both reports and in the interviews they were mostly referred to as part of the on-going needs assessment for effective grant making. However, the on-going assessment of community issues related to projects identification and implementation have contributed to the more effective work of the MCOs, as they had a representative within the MPDIC.

2.2.2. Concrete activities related to the Local RAE inclusion plans

The project team, as well as the MCOs had a more leading role in the activities related to the processes for local planning done from this project. The UNDP project team made a lot of effort to raise the awareness of local institutions for the need of local RAE inclusion plans. With the delay of the finalization of the Kosovo RAE Strategy and Action Plan the objective became to encourage municipalities to draft short-term action plans involving all relevant actors, which could serve as a good basis and better readiness for implementation when the RAE Strategy is approved. Processes in this direction were initiated by UNDP in 2008 in both municipalities (in Prizren in partnership with OCSE). Based on this, the MCOs took the leadership and organized meetings with different stakeholders as part of the planning processes.

- In Ferizaj/Urosevac the Deputy Mayor was actively involved together with the head of the MCO (who is also the member of MPDIC) in the planning process. Participants in the planning workshops included all members of the MCO, as well as representatives of other departments like the directory of education, directory of youth, sport and culture. This resulted in a draft RAE action plan for 2009. Together with the action plan the head of MCO assigned tasks for each of the MCO staff and will serve as a document for their evaluation in the coming months. Later on the project further assisted the improvement of the plan by bringing participants from the RRP Montenegro component to facilitate a local action planning workshop.
- In Prizren, the project staff made a lot of effort to stimulate the active involvement of both institutions and of RAE civil society. Based on the interview with the municipal coordinator, it was a challenging process of gradual opening of institutions to understand the importance of these

¹¹ (18 in 2007, 23 in 2008 and 28 in 2009)

plans, and their integration in the overall local planning. “It is one thing to write a plan on paper, and quite a different story to get people really involved in its development”. NGOs in Prizren were very actively involved in the local action plan development. Based on interviews with some of them (both RAE and non-RAE NGOs), they felt that the UNDP coordinator was right next to them and very supportive. “She had a good sense for civil society, but also a good knowledge and approach to the institutions”.

In both municipalities the work on the finalization of the RAE local action plans and their implantation has continued under the leadership of KFOS, working directly with the two municipalities, and facilitating the process through local NGO partners. Especially in Prizren, the good cooperative relations of the local staff of this project with KFOS and their local NGO partner in Prizren “ATTA” was very beneficial for the good outcomes of the local action planning processes¹².

2.2.3. Bringing together stakeholders from the central and local levels, as well as from the two municipalities

This was another instrument of the project to stimulate learning from practices. Regular coordination meetings with all project partners were organized on six months basis. They were mentioned in the interviews with different stakeholders as very useful.

The study visits was another type of capacity building activity. Not initially planned, they came as a request from both institutions and local RAE representatives to learn from other countries’ good practices of addressing Roma issues. Three study trips were organized in the course of the project - in Macedonia (2007); in Slovakia (2008) and in Montenegro (2009). All of these study trips had a concrete program to meet with both institutions and with Roma organizations in the relevant countries. The study groups of 10-11 people, involving representatives of central institutions (mostly MCR) and of different local stakeholders from both municipalities: representatives of local authorities of the municipal community offices, local RAE NGOs and community representatives.

While the study trips to Macedonia and Montenegro were considered a valuable learning experience, the view of the study trip in Slovakia was different among participants. The MCR’s representative found practices from the state social housing program very useful, and later insisted in applying similar approach of involvement of Roma in reconstruction of their houses in the prepared reallocation of the Kolonia settlement in Gjakova. Participants coming from RAE NGOs and MCOs in Ferizaj and Prizren commented the study visit was a “disappointment” and a negative learning experience. They wanted to see practices of good policy and integration of Roma in EU countries and to learn from it. Instead, what they saw in Slovakia was shocking. “It was hard to believe that there can be such segregation and discrimination at the heart of Europe”. The study trip brought an interesting side effect. Some of the officials from both municipalities, also participating in the trip were sharing with the RAE NGOs that “we have no problems, see how much worse it can be – stop complaining”.

3. Improving the Infrastructure for Social Assistance through Identification and Support to Sub-projects Addressing Issues of RAE Communities

The strategy in the second priority area was with a focus on capacity building of local stakeholders to develop and implement community development projects in the two municipalities, with a priority focus on grants for small job creation community projects involving unemployed youth and women.

The practice of implementation in this priority area was quite different and changing over time. The initial focus on job creation was completely lost. The implementation evolved into a combination of six parallel types of sub-project support activities done in parallel in the two municipalities and Kosovo wide. This was mostly driven by the growing frustration of the Project management of the low effectiveness of

¹² Based on the interviews with both KFOS and with local stakeholders in Prizren.

grants distribution due to the low quality of project proposals coming from the two municipalities and expanding the search for the best use of under spent Project funds in supporting sub-projects for RAE inclusion.

3.1. Stimulating community group formation of RAE women and youth in Prizren and in Ferizaj/Urosevac: process and results

The project attempted to follow the initial design, especially in its part for a pro-active approach to community activation and forming of community groups that would be implementing small income generation projects. Activities in this direction started in the second half of 2007. Based on the second progress report, about 7 such groups were formed (mostly of RAE women in Ferizaj/Urosevac and of RAE youth in Prizren).

A very interesting case in this direction was the work of the municipal coordinator in Ferizaj/Urosevac. Being a member from the RAE community herself, she succeeded in organizing and facilitating the formation of a group of 28 women to produce handicrafts by facilitating over 30 meetings of the women, persuading the Municipal Council to donate 350 euro for purchase of knitting materials, and to organize five fairs with the support of UNHCR and OSCE, Greek KFOR and US KFOR where women were able to sell their products and raise in total about 150 euro. The raised money was meant to support the most vulnerable families. Based on the interview with the municipal coordinator the meaning of this initiative was much beyond just earning some money. It helped bringing women from the three RAE communities to work on a common purpose – to contribute to the more vulnerable members of their communities. *“It was opening new horizon out of everyday life of marginalization - even entering for the first time the municipal building, where one of the fair was done, in a way that was a step to empowerment. They felt like someone important and useful”.*

However, the above practice, as well as the other initial attempts for forming and activating community groups was not linked with the grants scheme. Based on the interview with the RAE project coordinator in Ferizaj, these community activation attempts were not seen as a priority by the UNDP project manager at that time. With the increased workload on launching the grants scheme in 2008, as well as the resignation of the two municipal coordinators in 2008, the work for community groups’ activation stopped for a while.

Later in 2009, attempts for re-activating work with community groups were done in both municipalities, when the new municipal project coordinators continued organizing meetings with women and youth. In Ferizaj/Urosevac some of the RAE women meetings were done together with the Office for Gender Equality and MCO. More than 50 RAE women in Dubrava settlement participated in the meetings and elected their representative to be in regular contact with Municipal officials. In Prizren some of the meetings of RAE women were organized with the support of Foleja, a local NGO that addresses women’s issues, and others of RAE youth and RAE women were organized together with OSCE. These involved awareness raising, lectures on family education and possible violations in their families (lectures by a representative from Center for Social Welfare). Like in previous years, the work with community groups was not linked with the work with support to sub-projects.

3.2. Grants Scheme in Support to RAE NGO Projects in Prizren and in Ferizaj/Urosevac: Process and Results

3.2.1. Design of the grants scheme

The design of the small grants facility was done in the second half of 2007. The first installment of \$90,000 (61,000 euro) for grants support was transferred to each municipality, which was to be followed by a second installment of \$75, 000 (or 61,000 euro). The MPDICs were the main decision bodies for the decision on grants that will be provided from the above funds to local initiatives.

The criteria for project selection and rules and regulations of the process were thoroughly described in the Operational Manual for the MPDIC Based on this document, criteria for project selection can be grouped in two aspects:

- *Content and functional priorities* – projects should target RAE communities in the areas of education, health and social welfare with a priority to initiatives for improving the social status of RAE women and youth also through, vocational training for youth and facilitating job creations. The priority type of activities were capacity building through training, as well as through practice; awareness raising and reconciliation within the priority areas above.
- *Technical proposal requirements*: projects needed to be comprehensive, have realistic objectives and outputs and have sustainable results. Project overhead costs should be within the range of 3-5 % of the total budget, except for small projects (up to \$5,000) where the overhead cost should not exceed 15% of the total budget.

3.2.2. Effectiveness of implementation

The grant scheme was implemented through three calls for proposals – two in 2008 and one in 2009. Based on reports and interviews this implementation was of low effectiveness, especially from a grants allocation point of view. The first installment of funds for grants sent to each of the two municipalities in the middle of 2007 could hardly be allocated and spent by the end of 2009. The second installment came as “fast track” disbursement in 2010 to finally spend the money for community based initiatives.

Based on provided data¹³ and on the interviews the effectiveness of the small grants facility 2008-2009) can be outlined in the following aspects:

a/ Direct results of the three calls for proposals:

For the period 2007-2009 the direct results in each of the municipalities were as follows:

- In Ferizaj/Urosevac - out of 61 proposals, 11 grants were awarded to 7 RAE NGOs (in total 46,152 euro). Projects were initiated and implemented by RAE NGOs. Activities were mostly in the area of education, social welfare, and women’s empowerment, as well as one project on vocational training. The supported initiatives involved directly 802 beneficiaries from the RAE community (about half of them children below 14 years of age).
- In Prizren: out of 33 applications, 9 grants were provided to 5 NGOs – four RAE and one non-RAE working inside communities. The total amount of all grants was 40,332 euro. The supported initiatives were mainly in the area of education, work with children and parents, women’s empowerment, and community awareness through media programs. They involved directly 1020 beneficiaries from the RAE community (about half of them children below 14 years of age).

b/ Effectiveness of the selection and decision making on proposals

The process of selection of proposals and awarding grants was difficult and slow. Especially slow was the process around the first call in 2008, when the gap between announcing and awarding the grants was about 9 months. Though this gap became shorter over time (6 months for the second call, and 3 months for the third call) the process was not efficient enough to catch up with under spending from the first call.

According to reports and some of the respondents, the main obstacle was the very low quality of written proposals coming from the local RAE NGOs. The NGOs could not formulate clear logic chain of objectives, activities, results and outcomes. As outlined repetitively in Project’s progress reports, another challenge was that NGOs were “spoiled” by the “easy money” approach of other donors. Due to low

¹³ The Table on grants for community initiatives in the attachment, provides more details on the process and results. It was developed based on the data provided in the progress reports and the list of implemented grants. It illustrates the process and results from the grantmaking in each municipality in several aspects: ratio between submitted proposals, approved projects and contracted grants; size of grants and total amount of grant disbursed, and actual dates of implementation of supported projects.

capacities in RAE communities they were providing grants based on loose criteria and lower requirements as compared to other NGOs. Alternatively, this project tried hard to “teach” RAE NGOs to respect strict criteria, the same as for other NGOs.

The interviewed MPDIC local members, as well as local RAE NGOs considered the process as “very rigorous” and time consuming for all participants – the MPDIC, the applying NGOs, UNDP. In the words of one of the respondents “it was a tough effort to learn how to respect strong donors’ criteria”. Most difficult for applicants was the meet the criteria not to exceed the 15%of the overall costs for administration. A main problem outlined in the interviews was that criteria were complicated and not always clear. For some of the respondents, the requirements and expectations for written proposals were too high “you cannot expect a high quality of written proposals in communities that are so marginalized and education is not so high.” For most of the respondents, it was not so much the high requirements, but the *constant changing of the meaning of these requirements in the course of decision making on projects*.

Much stronger in Ferizaj/Urosevac, but also in Prizren, *local stakeholders shared a lot of frustration and negative experiences relating to the practice applied in the decision making on proposals*. The MPDIC representatives in both municipalities considered that though the committees were the decision making body, this was only on paper. While during the meetings of the committees there was a good discussion and voting took place, the final decision was taken by the Project manager. Projects were rejected even if experts who helped the NGO to develop the proposal, the municipal project coordinator and the MPDIC considered the initiative to be qualified. Even if approved, the projects were put on hold to be further reviewed by the manager: in cases this resulted in rejections of some of the projects approved by the committee; in others, additional reductions in budget lines for program activities, not just for administration, were made. In the words of one of the respondents “*we had such big changes in our project that finally we did not recognize it*”. Another group of issues, outlined mostly by the RAE representatives in Ferizaj (both the Municipal Community Office and the RAE NGOs) were of a more attitudinal nature. A number of examples were provided on the quite paternalistic and negative dynamics of the discourse, accompanying the above decision making practice, which were considered discriminative.

A challenge to the active participation in the decision making of the committee members who were nominated from the RAE communities was their low capacity to deal with grant selection. This was outlined in many of the progress reports, as well as in some of the interviews, especially in Prizren. According to some of the interviews, it was difficult find “neutral” people who had knowledge and practice with projects, in order to contribute to selection. Those who knew were in conflict of interest, as they were leading NGOs and wanted to apply. However, in Prizren, the second group of 3 RAE representatives in the MPDIC (nominated in 2009) was much more effective, due to a higher level of education and they were very helpful especially in direct outreach to the communities.

c/ Effectiveness of training for increasing local capacities for project proposal and organizational development

To overcome the low quality of proposals, the Project invested in increasing the technical capacities of local stakeholders for project writing and organizational development. The ATRC (Advocacy, Training and Resource Center), selected as the main training provider within the Project, conducted over 26 training for local stakeholders in the two municipalities for the period 2008-2009. Trainings involved a variety of topics: project proposal writing and budgeting, narrative and financial reporting, monitoring and evaluation, as well as in various areas of organizational development (leadership and management, advocacy and coalition building, NGO PR marketing and fundraising, etc). Most were organized in each of the two municipalities as joint sessions for RAE NGOs, the MCO and members of the MPDIC, including representatives of the MCR. Individual consultancy for proposal writing and budget planning “learning-by doing” was also provided to NGOs applicants (especially in 2008). Two of the trainings were organized for all partners from the two municipalities.

The effectiveness of training was assessed very highly in reports as contributing for the better performance of NGOs implementing the projects. In cases there were direct outputs coming right after the training related to development of concrete plans for fundraising, advocacy, or for rethinking management structure. Based on the interviews with grantees and MPDIC members, the assessment of this intensive training effort was generally positive, but with some constructive criticism. For many respondents the main value of the trainings was the provided interaction space for representatives from the different RAE communities' NGOs, and with institutions. For some of the respondents the issue based training (like PR, advocacy, etc.) was more valued than the proposal writing ones. The quality of trainers was good, but in some cases they could not adapt the style to the audience. Project proposal training was predominant and viewed as "enforced"/obligatory for NGOs, even if some of the grantees considered that they didn't need it (especially for a second or third time).

As several respondents noted, too many resources were spent on training – both as time, money and efforts; these could have been used for other activities in the RAE communities. It was viewed as a means to serve this grants scheme rather the beneficiaries.

d/ Effectiveness of provided grants in regard to their impact on improvement of the situation of RAE communities.

The MPDIC and the project team had done close monitoring of the implementation of the provided grants. In total 78 monitoring visits to supported projects were done for the period 2008-2010¹⁴. All projects were implemented according to the contract. There was only one case of cancelling of an awarded grant, due to mismanagement of funds¹⁵.

Most of the grants were small and short term. They cannot be anticipated to bring for visible and quick improvement of the wellbeing of RAE communities, especially in view the acute social and economic problems they are facing. The impact of these grants can be found only on an outcome level – to what extent these grants have contributed to supporting good processes, approaches and expanded capacities of RAE communities that will help them work for the improvement of the situation.

This review cannot provide assessment in this direction, due to the limited substantive information that was provided on the supported projects as activities and achieved results. Some assumptions can be made based on the brief interviews with a very small sample of RAE and non RAE NGOs that were supported with grants. Their initiatives were meaningful and useful in the context of their communities: directly involving RAE communities, in some cases combining direct assistance (for ex. purchase of books or materials) and developmental work – with families, with the communities and with institutions; raising community and public awareness through radio programs addressing variety of issues, community meetings and events; some were programs directly targeting empowerment of women. In both municipalities some projects led to creating coalitions or integrating RAE NGOs in existing local networks; others led to establishing new community organizations¹⁶. In Ferizaj some of the supported NGO initiatives for scholarships for pupils resulted in the scaling up of a broader initiative for scholarship support, further expanded by the Project in Prizren, and later Kosovo wide (see next section).

e/ Fast allocation of the second installment for support of community projects in 2010

In 2010, based on left-over from the funds for community projects, some additional short term support was provided to initiatives in both of the municipalities:

¹⁴ Based on data of Project progress reports these include 18 monitoring visits in 2008 (respectively 15 in Ferizaj/Urosevac and 3 in Prizren) and 30 visits in 2009 (15 in each of the municipalities). 30 more monitoring visits were done in the first half of 2010.

¹⁵ This is a project of RAE organization in Prizren

¹⁶ An example in this direction was provided in Prizren, where the initiatives of one of the supported NGOs working for integration of RAE children led to activating RAE youth and emerging of a new RAE youth association.

- In Ferizaj this included 6 grants in total 28,534 euro. Out of them 3 grants supported the Healthcare center through the Department of Health of F/U Municipality in total 21,600 euro¹⁷ and 2 grants were in support inventory for refurbishment of rooms for pre-school classes, 3,467 euro each, provided in March and in August 2010 through the Department of Education F/U Municipality
- In Prizren this included 7 grants in total 40,525,5 EUR: five grants to NGOs, mostly for continuation of activities from previous projects 5748,5 euro in total: (3 projects in the range of 240-790 euro, and two b/n 1,277 and 2,695 euro) and two grants (in total 34,777euro) for infrastructure projects to build playgrounds in two schools with ethnically mixed children

These grants in the two municipalities were provided on a pro-active operational level, without a call for proposals and rigorous process of selection of previous years. In both municipalities these grants, except the small grants to the NGOs in Prizren, were larger in size and in support to projects that were run by the municipal offices themselves, activating opportunities for co-funding and matching - with the Directorates of Education, as well as the Department of Health and in partnership with the MCOs. All of the grants were of duration of one to three months. They were viewed in the interviews as very efficient in quick response to local needs. As noted in some of the interviews with project staff, “we had to bring to communities the funds that were envisaged for them, but it was a pity that we had to spend fast at the end of the project, due to delays in the previous stages.”

3.3. Expanding support to RAE social inclusion projects program to other communities and Kosovo wide

As said before, another tendency accompanying the support of the community initiatives in the municipalities of Prizren and of Ferizaj/Urosevac was the search for widening the geographic scope of the grants support to other locations and Kosovo wide, based on the assumption that this might bring better projects. This resulted in several initiatives done at different times of the project implementation. Although all were driven by the growing concern for more effective dealing with under spent funds, they were different as nature and approaches.

3.3.1. The emergency response to the situation in the RAE Kolonia settlement in Gjakova

This was a sub project that emerged in the second half of 2007, following the concern of the SIDA field representative in Kosovo and later of the MCR about the poverty and appalling living conditions of Kolonia settlement in Gjakova/Djakova. Following a base-line study developed by the Project team in October 2007, it was decided to allocate \$12,000 in support of a community empowerment initiative combining training of women and youth and small scale income generating projects, resulting from the training.

During this review there were not too many findings on the results of the “Kolonia Project”, partially due to the fact that Gjakova was not among the visited localities. Based on the progress reports the sub project was active in late 2007 and first half of 2008, when two local NGOs were selected to work with the communities, and over 50 community members of the settlement (mainly youth and women) participated in various trainings. A result was the establishment of a small women’s informal company for house cleaning and maintenance. Later there was also a concept for integrated work with the settlement elaborated with the assistance of the UNDP Bratislava Regional Center. However, there were no findings for concrete follow up on suggested initiatives.

¹⁷ (10,000 euro for ultra-sound equipment provided in July 2010; and later in August - 9,600 euro for a generator and 1000 euro for books)

3.3.2. Scholarships for RAE High School Pupils and University Students

All people interviewed within this review outlined the scholarships to RAE pupils and student as the best achievement and most visible result of the RRP project in Kosovo.

The initiative started first at a local level as a support to a RAE NGO project in Ferizaj/Urosevac that provided 10 scholarship support for pupils in 2008. The main idea was to increase the motivation of children to go to school, often hampered by the poverty of their families. This idea was embraced by the project, further developed and expanded in Prizren. There it was organized by the MPDIC, together with the Department of Education in the municipality. As a result, a total of 73 scholarships for university and high school students were distributed in both municipalities and 15 earmarked for vocational training in 2008-2009. The provision of financial support was linked with the success and performance in school, and in both municipalities there was ongoing interaction and meetings with students to discuss their achievements and plans for the future.

This initiative scaled up in partnership with central level institutions. In 2009 based on the experience in the two municipalities, the MCR provided support to 60 more scholarships (50 high school pupils and 10 university students). Later in 2009-2010 this evolved into a joint program of two ministries and UNDP – the MCR and the Ministry of Education and Technology (MEST). Each ministry was also providing a financial contribution to the initiative. The rounds for provision of scholarships were organized in a very transparent way, based on a clear set of criteria. It involved individual meetings and discussions with the students. The amount for one semester during the first round was 270 Euros per two semesters for pupils and 500 Euros per two semesters for university students. In order to receive this amount, the students needed to have a bank account in their name, not in their parent's name. Money was sent in installments, and continuation of support was provided only upon fulfilling the requirements for good school performance.

As a result 86 scholarships (70 high school pupils and 16 university students) were provided Kosovo wide in 2009. In 2010 these increased to 144 high school pupils and 42 university children.

Behind these numbers are many inspiring personal stories of young people that received the chance to further their studies solely on the basis of the scholarship. Based on the interview with representatives of the MEST and of project staff, it was a difficult but very rewarding experience to see the growing motivation of children to get a better education. In addition to this, the effect on children was beyond just going to school. It was bringing for their increased self-esteem, feeling for the first time important and gradually starting to believe in themselves. They were for the first time recognized as existing even by the mere fact that they could have their own bank account. This effort was very successful due to the approach of participating people from both the ministries and the UNDP management and team. In the words of the representative of MEST, “the main factor for success was that we all worked with a lot of empathy and commitment to these children and that we did it as a cooperative effort”.

3.3.3. The small grants call for proposals Kosovo-wide and other pro-active grant and support in 2010

In late 2009, UNDP in agreement with SIDA decided to open a call for small project proposals to initiatives of RAE NGOs working in other municipalities. Proposals from the two municipalities (Prizren and Ferizaj/Urosevac) were not eligible for this call. This round of small grants was designed and carried out together with the MCR, also as part of the implementation of the action plan of the MCR for 2009-2010. There was also a commitment of the MCR to continue with its own funds this type of support after UNDP/SIDA money were over.

A joint project evaluation working group was established. Out of 30 proposals 6 grants were awarded in total amount 40 885 euro. The provided grants were in the range between 5,150 – 7,830 euro and of duration 4-5 months. Initiatives were implemented in the first half of 2010.

Based on review of documentation, the initiatives were suggested and implemented by NGOs in , all with experience and other initiatives in regard to RAE development; some working from Pristina in partnership

with local actors and others were locally based. Most of them were RAE NGOs, and some non-RAE but working inside RAE communities. All the initiatives were local in 6 municipalities of Kosovo. They were in the area of education, prevention of school drop outs, literacy courses especially for women, and vocational training. One of the projects contributed to the establishment of a RAE community organization, and another for drafting of an RAE Action plan. Again, like in the case with local calls for projects in the two initial municipalities, the level of quality of proposals coming from NGOs was assessed as very low in the progress reports of the Project. In addition to the above initiatives, two more grants were provided in 2010. One was for repetition of the vocational trainings in Podujeva¹⁸ and the other one was an initiative for literacy courses for two groups of women in Ferizaj and Podujeva.

III. Outcomes, Lessons and Future Prospects

1. What came out from the Kosovo Component?

The Kosovo component implementation was a dynamic journey of testing a wide range of combined or parallel initiatives with shifting focus and approach over time. As a result, the Project has opened a lot of processes, supported by many activities at both the central and local level, government institutions and RAE civil society, informal groups and individuals of RAE communities in a growing number of locations. Each of these has yielded some intermediate results in the concrete context and time of implementation.

However, the assessment of how the mosaic of direct results interrelate and bring together for summative outcomes and impacts faced three main challenges:

- The first is that *the Project did a lot on activity level but failed to find a relevant framework to grasp the evolving “so what” answers on a strategy level*. With shifting focus and priorities the project struggled to fit these answers into the initial project results and outcomes framework. Progress reports tried to follow initial outcomes and indicators while evolving practice of implementation was obviously departing from initial assumptions and design. The Project would have benefited both as learning and effectiveness if at an earlier stage, for example at the end of the first year if it did a targeted strategy redesign effort and defined a new framework to monitor effectiveness and impact of interventions. This would have helped keep the big picture bringing together the effects of the various activities.
- *The second is related to the ratio among aspects of attribution (or which aspects of outcomes can be attributed to this concrete project) and aspects of contribution to achieved outcomes (or in what ways this project has complemented efforts of others in the same direction)*. This project was providing support in various ways and in many processes, where others were more or less also involved before, or at the same time in the framework of the relevant action lines. The narrative of progress reports provide some information in this direction, but in a more competitive rather than substantive way.
- The third is the *fragmented and emotional institutional memory on the Project*. With constant staff turn over, pieces of the substantive knowledge on what was done and what was the outcome remained with individuals involved at different phases of implementation. At the same time, the interviews with project management, and some of the project staff that left and/or came later had a different level of emotional load in interpreting processes and results, depending on the personality of respondents. This applies to a number of the interviews with respondents, too.

Based on the interviews and documentation review several key outcomes resulting from the work of the project can be outlined in three main areas:

1) Capacity growth of institutions at central and local level:

- *The consistent work with the MCR has contributed to its institutional capacity to address issues of RAE communities*. There is some increased understanding of the importance and complexity of these

¹⁸One of the 6 grants supported with the Kosovo wide call for proposals.

issues and they are put in practice on the policy agenda of the ministry, by developing more targeted planning on RAE issues in the overall planning of the ministry. The project has provided a space for an on-going interaction of the MCR with RAE communities through participation of MCR staff in project activities at the local level, joint experience during study visits or establishment of RAE working group at the Ministry within the drafting of the Action Plan for Implementation of the Kosovo Strategy for the Integration of the RAE communities (2009-2015). This has started introducing a new institutional practice for a more open and inclusive approach to policy development and implementation.

- *The project has contributed to more clarity on the role and concrete responsibilities of the MRC, stated as a key ministry that together with relevant line ministries will be responsible for the implementation of the RAE Strategy actor in the strategic documents for RAE integration. Though future sustainability will depend on the new people that will be leading the ministry after latest elections, the Strategy and the Action Plan with the concrete directions of implementation assigned to the Ministry are the institutionalized frameworks that will provide for continued attention and action on RAE issues.*
- *The project has stimulated inter-ministerial cooperation on dealing with RAE issues, which is currently underlined in adopted RAE integration strategic documents as critical for effectiveness of interventions. The practice of the RAE Scholarship Program, developed and implemented jointly by the MCR and the MEST has demonstrated the effectiveness of a partnership institutional approach to Roma inclusion, concretely in the area of better access to education. The Scholarships will continue as a key practical measure, as a broader collaborative effort of MEST with other supporting stakeholders (MCR included).*
- *The project has contributed to growing local institutional capacities for consultative processes for RAE inclusion policy formulation and implementation in Ferizaj/Urosevac and in Prizren.. By establishing the MPDIC it has increased the capacity of the MCOs as key municipal departments on dealing with RAE issues. The project has also started some expanding interaction with other municipal departments especially of education and health. Though this was more at a later stage it has contributed to putting on the municipal agenda the need for mainstreaming the issues of RAE inclusion in the local policy implementation.*
- *The project has stimulated linkage between central and local level institutions in dealing with RAE issues. This contributed to better understanding of the diversity of situations and local issues in the process of policy formulation at the central level, and has supported access of local institutions to contact or program support opportunities of different ministries.*

2) Expanding RAE community participation in the process of decision making

- *The project has failed to expand the capacities of RAE NGOs at a network level, due to the wrong assumption that the KRAEF forum can play the role of catalyst for mobilization of RAE participation in decision making locally and Kosovo wide. Activation and consolidation of RAE civil society for participation in the drafting of RAE integration strategic documents (Strategy and Action Plan), as well as later the Local Action Plans was led by other key stakeholders, especially KFOS. The UNDP project complimented these efforts more sporadically at the central level by bringing RAE representatives at MCR workgroups in the framework of the RAE Action Plan development, and more consistently locally by efforts to stimulate RAE NGOs coalition building and interaction with institutions, especially in Prizren.*
- *The MPDIC failed to be a well functioning model for participation of RAE in the decision making on sub-projects for social inclusion. The communities were present in the committees through the nominated three members, as well as by the appointed representatives of the MCOs. As one of the MCOs representatives said “at the start we felt that this was really our fund, for improvement of our communities”. However, the practice of decision making on the funding of community initiatives turned out different. The MPDIC were a place for discussion, but not for decision making. Decisions*

were taken by the project management, “often acting like a barricade to stop the funding of proposals voted by the committee”. On the other side, nominated RAE communities representatives did not always have the capacities to review and assess projects and were more effective in concrete activities for community outreach and work.

3) Expanding RAE communities capacities which can lead to more social inclusion

- *The project has expanded “the common ground” among the three groups Roma Ashkali and Egyptians, which traditionally has been divided and conflicting.* All local respondents consider that this is definitely an outcome from the years of constantly bringing their representatives together at joint meetings, trainings and supported projects. In addition to positive experiences with the project, as stated in some of the interviews in Ferizaj/Urosevac, even joint frustration with the tough approach and rigorous attention to proposal development and writing was a consolidating factor for participating NGOs from the three communities.
- *Local RAE NGOs have increased their capacities through training and through the practice of implementing their projects.* Despite of the difficulties and frustrations with the way support for capacity development and initiatives was provided; it has introduced them to a variety of NGO organizational skills that will be of use for their future work.
- *The project has contributed to the individual life and knowledge skills of RAE community members in a variety of aspects.* It is a definite achievement that the Project was consistently trying to focus on women and youth empowerment. Students who received scholarships have increased their performance in school. They got a new experience of being part of the system, with responsibilities and choice out of the marginalized circle. Women and youth involved in community groups also got some experiential learning in belonging to communities with skills and opportunities, rather than just problems and poverty. The small projects supported in the two municipalities and in other locations have also assisted their beneficiaries for getting access to new skills and practice.
- *The longer term effect and sustainability potential of the achievements at communities’ level was affected by the “arrhythmic” nature of the way grants support was allocated.* With the good intention to be a ‘developmental’ grantmaker, the resulting grants mosaic supporting direct involvement of communities members came out wide spread and short term, with the slow selection of proposals (in some cases taking longer than the projects themselves) or a fast decision (based on the need to finally spend the funds at the end of the project). However, all projects that received grants have introduced directly involved beneficiaries to new skills and activities, as a step out of the marginalized circle people live in. The longer term effect in terms of the improved wellbeing of communities will depend on the ability of local civil society and institutions to continue the work for providing access of community members to opportunities and skills that in turn will bring for more access to mainstream society and service.

2. Lessons for Future Applications

UNDP Kosovo has RAE inclusion as a key priority in its work, especially in the area of income generation and employment. The RAE socioeconomic study, supported at the end of this project and is to be finished soon, will be a good background for this work, as well as the learning from other initiatives like SPARK and Mitrovica projects implemented in the past years.

The challenging implementation of this project cannot provide concrete learning in the area of income generation that can serve as recommendations in this area, as very little work was done in this direction. But its experience can provide some broader lessons that can assist design and implementations of future interventions.

Lessons can be outlined in three groups:

1) Generally, at the stage of project design and formulation of future interventions for RAE social inclusion:

- *It will be beneficial to invest more time and resources on the pre-project phase to study and reflect on the feasibility of the strategy as focus, type of partners needed, realistic timeframe based on good analyses of existing capacity and gaps, as well as of implication of envisaged approaches.*
- *It is important to have a clear focus of the intervention . One project can hardly do it all. It is important to have a leading priority and “entry points”. A challenge of this project was that it was having many “leads” varying from general capacity development for policy in all areas of social inclusion (action plans Kosovo wide and locally) to sub-projects on income generation to build practices of policy implementation.*
- *Clear focus will help identify better which institutional partners need to be present and what kind of capacities of the team will be needed. For example, if access to jobs and incomes is a lead priority then this may need a more clear involvement of the relevant line ministry and local labor offices. On a team level it may require people with some expertise relevant to income generation, and respectively ways that team members can further develop knowledge and capacities in this direction.*
- *It is crucial to approach the stated implementing partners prior to the start of the project. There will be more chances for effective implementation if they have been involved in the design of the intervention. This will help avoid surprises at the implementation phase that partners have no or little interest, or do actually not actively exist.*
- *Selections of localities will be more instrumental if it is done based on in-depth local assessment of the variables and local factors that can help or hamper desired intervention, especially if there has not been too much previous experience of work there. A more pro-active approach to project design based on local visits and meetings with local stakeholders will assist clear identification of partners and getting their agreement for joint work prior to the start of implementation.*
- *Especially at the level of RAE communities, in addition to assessing what are the needs it will also be also good to do a more in-depth “opportunities” assessment of the different communities stakeholders that are planed to be involved – for example what is there as skills, traditions, power relations, political and informal leaders, self-organizing, key NGOs and their record of trust and work inside the community. This can help focus the strategy for identification of sub-projects and community initiatives support in terms of approach and realistic expectations.*
- *It is also important to identify the niche for value added intervention. This includes analyses of other key players work and identifying those aspects where the project can really have a valuable contribution. It also requires a clear strategy for cooperation and clarity on what this project can offer as assistance. This will help avoid situations of being “left out” from the main developments in the area of project intervention and will contribute for more strategic management of the initiative.*

2) Some community lessons on approaches and instruments for stimulating community development projects:

- *There is no one answer on how to identify the best way to provoke and support community initiatives that can stimulate social inclusion. Based on the learning from this project, as well as many other grantmaking efforts in the region, there is no one way that is the “right” one. It depends on the concrete local context, level of development and existing capacities. The ambition to show the right approach to providing grants to RAE NGOs as compared to the predominant “easy money” disbursement of other donors, actually blocked the effectiveness of the grantmaking component in this project.*
- *Grants schemes are just an instrument and cannot be an objective by itself. Their effectiveness will depend on the clarity on the purpose of the grants. As was said above, a clear focus and lead priority can help better target grants support as process and results. Based on the experience of this project*

there needs to be clarity what is the leading outcome anticipated from the grants – for example is it for expanding capacities of municipalities to make tenders for small grants; is it for support of initiatives that will bring knowledge on community problem solving that can further feed in policy implementation process; is it to stimulate jobs through public works and through community groups income generation activities, is it to expand institutional capacities of NGOs and if so – capacities for what, etc. All these can be legitimate objectives, more than one can be present, but it is important to have certain prioritization

- *Clarity on objectives and good knowledge of the local context will provide better answers to the dilemma of what kind of grantmaking approach would be most effective: proactive (developing initiatives and community groups that later will be funded, or identifying NGO partners that will be implementing some key initiatives overtime); responsive (call for proposals, selection and awarding grants) or the way these two may be combined.* This was a major struggle throughout implementation of this project. Without clear focus and space to develop a shared vision, it came out as parallel processes, depending on the individual capacity and vision of the manager and team members.
- *The responsive approach with traditional calls for proposals alone is usually not effective, if not combined with developmental support, especially in new and less developed issues (for example income generation).* In a donors' dependent environment, more or less calls for proposals will provoke initiatives that are already there due to previous funding support. In the case of this project experience, this is among the reasons why most of the supported initiatives were in the area of work with children and education. This project made its discovery of the low quality of proposals coming as a response to the calls for proposals and focused its developmental efforts on this issue. Actually, by default, it is the starting point that any grants scheme in marginalized communities should anticipate. As some respondents said, “if they could write well they would not be as marginalized”. Also, in some of the communities the culture is more oral than written (not only due to illiteracy). Among the disappointments on the low quality of proposals one of the progress reports of this project noted that applicants were much better in telling what they want to do, but still not good in putting it on paper.
- *A facilitative development approach is needed to be integrated into grants facilities to make them more effective in support of social inclusion initiatives.*

Based on the experience of this project community activation and work requires facilitators who understand the community and who can generate trust, as well as “interpreters” those who can interpret the issue to authorities. In some cases these functions were done by the municipal project coordinators, among all the other obligations they had to do (just one example is the women community group work in Ferizaj in 2007-8); in others it was done by identified local partner NGOs (just one example is the support to a women’s NGO to organize women’s meetings in Prizren in 2009); in more others it was done within the projects supported by grants.

There was also a lot of resource for NGO training. While developing technical NGO skills (like management, structure, proposal writing, etc) is needed, it is also very important to assist their capacity for community based and responsive work. As noted by this project, among the shortages of NGOs is that often they are self-centered on their interest rather than the interest of the communities. This applies not only to RAE NGOs, but to the broader picture of civil society which is having donors as their main constituency. Capacity building for community development and facilitation through training and/or mentorship as well as exposure to real community based models can be of help in expanding the capacities RAE NGOs to serve their communities.

- *In order to accommodate a more development approach, future grants schemes can envisage two funding lines: a community activation seed fund that will be a flexible facility managed by the project for on-going support or “seeding” initiatives (for ex. community group formation and small funds to support their emerging activities) and a community development fund (to support initiatives of NGO or coalition of NGOs, to provide follow up support to growing community groups etc.;)*

- *Establishing a local partnership structure for project implementation is a good instrument if there is clarity on its functions and needed capacities.* The MPDICs were an interesting form with a genuine intention to get local stakeholders involved in decision making. As noted by respondents (both municipal coordinators and other members of the committees) the MPDIC turned out to be dysfunctional on some of the many aspects of their functions. They were named as project development and implementation committees, and at the same time they were the board for making the decision on funding. A challenge was to identify communities members that can serve in these structures due to limited capacities; those who had more experience with projects were potential applicants.
- *Maybe for future applications it can be considered to divide the functions of grants decision making and problems identification and local projects strategy: to have a local advisory committee (or sounding board) with active RAE representation as a consultative body that will reach out to the community, facilitate meetings and provide feedback on effectiveness of supported initiatives; and a technical grants decision group or board – at the municipality with involvement of the municipal community office and other departments representatives, as well as UNDP*

3) Some organizational lessons from the experience of this project:

The history of this project has been scarred by some serious organizational issues that have affected implementation. In the second half of 2007, there were growing negative dynamics among the project manager and team that was hired by the UNDP office prior to the manager. This escalated in a group complaint of all the team against the Project manager approach to the UNDP senior management. This was followed by internal investigation and individual talks with each team member and the manager.

As a result, in 2008 six out of initial seven member team,¹⁹ everyone except the manager, were replaced – the coordinators in the two municipalities resigned, while the rest of the staff had to leave due to decided general reduction and “optimization” of staff. The position of the municipal coordinator in Ferizaj faced further turnovers, as two more people changed in the course of the remaining implementation. Based on the interviews, the main clash between manager and team was on the question of capacity gaps – the team not having capacity to work as required by the manager, and the manager not having the capacity to manage in an inclusive way as needed for such a complex effort.

Though it is always uncomfortable to face organizational problems, deeper learning from the organizational instability of this Project can be of help for better organizational performance in future applications:

- *Clarity on the initial question on what the program priorities are can assist for better identification on what team and management capacities will be needed. . A clear focus and leading priority of the initial design of new programs can help identify better what kind of capacities will be needed in order for interventions to be more effective. In many cases, the needed capacity might not be perfect, but a program can envisage ways for good supervision and staff development, as well as some funds for training or other ways of increasing the skills within the team.*
- *In complex programs it is important to build some space for growing a shared vision of the implementation team on the purpose and respectively a shared commitment to the success of the program.* Based on observations from the interviews with some of the current and former staff, both manager and coordinators: 1/ all had capacities or potential to further develop them and 2/ all had a lot of commitment to do the work well. However, it seemed like the vision on what needed to be done and how it should be done were quite different, depending on their background, closeness to the communities, previous experience and personality. Due to the heavy workload and increasing pressure of under spending, there was little if any shared team time for joint team meetings for conceptual/content discussion, adapting of the strategy and identifying what could work better.

¹⁹ A program manager, two municipal coordinators, four people technical and support staff – interpreters, assistant and driver

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- *It would be helpful to integrate into the design of new projects time for joint discussion on implementation strategy and its review on a regular basis.* No matter how perfect a project is as a design, its implementation and action plan requires discussion on a regular basis. In this case, the project could have benefited from having a strategy retreat/discussion at the start of the project; and respectively every six months.
- *There needs to be a clear system of supervision and strategy backstopping. In cases of complex programs an option can be to have a Program Board on the country level.* Management of complex programs for social inclusion require a lot sector knowledge and skills as well as functional capacities for strategic thinking, multitasking, stimulating team work and empathy with the targeted groups. At the same time, it is almost impossible to find all of this in one person and it will be not fair to put the responsibility for failure or success on the manager or on team members. Clarity on strategy backstopping and decision making on changes at critical points of program implementation can assist better strategic and management performance.

Chapter 3. PROJECT COMPONENT IN SERBIA: EFFECTIVENESS, OUTCOMES AND LESSONS

I. Strategic Relevance

1. Responding to Development Opportunities for Roma Inclusion

Based on the interviews and review of project documents, the Project component in Serbia emerged as a timely strategic response to continue and expand a good approach to growing the institutional capacities of Government for Roma inclusion at an important time - the first years of the implementation of its policy commitments within the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

Three main interrelated aspects in the local context were of importance to the design and implementation of the Project:

1) *Fighting poverty and improving social protection of vulnerable groups was one of the three aims of the Government's reform agenda since 2000 and remained a consistent commitment of the reform elite within the overall effort for democratization and pro-European choice for development of the country.*

Improvement of the status and access to development of the Roma population was a growing policy priority within the overall aim of improving the situation of vulnerable groups. Following the adoption of the Law on National Minorities in 2002 there were a number of policy document and measures for improvement of the status of Roma. This involved establishment of Roma representative bodies like the National Council of the Roma National Minority, as well as structures within government tasked with coordination of Roma inclusion efforts like the Roma National Strategy Secretariat. Another tendency related to intensive processes of formulation of key strategies and plans for actions related to overcoming Roma exclusion. Some were specifically targeted on Roma issues – like the draft Strategy for Roma Integration and Empowerment (2002), as well as the started action planning for its implementation. Others, like the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PSRP) were broader frameworks, including Roma as a vulnerable group. An important aspect was introduction of a new way of drafting policy documents and strategies. An example was the PSRP, developed as a broad-based consultative process involving relevant line ministries, municipalities, civil society and donors. This had increased the visibility of the urgent need for improvement of the situation of Roma on the agenda of different stakeholders.

2) *The UNDP country office has been recognized as a key development actor in the area of overcoming vulnerability and exclusion, based on its numerous initiatives and projects in the past decade.*

UNDP was directly involved in assisting the reform processes in the country, especially in the area of overcoming poverty and vulnerability. This involved numerous initiatives of initiating or supporting research and data gathering, supporting the development of policies and strategies (for ex. the PRSS), as well as testing new approaches and instruments like the Social Innovation Fund. These initiatives involved consistent efforts to expand capacities of relevant institutions and to improve inter-ministerial cooperation and to mobilize broad based consultative processes with the direct involvement of civil society and municipalities. Based on this the UNDP country office had established strong partnerships with the central government and line ministries, including the Ministry for Minorities and Human Rights, directly responsible for Roma issues, the Standing Conference on Towns and Municipalities, Roma and non-Roma civil society organizations, as well as other key donors or international organizations involved in the effort for more social inclusive policies and practices.

3) *The UNDP project was designed as a follow up of an already piloted and well working initiative of the Government of Serbia for creating institutional capacities for Roma inclusion policies.*

This relates to an initiative of the Ministry for Minority and Human Rights (MMHR) for introducing local Roma facilitators/ coordinators as part of the municipal administration as an instrument to stimulate

Roma inclusion policy and implementation at the local level. Designed by the Minister' cabinet in 2005, it was applied by the MMHR and later by its successor the Agency for Minorities and Human Rights with the support of the international donor community – SIDA at the initial stage, and EAR in 2006-2007, as well as international organizations like OSCE and ECMI. Based on this there was already proven success of introducing the model of promotion of Local Roma Coordinators within the structure of local self-governance, acting as liaison between the Roma communities and the local authorities in 20 municipalities in Serbia. In addition, the project of the Agency for MHR supported by EAR and OSCE involved support to the work of the National Roma Strategy Secretariat (NRSS) to implement its responsibilities related to the intensified policy development processes after Serbian Government became a signatory of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

The Agency for MHR approached UNDP with the request to assist the continuation of the the work for growing institutional capacities for Roma inclusion after the end of the EAR/OSCE project:

1/ to bridge the gap of still missing their own resources for the support of the RNSS which was of critical importance due to the need of continuity of the regular work of the Secretariat needed for the update of the National Strategy and NAPs for Roma inclusion, as well as its additional responsibilities related to the forthcoming Serbia Presidency of the Roma Decade.

2/ to further expand and foster the practice of local Roma coordinators as in more municipalities in the country.

2. Brief Outline of Strategy and Approach

The Serbia Component was planned for two years (2007-2009) with an overall budget of 1 million... EUR. It got a no cost extension for three more months in 2010 due to the need to postpone some of the activities in response to the dynamics with context. A core partner for the implementation of the project was the Agency for Minority and Human rights.

Its overall objective was to provide support to the Government of Serbia and other relevant stakeholders to address in a sustainable manner the problem of vulnerability in the country during a critical transition period for the country and for the region.

Strategy was organized in two priority directions:

1. Supporting institutional capacity and policy support at the national level

The main objective of the work at the central level was to support the capacity of the Agency for Human and Minority Rights to perform its important role of coordination, monitoring, advocacy and the implementation of the activities aimed at ensuring the protection and access to rights of the vulnerable groups. More specifically this was to be done by providing for the staff and capacity of the Roma National Strategy Secretariat (RNSS) to increase its operational capabilities in two main directions:

First, to implement its core functions for redrafting and promoting the adoption of the Draft National Strategy for Integration and Empowerment of Roma, coordination of the National Action Plans (NAPs) implementation and update; ensuring participation of all stakeholders (representatives of line ministries of the Republic of Serbia, representatives of the National Council of Roma National Minority, representatives of the NGOs, and International organizations), as well as that on the local level, municipalities are trained to transform the targets of the NAPs into their Local Action Plans, be able to implement them, and to monitor against indicators.

Second, the Project was also to assist the capacity of the RNSS in view of its expanding responsibility (at both the national and international level) within the planned Presidency of Serbia in the International Steering Committee of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (July 2008 to July 2009).

The anticipated outcome was the increased capacity of national and local level actors to identify and address the complex problems of vulnerable groups particularly Roma in Serbia within the broader

frameworks of human rights and human security and based on relevant data inputs and data collection at the local level.

2. *Improving infrastructure for social assistance through expansion and redefinition of the existing support frameworks*

The main objective in this area was *to expand the capacities of municipalities to translate national policies at the local level by introducing local Roma coordinators as part of local self-governance structure in 10 new municipalities, each year of the project.*

The strategy for this was following the tested methods in previous years, which had led to adopting the position of Roma local coordinators in 19 municipalities. More specifically the Project envisaged the following set of interrelated activities and instruments:

1) selection of new municipalities based on strict criteria elaborated in cooperation with the OSCE mission to Serbia, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, UNDP experts and Roma experts.

➤ *promoting of the position of local Roma coordinators within local authorities to act as a link with Roma communities and to assist social inclusion policy formulation and implementation. The Project was providing for their payment for a year. The municipalities in turn had to ensure that after this support is over the positions will be systematized (part of the municipal paid staff)*

➤ *organizing through the RNSS on-going series of trainings and network activities for Roma coordinators and municipal staff in various areas of LAPs development, implementation and monitoring, thus investing in capacities to transfer the priorities and targets of the NAPs into the LAPs at the municipal level*

➤ *small grants facility to assist municipal projects in priority identified areas for Roma inclusion: It was envisaged that each municipality engaging a Vulnerable group/Minority Coordinator will have available a predetermined amount for the purposes of supporting implementation of the local Action Plans per year as additional assistance to the municipal budget committed to these activities.*

It was expected that by the end of the Project the participating municipalities would adopt at least one Local Action Plan, the position of vulnerable groups/ Minority Coordinators would be systematized and covered with funds from the municipal budget and the local coordinators had the capacities to transfer the priorities and targets of the NAPs into the LAPs within their own municipality, adequately supporting the local plans' implementation and performing the monitoring of its effectiveness.

The expected overall outcome of this priority area was that *local institutions for social assistance had better understanding of the needs of vulnerable groups like Roma and were equipped (in terms of staff capacity and technical infrastructure) to address priority needs of those groups.*

Crosscutting priorities for both areas included: expanding partnerships with key stakeholders, growing gender sensitivity and direct involvement of Roma – as part of the staff of the RNSS and as local coordinators, as key partners at the national and local levels through working cooperation with National Council for Roma National Minority, the NGO coalition “League for Decade”, Roma NGOs involved in the PRS implementation and monitoring, Roma Political Parties, as well as Roma NGOs in the municipalities as partners in projects and the work of the local Roma coordinators.

II. Effectiveness of Implementation

1. Expanding National Capacities for Roma Social Inclusion

1.1. Strengthening of the Roma National Secretariat as a governmental department

All the activities at the national level were focused through the investment in the strengthening of the National Roma Strategy Secretariat as the key department of the Agency for Minority and Human Rights responsible for coordination of the efforts for Roma inclusion. Support for this included providing for the staff of the RNSS and on-going assistance for its work from the UNDP project staff – a project manager to assist the work with central level institutions, a project coordinator to assist the work with municipalities and administrative staff. They were both located in the premises of the Agency.

With the support of the Project the RNSS was fully staffed by the end of 2007. The new staff included Head of Roma National Secretariat Staff, Deputy Roma National Secretariat Staff, Roma Decade Assistant and the Finance Assistant. The process of promoting the role of the NSRR within the Agency faced several challenges related to the dynamics of the context at the start of the project:

First, in 2007 there were different options discussed for the positioning of the NSRR especially in view of the Serbian Presidency of the Decade: – to remain in the MMHR, that the Secretariat remains under the auspices of the Agency for Human and Minority Rights, that it is moved under the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, that the DPM's Office creates an inter-ministerial body to deal with Roma issues.

Second, the Agency for Human and Minority Rights was transformed into the Ministry for Human and Minority rights after the elections in May 2008. This led to complete change of leadership – new Minister and five new deputy ministers. Though there was a decision for systematization of the RNSS as government staff from early 2008, in practice this process took much longer. It required efforts to introduce the initiative to the new leadership, and gradually build support for it.

Third, the good strategic cooperation with the Agency for MHR at the start of the project was not formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding. Technically, the UNDP project was a Direct Execution program, which in practice meant that all staff – the RNSS and the Project staff were on contracts with UNDP, not the Ministry. This created a certain tension in dynamics related to the need of clarification of roles and responsibilities among the NSRR leadership that was gradually growing into ministry staff and the Project team (especially working at the central level).

Despite of these difficulties, the Project succeeded in achieving one of its main results – the RNSS staff has been systematized during 2009, as staff of the Ministry for Minority and Human Rights. Main factors that contributed to the success in this direction were the high commitment and professionalism of the staff of the RNSS and of the UNDP project staff, the on-going assistance of UNDP country office for strengthening government support, as well as the back up and support of the Regional Project team in facilitating problem solving and clarification of roles among RNSS and project staff, as well as relevant communication with the donor for these developments.

2.2. Effectiveness of the NRSS work in 2007-2009

An objective of the project was to stimulate the capacity growth of the NRSS. Evidence for this was the extent to which the NRSS succeeded to effectively implement its core functions as the coordinating body for Roma inclusion policy formulation and its expanding responsibilities related to the Serbian Presidency of the Decade. The intensive work of the RNSS can be grouped in three main directions:

a/ Facilitation of development and adoption of key country strategic and policy documents for Roma inclusion 2007-2009

A major part of the activities of the NRSS in 2007-2009 was related to the intensive work for re-writing of the draft Strategy for Integration and Empowerment of Roma from 2002, as well as of the revision of existing and drafting NAPs in other identified strategic priorities for Roma inclusion in the country²⁰. This involved a broad consultative process of over one year with various stakeholders: Roma civil society, Roma political parties and the National Council of the Roma National Minority, Office for Integration of Roma in Vojvodina, as well as representatives appointed by the relevant line ministries and experts from different institutions and organizations. In addition, on-going meetings and sharing of experience with other countries involved in the Decade, assisted learning from their strategy and action planning efforts.

As noted in the project documents and in the interviews, the process of finalization of the Strategy and the Action Plans was a complex effort to coordinate the input of various stakeholders and get agreement in prioritization in chapters addressing issues of education, housing, employment, health, social security, anti-discrimination and political participation, as well as chapters on the position of vulnerable groups within Roma communities like IDPs, returnees on the basis of readmission agreements and women. It also required ensuring adequate presentation of the position of these groups, as well as cross cutting issues and principles like gender sensitivity, anti-discrimination and affirmative action in all parts of the strategy. Another set of efforts was related to the work with line ministries on budgeting proposed action plans in their sectors. Organizing round tables and public debates on the drafted strategic and policy documents in the different regions of the country were also an important part of the process.

A major challenge was the unstable political environment, where almost on an annual basis there was a change of government. This required much more efforts, to get the engagement of newly elected officials and respectively within administration in order to grow consistent involvement and re-confirm support for the strategic documents.

As a result of the work of the NRSS the draft documents were reviewed by over 1,500 people from institutions, experts and civil society, not only in Belgrade, but also in key regions of the country. The Government adopted the Strategy for the Improvement of Position of Roma in April 2009, and several months later - the 13 National Action Plans²¹ for the implementation of the Strategy priority areas covering the period 2009 – 2011. Proposed budget amounted to 1.1 billion CSD.

b/ Work of the NRSS related to the Serbian Presidency of the Roma Decade (June 2008- July 2009)

The RNSS developed the Decade Presidency Plan based on consultations with broad range of stakeholders – Roma NGOs and coalitions, Roma representative bodies, relevant offices of central government and line ministries, international organizations, as well as individual experts.

Identified priorities included in the Decade Presidency plan were: housing; combating discrimination in education; development of a monitoring and evaluation system; development of European Roma Policy and access to European Union funds for non EU countries for programs aiming at improvement of the Roma position. Organizational board and thematic working groups were established to assist the implementation of the Decade Presidency Program. Funding support was provided by the State Budget of the Republic of Serbia through the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, UNDP Serbia and Fund for an Open Society, as well as by the regional component of the Project.

Under the Serbian Presidency of the Roma Decade, RNSS organized over 20 events at different levels: the three International Steering committees and three topic workshop on issues of housing, monitoring and evaluation and of women; sub-regional meeting; and various meetings and events at the national, regional and local level in Serbia.

²⁰ The four main NAPs in education, employment, housing and health were drafted in 2004. Nine more NAPs have been drafted in this period.

²¹ (social protection, gender equality, culture, media and information in Romani language, reintegration of returnees based on readmission agreements, IDPs, anti-discrimination, and revision of four already adopted plans (housing, education, employment and health).

Based on the interviews, the RNSS played a very important role for the success of the Serbian Presidency of the Decade. It succeeded in mobilizing the support and participation of civil society, the donors community and different government institutions. The numerous events and debates succeeded to make the Decade much more visible in the country - not only among institutions at the central and local level, but broadly in the public.

c/ Coordination of the Implementation of the Strategy and NAPs for Roma inclusion

Following the adoption of the Strategy and the NAPs in 2009, Working Groups for their implementation and monitoring were established in 12 line ministries and Commissariat for Refugees. The NSRR as part of the Ministry for Minority and Human Rights had the challenging task to coordinate the efforts of the different groups.

Based on the interviews, the implementation of the NAPs is at its very initial stage, but there are some already emerging challenges that can block its effectiveness:

- Budget cuts and restrictions: With the economic crises, initially committed budgets were reduced which hampered effective implementation of the different NAPs. As part of the restrictive measures of the Government, due to the financial crisis, the first budget rebalance was undertaken in March 2009 and the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights' budget was decreased to 22,200,000 RSD (approximately 230,000 EUR). The funds have been allocated to the organizational cost of the Decade Presidency events and the implementation of the priority areas interventions. According to some of the respondents, only four out of the 13 NAPs have planned some budget. With no one doing budget monitoring, there was no clarity on allocation of real funds for implementation.
- Coordination challenge: Effective coordination was vulnerable due to constant political changes, bringing different views on what NAPs implementation needed to be. This in turn affected the consistency of the political support to the implementation effort. An additional challenge to coordination, but also to monitoring of actual implementation was that due to the complexity of the issues, and in the genuine desire to put all priorities right, there was too much fragmentation of the NAPs – there were 13 chapters/NAPs, some of which were by sectors, others – crosscutting principles and/or priority target groups within Roma population. Based on some of the interviews, such coordination requires much more resources and the interactive effort of different stakeholders.
- Organizational capacities: There were no regular focal points and not enough resources in the line ministries to work consistently on implementation of the NAPs in their sectors. Based on the interviews, there was also some attitude within the Ministries that the “development of the plans was an end of itself”; there was a need that the line ministries get more aware that implementation required day-to-day work. It looked as if “the Secretariat was working on its own on the implementation of the Strategy, participating in various committees in line ministries”.
- Roma politicization challenge: As noted by many respondents politicization within the Roma movement may become a key threat for the effectiveness of the implementation of the Strategy and the Plans. It will be counterproductive if Roma leadership and groups are divided based on different political party affiliations. The effort for inclusion is too complex to be approached in a politically fragmented way. Shared concerns were different: some related to the political aspects of the processes of electing National Roma Councils, others to “dividing” the sector implementation among Roma political parties, depending on where they have representatives. A third aspect referred to insufficient clarity about the role and interaction between political positions and coordination/administrative positions in regard to Roma inclusion strategy implementation. (This specifically referred to the new political position of Assistant Minister at the MHMR and how this situates vis-à-vis the RNSS).

A critical issue for all countries involved in the Decade was in what way actual implementation will be monitored. The Project put a special effort to develop a framework for the implementation of the NAPs in Serbia. Supported by the UNDP Regional Project team, the elaboration of the framework involved two workshops with different stakeholders – representatives of line ministries and international organization,

and of Roma NGOs, to consult the suggested indicators and approach to monitoring. A third workshop was organized to present the framework to the policy makers in Serbia.

Based on this, the UNDP Project in Serbia developed a concept for putting in practice the Framework in the country, drafted with the assistance of a consultant. The draft suggested establishing a monitoring body consisting of four experts (one per thematic area) and directly involving Roma municipal coordinators into collection of data needed for monitoring and evaluation of the Decade implementation. It is a very good document, which is suggesting a clear plan of mobilizing existing resources in local self-governance structures – the network of Roma coordinators in 55 municipalities and allocated needed resources at the national level.

As a result, monitoring of the implementation of NAPs was among the priority themes of the Serbian Presidency of the Decade and was the subject of one of the Decade international workshops organized. The draft framework and concept for organizing monitoring of implementation in Serbia was presented there. According to respondents, this was an achievement by itself. It put monitoring of Decade implementation on the agenda not only as need and objective, but also as a concrete suggestion of how this can be put in practice involving effectively the local level.

Though there was an expression of general political will of the MHMR for engagement with the task of monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy and NAPs, there has been no practical follow up. The monitoring framework and plan are there, but an interview with the RNSS did not provide evidence on whether and how they will be used. As noted by several respondents, monitoring will remain just an empty wish if adequate resources are not envisaged for that. The only group that is trying to do some monitoring is the NGO network League for the Decade. However, as its coordinator underlined – this cannot be done only from the outside as an effort of Roma and non Roma civil society. It needs to be a joint effort.

2. Activating Municipalities for Roma Social Inclusion

2.1. Initial Plan and Changes

A significant part of the Project component in Serbia was focused on investing in capacities of municipalities to translate national policies for Roma inclusion at the local level. The strategy was applying the model that was already tested by the previous projects of the Agency for Minority and Human Rights and OSCEE/EAR.

At the core of the approach for activating municipalities for Roma social inclusion piloted within the OSCEE/EAR project was *the promotion of the position of Roma local coordinators within local authorities*. Assistance for expanding this approach was in two interrelated directions:

- 1) selecting 10 municipalities and signing a Memorandum of Understanding; promoting the position of local Roma coordinators as part of local self-governance structure by covering the salary costs for one year and support for organizing local meetings and coordination for the drafting of LAPs
- 2) Supporting local capacities for implementation of the measures of the NAPs for Roma inclusion in the 10 municipalities by two main instruments: a/ *training for the Roma local coordinators and municipal representatives* for LAPs development and implementation, also involving 20 Roma local coordinators hired by previous projects in 2006/7 to both share their experiences and participate in new trainings ; b/ *small grants for municipal projects addressing priority areas for Roma inclusion, as defined in the NAP/LAPs*,

The process of the UNDP Project implementation was very effective and went beyond the initially planned number of municipalities. It evolved in two phases:

➤ *The start up phase (2007-2008)*, followed the initial plan of focused support in 10 new municipalities, as described above.

➤ *Second, expanding phase (2008-2009):*

The combined application of the different types of assistance activities was modified to provide for expanded geographic coverage evolving from the strategic cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MOLSP). The work plan of the MOLSP for 2008 had as a priority increasing access to public service by vulnerable groups, by financing positions of Roma local coordinators. Due to good cooperation with the MOLSP and in agreement with SIDA, it was decided that UNDP project will not provide financing for 10 more municipalities in 2009. Instead, it expanded the small grants scheme to 28 municipalities (the 10 that UNDP selected in 2007 and in the new 18 that were provided with financing for the position of local coordinators by the MOLSP). The trainings also expanded to cover local coordinators from all municipalities with local Roma coordinators.

In 2009, the Provincial Government of Vojvodina approached UNDP with the interest of learning and adopting the model of local Roma coordinators. It suggested cooperation with the project, by including in the training and network activities newly hired local Roma coordinators from the Province. This was one more recognition for the effective work of the Project at the local level.

2.2. Promotion of Roma Local Coordinators

2.2.1. Selection of Municipalities and Hiring of Roma local coordinators

Municipalities were the entry point for all the other activities at the local level – hiring of local coordinators, adopting LAPs, participation in capacity building and applying for small grants. For this reason the selection of the right municipalities was of critical importance for the success of implementation.

Start up phase (2007):

The first 10 municipalities for promoting the local Roma coordinators by the UNDP Project were selected in 2007 by a joint Selection Committee. It included representatives from the Agency for Human and Minority Rights, Roma National Strategy Secretariat, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, OSCE and UNDP. Selection of municipalities was done based on a set of criteria: *geographic distribution* (allowing for the targeting of entire regions with the programme rather than one municipality only); *situation of Roma population* (size, number of settlements, share as percentage of the population), *level of openness and will of municipalities to participate*; *level of self-organizing of Roma community* (existing ethnic councils, Roma organizations, active people) as well as *avoiding duplication with previous efforts* (already existing local coordinators, or LAPs),

The selection process took several months of intensive meetings of the Committee, visits to some of the municipalities, and meeting in Belgrade with the 15 that were short-listed. As noted in the interview with the project staff, it was of critical importance to make sure about the real interest and commitment of municipalities to get involved in the initiative.

As a result, the following 10 municipalities were selected: *Beocin, Zrenjanin, Belgrade – Cukarica, Lajkovac, Smederevo, Bor, Cacak, Kraljevo, Lebane, Prokuplje*. The 10 municipalities had a Roma population in total of 13,220 according to official data²² and the estimated real number of about 50,000 people.

Following signing a MoU with the UNDP Project, each municipality in consultation with UNDP recruited a Roma coordinator. This was based on a clear set of criteria: secondary education, good knowledge and positioning among the Roma community and its representatives; potential to cooperate and work within local governance structures; existing and potential organizational and communication skills, etc. Another priority was to identify where possible women for the position of local coordinators.

²² Based on “Ethnic Mosaic of Serbia”, published by the Agency for Human and Minority Rights in 2004,

As a result, 10 Local Roma coordinators were hired, and three of them were women. Their salaries were covered by the UNDP project in 2007-2008 for a period of 12 months.

Expanding phase 2008-2009:

The selection of the new municipalities was initiated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MOLSP). As said, in early 2008 the MOLSP had a decision to provide for 40 new local Roma coordinators and there was a state budget allocated for that. Based on agreement with the MOLSP the Project started the process of identifying new municipalities, sending a request for interest to 65 municipalities, as well as site visits to meet with potentially good candidates.

As only 20 were shortlisted, it was decided to go with them further in the selection process following the steps of the previous phase. The selection committee consisted of the representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, National Council for Roma National Minority and UNDP project team. The MOLPS and UNDP had the plan to continue the search for the other 20 municipalities, but due to the politicized situation around the elections in 2008, this had to be put on hold. Later, due to budget cuts this could not be done.

As a result, 18 new municipalities were selected and joined the initiative: Vladicin Han, Jagodina, Becej, Zajecar, Knjazevac, Smeredevska Palanka, Alibunar, Novi Becej, Odzaci, Kursumlija, Senta, Kovin, Trstenik, Nis/Medijana, Vlasotince, Sabac, krusevac, Barajevo

The MOLSP signed a MoU with each municipality. The municipalities in cooperation with the Project and the MOLSP identified and recruited 19 Roma local coordinators, 11 out of which were women. As the allocated state budget was on annual basis, the MLSP could provide for the salaries of the new coordinators only for 6 months through the end of 2008. Due to already mentioned budget cuts, it did not get state budget funding for support of the local coordinators in 2009.

Based on the interviews, the selection of municipalities and local coordinators in both phases was done in an effective way, especially in view the complexity of the effort. Each place had its own dynamics of interface between the different aspects of the criteria for type of municipalities, geographic distribution and qualities, existing skills and potential of local Roma coordinators. Despite of the genuine attempt to always follow the objective criteria there were a number of challenges. It was not always easy to find a person for coordinator with the needed qualities and also well accepted by all local stakeholders. There were also a set of other factors – some influence or pressure from local or central levels and the challenging balance between objectiveness and “obeying powerful people”. A merit for the Project and its partners is that it succeeded to identify the balance, and avoid some pressure for “quick” political hires in the politicized time especially around the elections in 2008.

2.2.2. Work of Local Roma Coordinators: effectiveness and promotion within local self-governments

a) Key tasks and activities of Roma local coordinators

The Roma local coordinators had a complex and challenging task. Their core function of acting as a link between the authorities and Roma communities had multiple aspects: better and more accessible service provision, stimulating cooperation among Roma organizations and with local authorities for community problem solving, to facilitate the process of LAPs development based on involvement of local stakeholders; to assist raising local awareness on the issues of Roma and on national policies for inclusion; to help the fundraising for municipal initiatives by developing projects together with different municipal departments, etc.

Each of the newly hired coordinators started this challenging work upon their selection. Based on the interviews in the visited municipalities, as well as with the UNDP Project coordinator for the work at the local level, the way these tasks were approached differed depending on the local context. In a way each coordinator gradually shaped their role within the local administration.

Basically, everywhere it involved daily work with Roma to assist individual problem solving by access to different municipal and other institutions service, as well as daily work with different departments of local administration. As shared in the interviews, most challenging was to build trust and support inside local administration and in cases to overcome existing stereotypes and prejudice. It was also important to grow understanding that Roma coordinators were not the “final service” point that solved the various social problems of Roma coming to the municipality. They were the “entry” focal point, that would activate the municipal service system to solve the relevant individual or community issue. This was a gradual process with its ups and downs depending on the variety of local circumstances. The joint trainings and work on design of projects to be funded by the Project small grant scheme were very helpful in this direction.

According to some respondents, there was also some “internal challenge” of the role of the coordinators. They had to be promoted as staff of local administration, but at the same time to voice out the needs of Roma communities, and/or the issues put forward by Roma civil society and representatives. The balance between these two aspects was not always easy, depending on the local situation and changing over time. In some cases, Roma coordinators were closer to the administration, in others to the community and/or Roma civil society, especially if they had an NGO background.

The development of LAPs for Roma inclusion was another key activity that most of the coordinators were facilitating in different times between 2007-2009. As noted in the documents the LAPs drafting was a process of at least 3 months with a number of phases: municipal decision on forming a working group for preparation of LAPs and on its members, additional consultations and trainings with working group members, process of drafting LAPs, submission of the draft LAPs for adoption, budgeting for LAPs, and submission of budgets for adoption.

The local Roma coordinators were tasked to assist all steps. They were also coordinating the involvement of Roma NGOs and community representatives. In some places Roma coordinators acted as catalysts for creating forums of Roma NGOs and/or adopting documents document on cooperation with all Roma NGOs for the process of drafting of LAPs. The way these processes evolved differed again depending on the local contexts. In some of the visited municipalities they were broad and systematic consultations, in others it was said that the process was more formal. There were places, where processes happened only partially.

As a result based on provided data(as of end of 2009):

- 17 out of the 28 municipalities that the Project was working directly with have adopted at least one LAP.
- Through the training the project was in cooperation with all 55 municipalities that have local Roma coordinators. If before the Project only 8 of the 55 municipalities had LAPs, by the end of the project already 31 of them have adopted LAPs in at least one of the priority areas. Some of them have allocated municipal budgets for their implementation. Though the amounts are not big, they are significant in view of the poor economy and limited overall budgets of the municipalities.
- Based on the sample of visited municipalities, allocation of budgets is a consistent objective of local authorities within the feasibility of overall local resources. Though small, municipal funds allocated for LAPs priorities are used as seed money to attract additional resources from line ministries or international donors programs

b) Effectiveness of Roma local coordinators within the municipal structures

The main indicator for the effectiveness of the adoption of the Roma local coordinators model is the rate of success of their promotion and systematization as staff are paid from the municipal budgets:

- Based on provided data, by the end of the project the position of Local Roma coordinator was systematized as part of the municipal administration staff in 37 out of the 55 municipalities that the project was cooperating with. 17 other Roma coordinators continue working on temporary service contracts, some with the near prospect of being systematized as permanent staff.

➤ Only in 7 municipalities, the coordinators are currently not covered by funding of the municipality. In four cases, coordinators continue working on a volunteer basis due to lack of municipal funding. In the other three – the position for Local coordinator is empty, due to the leaving of the Roma coordinator in most cases as a result of political changes and/or pressure.

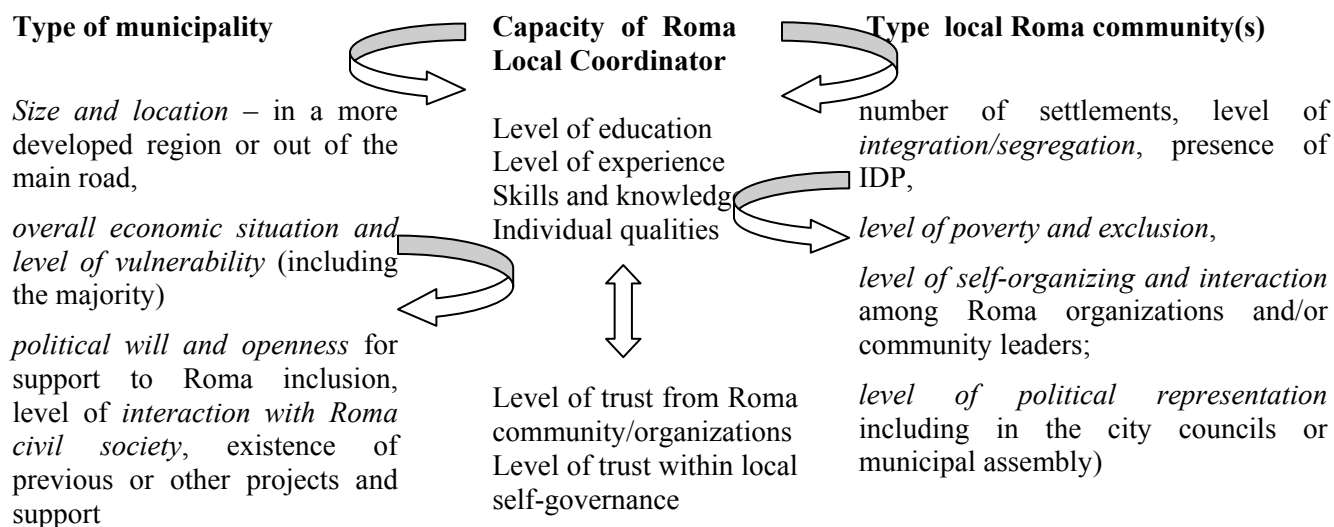
This high rate of adoption of the Roma coordinators by the municipality, especially in the localities that the Project was working directly with is obvious evidence for the effectiveness of their promotion and acceptance by the local administration. The payment (through systematization or temporary contracts) from municipal budgets means real acknowledgement of the usefulness of having local Roma coordinators, especially in view of the real poor economic situation and low municipal budgets.

As shared in the interviews, the systematization of the positions of Local Roma coordinators was practically blocked by the Central Government policy for reduction of staff of municipal administration in 2009 as an instrument to face the challenges of the economic crises. Despite of these restrictive measures and lack of funding from the central level, the majority of the municipalities that could not systematize the positions of local Roma coordinators are paying them by various service contracts.

Based on all the interviews, effectiveness of the work of the Roma local coordinators, and respectively, the level of acceptance from the local administration and from the communities, was different depending on the varieties of the local contexts.

As it is shown on the Table below it depended on the concrete interface of three sets of factors related to: the type of municipality, the situation of the Roma community, as well as the capacity and personality of each of the coordinators. In addition to the different combination of local factors, the diversity of effectiveness in the different municipalities was also affected by the political processes and especially the elections for local self-governance in 2008, and the elections for Roma national councils.

Effectiveness of Local Roma Coordinators



Based on the limitation of this review, it is not possible to make a generalization of the set of factors that are most important for the promotion of the Roma local coordinators.

For most of the respondents, the main factor was the individual qualities and capacities of the local coordinators and their ability to situate in the local circumstances. As phrased by the respondents, some were more passive and reactive, others more pro-active and taking the initiative. This also depends on the experience of the different coordinators, but also on the dynamic framework of the other local factors

described above. Based on some of the interviews, more than 50% of all 55 Roma local coordinators have a pro-active approach in mobilizing the community, advocating within local administration for their interest, and facilitating and coordinating the processes for Roma inclusion locally.

Other respondents considered that the political will of the municipalities was the leading factor for success. Visits to municipalities provided evidence that despite the change of local government, the coordinators remained due to the broader political support to the process for Roma inclusion. This was the case in most of the 55 municipalities. But there were also municipalities where political changes or pressure blocked the work of local coordinators. Out of the visited locations, this was the case in Vranja. Despite the very good personal qualities, skills and advocacy capacity of the local coordinator, due to lack of political support from the Mayor he could not stay and is working from the outside, as part of Roma civil society. The position of local coordinator stays empty, and LAPs, though adopted by the Local Council is still not adopted by the Municipal Assembly.

2.3. Effectiveness of support to promotion of local Roma coordinators by training and small grants for municipal projects

2.3.1. Capacity building through interactive training of local Roma coordinators and municipal representatives

The trainings were organized in a very effective way as a supportive and accompanying mechanism for interactive growth of capacities of local actors from the municipalities that have adopted the practice of Roma local coordinators within their structure. This involved four consecutive rounds with over joint 30 trainings in total, with the participation of both representatives of the local administration and of local coordinators of all municipalities – those that were “new” and just started and those that already had been practicing the model (including the “old” municipalities from the pre-project time of the OSCE/EAR supported initiative of the Agency for MHR)-

The first two rounds 2007-2008 included participants from 30 municipalities, and the other two rounds in 2008-2009 – participants from 47-55 municipalities. In addition to the joint trainings for all municipalities, there were several that were organized on a regional basis – bringing together representatives of local self-government and Roma local coordinators in South Serbia and in Vojvodina.

The Project worked with a core team of two trainers, both coming from Civic Initiatives/Tim Tri with a lot of experience in organizing participatory and interactive trainings in various areas of civil society, good governance and social inclusion. They were also the trainers involved in the previous efforts for applying the local Roma coordination model in other municipalities. Additional trainers were involved to cover more specific topics, as well as practitioner for different presentations.

Trainings included a variety of topics to respond to the numerous capacity needed for the challenging task of Roma inclusion at the local level: knowledge on the existing and new national policies for inclusion; concrete work on translation of national priorities as set in the strategy and NAPs for Roma inclusion into LAPs, knowledge and practical skills for applying participatory local planning with the involvement of communities and various local stakeholders; fundraising, project development and writing and project cycle management; trainings on various aspects of public service and functioning of local self-governments; communication and outreach skills etc.

As shared in the interviews with Project team and trainers, this was not just a series of trainings. It was a consistent capacity building effort, where trainers and Project team working with the municipalities were in constant link with local participants not only during sessions, but in-between them. A Yahoo group was created for all municipalities, where local Roma coordinators could share issues, get assistance from colleagues, or the trainers and the project coordinator.

Based on the interviews with respondents – both local coordinators and local administration in the visited municipalities, training was extremely helpful for them in several aspects:

- *It was bridging the gap between the national and local level by providing access to knowledge and information:* choice of topics in the consecutive trainings was done as a timely response to all developments of national strategic documents and NAPs. In most of the trainings local actors could get the information directly from the source. For example the NRSS was present to provide for explanation and assist the learning on the national strategic processes, as well as from other countries of the Decade.
- *It was practically relevant to the challenging task of the work of local administration for social inclusion.* Many of the sessions throughout the different rounds of trainings involved practical facilitation of learning how to assess the local situation, how to formulate solutions, how to develop projects and find resources for local initiatives, and how to organize a good LAP planning process and bring in the input of various stakeholders. As shared by respondents this was among the factors for successful planning processes developed after the trainings in their community.
- *It provided for developing organizational skills and knowledge on effective self-governance work for Roma local coordinators.* As shared in the interviews, this was like a “public service” school, in the sense of real service provision and working with communities. For some it was a first experience of this kind.
- *It created an interactive space and improved understanding among Roma local coordinators and representatives of the municipalities.* Both respondents from the local self-governance and from the Roma coordinators consider that their joint work and learning during the trainings, and the possibility to interact with other colleagues from other municipalities was one of the stimulating factors for improving their joint work at the local level.
- *It contributed to networking among different localities,* jointly discussing issues, sharing of experience, learning from each others practice. It was very useful that local Roma coordinators and representatives of the local self-government structures that have been working from previous phases were involved as trainers and facilitators or participants.
- *Especially valued was the on-going support and coaching provided by the team – trainers and the Project coordinator* for putting in practice lessons from training sessions in their everyday work with municipalities. This was obvious in all interviews at the local level. As one respondent phrased it “they were always there for me if I had questions or problems”.

2.3.2. The Small Grants: Expanding Municipal Capacities for implementing NAPs priorities

The small grants were aimed as an incentive to raise the interest and support of municipalities to the development of LAPs and their implementation, as well as to the promotion of the local Roma coordinators position. Another objective was to stimulate the interaction and joint work of the municipality and Roma NGOs by practical development of joint initiatives in the key areas of the NAPs (and LAPs where they existed).

The grants selection committee consisted of UNDP, and the Agency for Human and Minority Rights representatives from line ministries²³ related to the key sectors of the existing then four National Action Plans (employment, health, education and housing).

The selection process was based on a set of criteria guided by the principle of having simple projects that will have visible results and achievements for the Roma community (or wider minority communities in some of the municipalities) through improvement of the situation related to the 4 priority areas from the NAPs: employment, education, infrastructure, health.

The envisaged duration of the project was between 3 and 12 months, and grants could not exceed 10,000 EUR. A contribution of at least 20%, was required from participating municipalities. They could submit more than one proposal. No office costs are to be covered from the project, representatives of the local self-governments or Roma Coordinators cannot be paid from the project budget.

²³ Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health

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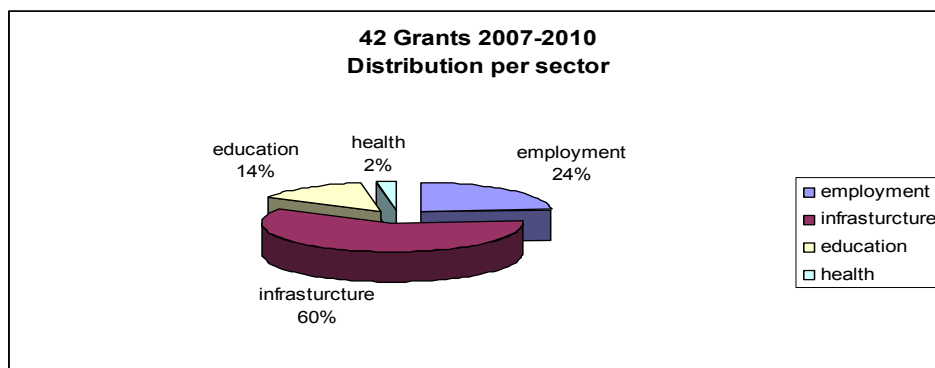
Grants were provided in two rounds:

➤ *The first round was in December 2007.* Out of 20 proposals 12 projects of 10 municipalities were approved. The 10 grants were in total \$146,693, varying in size between \$9,000 and \$16,768. Each municipality made a matching contribution of at least 10 %. Per sector the projects distributes as follows : 6 projects were related to improving infrastructure, 3 were targeted at increasing employment opportunities, 2 were in the area of education and one was health-related. In all projects the municipalities were working in partnership with local NGOs.

➤ *The second round of small scale projects was in November 2008.* It was open to all 28 municipalities²⁴. Out of 29 proposals 28 projects were approved in 27 municipalities. The total amount of grants was \$241,101. The size of individual grants was mostly in the range of \$8,000-\$9,000 (about 2/3 of the grants), and a few between \$10,000 and \$13,000. As compared the first round of projects, the matching contribution of municipalities was much higher. In total the additional municipal funding matching the UNDP grants was \$129,590. Per individual project the size of municipal matching funds differed: 11 municipalities provided matching funds of 10-15% to the UNDP grant; other 11 municipalities – 20-30%; three municipalities provided from own budgets the same amount of money. In three other cases, the grant of UNDP was up to three times less than the municipal funds provided for the project. Per sector, the projects distributed as follows: Out of them 17 were infrastructure/reconstruction, housing etc.; 7 – related to employment and 4 to education.

➤ *Three more grants were provided in the second half of 2009.* These were projects of three municipalities in South Serbia Vranje, Bojnik and Leskovac, in support for the immediate housing issues and basic needs of Roma Families, who were relocated there from Belgrade's Gazela settlement.

For the period 2007-2009 the Project supported 42 small scale projects, in total \$387,794. They were implemented by 31 municipalities in 2008, 2009 and in 2010, targeting around 25,900 Roma in 129 settlements throughout Serbia. The projects were in the four key sectors of the National Action Plan – education, employment, health and housing/infrastructure. The chart below illustrates the distribution of projects in the different sectors.



➤ *The biggest share 60% or 25 projects were in the area of infrastructure and reconstruction.* These included a variety of initiatives responding to the need of solving issues of poor infrastructure in the Roma settlements. They had a direct and visible impact in 23 Roma settlements and were of different nature, depending on locally identified most urgent needs. Most of the initiatives related to reconstruction and expanding the water and sewage systems, several invested in building or reconstructing children's playgrounds, others provided for repair of houses and providing for basic hygiene needs like toilet blocks. Three of the projects were another type of investment in the

²⁴ the 10 municipalities, selected by the UNDP Project in 2007 and the 18 new municipalities selected together with the MOLSP in 2008)

communities. By reconstruction and rebuilding of Roma Houses or Cultural centres they provided for meeting space of Roma community members and civil society organizations.

- *The next group of 10 projects were in the area of employment.* These involved a variety of vocational or self-employment courses. As a result 245 Roma received new skills and better chances for employment.
- *Another group of 6 projects invested in education and 1 in health education. They were targeted at Roma children.* Most were focused on pre-school and primary school education, as well as health education. As a result over 100 children were included in the school system.

Based on the interviews, all supported initiatives were meaningful in their local contexts. They have provided for solving some urgent problems especially related to poor infrastructure, as well as start or continue processes of addressing issues related to education of children. In many cases they contributed to direct involvement of Roma communities by Roma NGOs or community members directly participating in the initiatives.

The grants were very effective in regard to their actual objective. They were not to solve the problems. They were to expand the municipal capacities, joint commitment and practice in mobilizing local resources to match outside funding in order to implement local action plans for inclusion. Data on the growth of allocation of municipal funds to match the small grants is clear evidence for the success of the grants scheme.

Based on the interviews in the visited localities, the grants were a very good incentive. They helped for growing support to the local coordinators both by the community and by the municipality. They served as a catalyst for the development of various projects and search for resources to continue the implementation of initiatives for social inclusion. In some cases, the effective small project supported by UNDP led to the decision of the municipality to allocate funding to support another similar project on its own. An example was the Municipality in Prokuplje that has supported the renovation of a Roma community center in another settlement, based on the positive effect of the first Roma center supported within the UNDP grants scheme.

III. Outcomes, Emerging Impacts and Sustainability prospects

1. Key Outcomes and Emerging Impacts

The implementation of the Project Component in Serbia was very effective, achieving results that were beyond the initial plan, especially at the local level with the expanding geographic scope of the initiative. Among the main factors that fostered this success were:

- *the continuity nature of the project:* expanding and consolidating already tested working methods for promoting local Roma coordinators as part of the municipal capacities for Roma social inclusion
- *the start-up and growing political support for the initiative:* of key people in government like Rasim Ljajić, former Minister of the MHMR, later of the Minister of MOLSP who have initiated and consistently supported the idea for local Roma coordinators over the years, as well as growing support of the Central government and line ministries within the strategy and policy development and the year of the decade Chaired by the Serbian Government.
- *the capacities, high commitment and hard work of the Project team and the NRSS* to consistently expand the capacities and awareness of central and local stakeholders on the feasibility and potential of participatory and inclusive institutional models for policy development and implementation

Based on the review of documents and interviews with local respondents the key outcomes and emerging impacts of the Project can be grouped at two main levels:

a) Increased capacities of the key actors at the central level to identify and address the complexity of Roma exclusion

- *Through the support to the Roma National Strategy Secretariat (RNSS) the Project has increased the capacity of the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights (MMHR) to play the role of coordinator and advocate for the systematic policy development and implementation that will contribute to Roma inclusion in society.* Evidence for this are the redrafted and adopted by government Strategy and NAPs, which were developed based on a broad consultative process, involving the input from over 1500 representatives of different stakeholders – central government, line ministries, experts, civil society, Roma representative bodies and Roma NGOs.
- *The RNSS as the key department of the MHRH has demonstrated good strategic and coordination capacities in the process of strategic documents drafting, promotion and adoption, as well as the successful coordination of the planning and implementation of the events during the year of the Serbian Presidency of the Decade for Roma inclusion. With the support of the Deputy Prime Minister's office, appointed for the Roma Decade Coordinator for Serbia, it has effectively mobilising the contribution of all relevant institution.*
- *Progress towards NAPs implementation is still at a very initial stage.* Only four of 13 areas in the NAP have some done start-up steps towards implementation (allocated budgets and initiatives). These include Roma housing (legalization of Roma settlements in cooperation with the Ministry of Infrastructure), health (programmes in cooperation with the Ministry of Health), employment (public works in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development and National Employment Service), education (through affirmative measures by the RNSS without much cooperation with the Ministry of Education).
- *Capacities at the central level for implementation of the NAPs are facing a number of challenges,* related to financial shortages and budget cuts, insufficient human resources, fragmentation of coordination and fragility of consistency of the efforts of the Central government and among different line ministries within the dynamics of frequent political changes and under the pressure of the growing economic crises.
- *The good framework that was developed and the plan for practical monitoring of the implementation of the NAPs, using the resource of the local Roma coordinators in 55 municipalities has remained a general political wish and has not been used, due to lack of enough capacities and resources in the MMHR and its department RNSS.*
- *The effective implementation of the NAPs and real monitoring of the outcomes of this implementation needs further developing capacities and resources within government, as well as of civil society as its partner. This takes enough people that can do these challenging tasks, with relevant skills, knowledge and understanding, as well as real budgets for actual implementation and monitoring of the implementation.*

b) Increased capacities of local stakeholders and institutions to identify and address the needs of Roma communities

- *There are a growing number of active municipalities for Roma social inclusion.* As outlined in some of the interviews, the local level is more active than the national one. The support of the project has contributed to the expanding number of municipalities that have adopted the *Roma inclusive model* for development and implementation of the Decade plans. Before the project there were 19 municipalities with local Roma coordinators as part of their administration. At the end of this project they have grown to 55, and additional municipalities in Vojvodina are in the process of adopting the initiative. The majority of the local Roma coordinators continue working in their municipalities, and are paid by municipal (on service contract or systematized positions).

- *There is a visible growth of capacities and skills of the local administration in the 55 municipalities to translate in practice the priorities of the NAPs at the local level.* The Project has contributed directly to this by accompanying training and mentoring to all municipalities, as well as direct support to 28 of them through grants. If before the Project only 8 of the 55 municipalities had LAPs, by the end of the project already 31 of them have adopted LAP in at least one of the priority areas. Many municipalities have been consistently allocating budgets within the feasibility of overall scarce local resources. Though small, municipal funds allocated for LAPs priorities are used as seed money to attract additional resources from line ministries or international donors programs.
- *The issues of Roma inclusion are increasingly becoming part of the overall municipal development policies and strategies.* Based on the interviews in the visited localities, the LAPs are directly linked with the local development plans in the different sectors. Especially in poor regions, where both the majority and minority population are suffering economic deprivation, the efforts for improvement of the Roma population are linked with the overall effort for overcoming poverty of all the municipality. As shared in some of the interviews, in municipalities that are in deep economic crises sustainable solutions of the drastic situation of local Roma community will not be possible without economic revival of the locality. In some cases, the projects for Roma inclusion also become the driver for activation of the municipalities for search and attracting resources that are of benefit for all groups of the population.
- *There is an evolving network of the 55 municipalities from all regions in the country that have adopted the Roma inclusive model of Roma local coordinators in their administration and pro-active policies for Roma inclusion.* This was not a planned outcome in the Project. It resulted from the approach to training, the on-going mentoring and consistent support to linking the local Roma coordinators from all municipalities. Though the project is over, this network continues to function informally. This relates both to the Roma local coordinators, and other representatives of municipalities. Based on the interviews this is one of the most valued outcomes.

2. Sustainability of achievements

The main sustainability aspect of the Project Component in Serbia was its nature – it invested in the institutional capacities at the central and local levels, that in turn will bring for improving the situation of the Roma population. The main sustainability potential, especially at the local level is in the strong commitment of the representatives of local governments to continue, despite the really deprived local economic situation and low municipal budgets.

While all the above outcomes are clear signs for the long term potential for impact, the sustainability of these achievements is still “vulnerable” and there is a definite need to continue building upon the positive moments created. This is especially true in regard to the challenges of implementation of the NAPs at the national and local level, in view of the economic crises and still “unfinished business” of translating the political will into political practice.

Two follow up projects have been planned and are to start in the near future that will continue the work for consolidating the efforts for Roma inclusion. The first is a project of the Provincial Government in Vojvodina to further expand the local Roma coordinators model in 20 more municipalities. It will be using the same methods, approach and part of the team that has worked on the UNDP project. Based on the interviews in Vojvodina with both the provincial government, representatives of municipalities and their Roma local coordinators this continuation will help consolidate the efforts for more effective implementation of plans for Roma inclusion.

The second project is in the process of approval from SIDA. It was developed by OSCE in partnership with the MOHMR. Due to the limitations of this assessment (as time and number of meetings) there was no evidence of how this follow up project will build upon the achievements of the SIDA funded UNDP Project. At the time of writing of this report, UNDP did not have information about the concrete scope of the project. Based on the interview with the RNSS the project will be working in-depth in 5 municipalities trying to develop a new model for integrated service provision (complementing policies

and services among municipal authorities, schools, social services, etc.). This will definitely be of benefit to the selected five municipalities.

However, a question that remains, is how to sustain and further expand one of the assets that was achieved - the network of 55 active municipalities for Roma social inclusion. Actually, there has been a clear concept for a follow up project, developed by UNDP at the end of 2009 that was submitted to SIDA²⁵. It had a good idea for further assisting the RNSS and consolidating the network of local Roma coordinators, thus increasing the capacities for local monitoring of the implementation of the NAPs. █

IV. Looking Forward: Lessons for Future Applications

Improving the situation of vulnerable groups, including Roma remains a priority strategy of the UNDP country office. Based on the interviews with key staff involved in different programs in this direction, a strength of UNDP so far has been that it has been consistent in searching for the maximum sustainability of invested efforts. As phrased by one of the respondents “our projects finish, but outcomes stay”. In the case of this Project, there are clear outcomes that have a lot of potential to make a difference in the area of more inclusive Roma policies and practices in the long-term.

Based on the suggestions from different respondents and the lessons coming from the experience of the Project, this potential can be fostered by follow up initiatives in three main areas:

1. *Strengthening and expanding the network of Local Roma Coordinators as part of the 55 Roma inclusive municipalities.*

➤ *The network has proved that it can be a very important platform for expanding the capacities of municipalities for Roma inclusion.* In addition to the LAPs, and other initiatives that were coming out of the three year of consistent work within this Project, interviews with other stakeholders showed that the network is very useful for outreach and work on different issues of Roma. One example was the work for registration and re-integration of IDPs. Roma coordinators have been very helpful to UNHCR in Serbia, but also as partners to Roma civil society working in the area of issuance of personal documents of Roma in Montenegro.

➤ *The value of the network was clearly expressed by all interviewed coordinators,* as well as in the written reports gathered by local coordinators at the end of the Project. However, all expressed concerns about the future of the network – with no resources to communicate and meet and especially with no support and coaching there are fears that it may fade away. The previous channel of knowledge, skills and information support, provided by the Project has gone. The RNSS as of now does not have resources to do this. With staff of only 3 people, and the enormous workload of coordinating the efforts at the Central level, the Secretariat as of now cannot take over the capacity building function of the Project. Clear evidence for this was coming from all local interviews.

➤ *There is a need of continuity of the networking among local coordinators.* The concrete form how this can be done may differ – as an informal but well facilitated network; as a more structured association, or as a visible platform of active municipalities within the Conference on Standing Towns and municipalities. No matter the chosen form, it will be important to have resources for meetings, on-going facilitation, providing information, coaching and further training and capacity building. It will also be important to work for further expanding the geographic scope of the network with new municipalities joining the initiative for Local Roma coordinators.

➤ *The network of local Roma coordinators can play important functional roles in testing new approaches and initiatives that can bring for best practice not only in Serbia but also in the region.* If supported to further grow its capacities it can serve as a good base to reach out to municipalities all over the country for testing new initiatives and approaches in different sectors like employment, local monitoring of the implementation of the NAPs. It can also become a country wide local advocate for the

²⁵ The concept for the follow up project is one of the attachments of the fifth progress report of the Project.

implementation of the NAPs, joining its efforts with Roma civil society and networks, like the League for the Decade. One concrete issue that requires immediate advocacy is reconsidering the restrictive measures related to municipal administration that blocs the systematization of Local Roma coordinators position. A broader issue is developing capacities for budget monitoring and advocacy for more transparency and accountability of budget allocations for the implementation of the Roma inclusion goals.

2. Expanding the knowledge base on Roma inclusive models in policy development and implementation

The UNDP is currently working on systematizing lessons coming from the experience of this project. This will be very valuable as the project brought a lot of good experiences, but also tough lessons on participatory development of strategy and plans at both central and local levels; as well as on the coordination for implementation of these plans at the national level, especially at times of economic crises.

Especially valuable is the learning from the application of the “Local Roma coordinator model” Existing publications so far provide information on the intention of the model – key functions of coordinators and training at the first stage of promoting the model in 2006-2007. As outlined in previous sections of this report, the study of effectiveness of the model and its further improvement requires much more in-depth analyses within a dynamic framework of local factors that foster or hamper the real impact of the work of local Roma coordinators.

It will be good if UNDP expands the current work on “lessons from the Project” (following its initial outcomes/output framework) and to study of the effectiveness of the model in its practical application especially at the local level. This can be done together with the network of Roma coordinators by organizing discussions on what works and why, and what else can be added to the approach based on their experiences, as well as by developing some case studies on both successful and not so successful examples gathering input from involved institutions, coordinators, but also other stakeholders, including the served Roma community members.

Such a publication can contribute a lot for increasing knowledge from practice of local approaches to Roma inclusion not only in Serbia, but in the framework of the Decade countries. In Serbia it can contribute to expanding the model to other municipalities, as well a raising the awareness on the real meaning of the Decade – it is not a humanitarian aid, but expanding institutional approaches, empowerment of vulnerable Roma communities and societal support to Roma inclusion.

3. Continue with Monitoring of NAPs Implementation and Data Gathering

The project has assisted in the development of a good framework and concept for its practical application. Initiatives for its application will need further support. Especially valuable is the potential of using the local coordinators network as a country wide resource for local data gathering. UNDP has experience in such locally based data gathering on the situation of vulnerable groups during the development of the RPSP by creating municipal databases and involving Roma civil society organizations. Some of this knowledge can be applied on monitoring the implementation of the Decade plans. There was also good models of community based data gathering practiced by UNDP Montenegro Project Component that can be of use.

Another priority for future work in the area of data was the need to develop a new vulnerability report as a follow up of the report, published in 2005.

4. Focused work in the area of employment of Roma

➤ This priority has been outlined by a number of respondents both at central and local level. While there has been done a lot in the area of social service and education, the work in the area of employment and income generation is underdeveloped. In the past there had been various initiatives of different providers, mostly international organizations for vocational training, women’s cooperatives, youth

employment etc. However, experience and effectiveness of tested approaches has not been carefully studied.

- UNDP has its own experience with a number of significant initiatives like the Social Innovation Fund, the youth employment migration project (not specifically for Roma, but in cases including Roma) and others. Based on studying various experiences and own practice, UNDP may consider developing a focused initiative in the area of increasing employability of Roma, done in partnership with local employment offices and the relevant line Ministry, as well as the network of Roma coordinators that can serve as the outreach to localities. In deprived localities, such initiatives were also seen as a part of local economic development program for all vulnerable groups, not only for Roma.
- Suggestions provided by different respondents were different: as microcredit facility for business development, combined with support for business development and marketing; support for social enterprises; increasing skills and mediation with potential employers, etc.. However, what type of instruments (or a combination of them) may be more or less appropriate will depend on the overall objective and design of the initiatives.

Chapter 4. THE REGIONAL PROJECT COMPONENT: EFFECTIVENESS, OUTCOMES AND LESSONS

I. Brief Overview of Priority Strategies

The Regional Component of the Project was implemented by the UNDP Regional Bratislava Center for Europe and NIS (RBC). It was of dual nature: a program of itself with its own set of activities; and a regional facility, providing for the smooth operation of the Project Decreasing Vulnerability Regional Project and its country components.

The programmatic part of the component was in two priority areas in the framework of the broader strategic work of UNDP/RBC for Roma inclusion:

- *The first was aimed at assessment of the Decade of Roma Inclusion progress by* introducing meaningful monitoring of the NAPs implementation based on clear indicators and data collection. Planned activities included: 1) Assisting the design of relevant progress indicators for Decade implementation and a system of disaggregated vulnerability data monitoring; 2) Conducting “mid-term assessment of the NAPs implementation” in 2008; 3) Elaboration of a regional report on the Decade progress in the region. The geographic scope of these activities was broader, involving different countries signatures of the Decade from the region, and only partially the national partners from this Project (mostly in Serbia). Funding for this was provided by UNDP itself, as well as from other than SIDA donors.
- *The second priority area was aimed at codification of knowledge and exchange of experience on Roma inclusion.* It was to improve awareness and knowledge of practitioners about approaches towards social systems responsive to vulnerable groups. Envisaged activities included: 1) elaboration of on-line databases on Roma development practices, and 2) codification of the experience generated and elaboration of a “How to” guide. Products were to assist better sharing of experiences among the variety of specifics of applied approaches in different countries and assisting learning practices (both positive and negative) in view of their potential for approaching Roma issues in the Western Balkans.

The regional coordination and support services were to ensure effective implementation of the Project with all its components and to provide for the sharing of knowledge emerging from them. This involved setting up and effective operation of the regional coordination facility; regular monitoring of country components and providing for periodic progress reports; on-going communication with SIDA, as well as advocacy and lobbying for expansion of the project to other countries and involving additional donors.

II. Effectiveness of Implementation: Key Achievements and Challenges

The programmatic part of the regional component was not a subject of in-depth assessment within this evaluation, as it would have required a different methodology and a broader scope of respondents and field work. The main focus was the assessment of the effectiveness and emerging impacts resulting from the work in the country components. Within this, the evaluator was also tasked to facilitate the reflection of RBC and of the national partners from the three countries to gather their views on the value of the regional work of the project; as well as their assessment of the effectiveness of the regional coordination and support services, provided by RBC.

1. Codification of Knowledge on Development Practices in the Area of Roma Inclusion

The main idea for the Roma Development Experience Portal was to overcome the fragmentation of knowledge on the variety of approaches applied by the diversity of development actors working on Roma inclusion. It was rooted in the earlier work of UNDP/RBC on the Regional Human Development Report on Roma in Central and Eastern Europe “Avoiding the Dependency Trap”. It was published on a UNDP

Reports site - <http://www.roma.undp.sk/> with the broader objective of this website to expand the debate on Roma issues and to stimulate exchange of various practices and approaches.

As part of the regional activities in this Project, UNDP/RBC developed an online database of Roma projects. Projects were collected in 2007 and updated in 2008 by desk research of UNDP country offices web sites and websites of major donors like OSI/Soros, SIDA, DFID and CIDA. There is no data in the Project progress reports whether a further update was done in 2009.

As a result, the Roma-Targeted Development Portal is present at the special section “Experiences” of the www.roma.undp.sk. It is organized by thematic areas and by cross-cutting challenges/issues. The Portal contains brief outlines of more than 100 projects in eight thematic areas²⁶. Each entry contains information on key activities, geographic scope, time of implementation, budget, duration and lessons learned (if available). Projects are of different nature and scope. Some are larger initiatives in the framework of donors like OSI’s initiatives on Roma health or Roma education, with a number of projects supported within these initiatives. Others are large scale donors’ or international organizations’ initiatives – like some programs of the World Bank or UNDP. There are also some smaller scale local projects, with support of various organizations and donors.

In addition, the Portal provides links to two databases developed by other organizations – a database of OSI with case studies on innovative practices within the Managing Multiethnic Communities Project of the OSI Local Government Initiative and a broader development site of UN Habitat and The Together Foundation with over 3,800 best practices from 140 countries on a variety of issues of inclusion and fighting poverty all over the world.

The Roma Development Experience Portal is definitely relevant to the need of consolidating learning from practices on Roma inclusion. The portal is probably the only website that is providing space for variety of practices, which otherwise are scattered among the sites of those who have implemented the relevant projects. Evidence for the relevance of the site was the growing interest to the site. Based on the data from Project progress reports, for the period 2007-2008 the portal had 3264 visits where over 1/5 of the visitors visited the webpage more than once.

An objective of the Portal was to assist the development of learning from practice. Based on a quick review of the site done within this study, there are several types of challenges to the portal’s effectiveness in this direction.

- *There are some technical issues that hamper the effective usage of the portal:* the portal can be accessed only by Internet explorer users, not by Mozilla Firefox browser users; the OSI innovative database cannot be opened from the provided link; links to websites within the information of projects are sometimes inactive, which narrows the possibility to search for more information from the site of the project’s organization/donor
- *The level of substantial information on different projects differs. It depends on the existing information on the websites of the relevant organizations/donors.* While some of the entries in the Portal provide for lessons learned – for example a series of case studies from Hungary in the area of income generation, others are just brief project information with more or no details on the project’s approach, outcomes or lessons. This is the case with many of the listed UNDP projects. Just one example is the Jobs for Roma component of the larger JOBS program of UNDP Bulgaria. It has a lot of learning on community based approaches to income generation and employability and has passed several evaluations, but those are not shared on the website
- *The type of substantial information on the different projects differs, again depending on what is provided on the websites of different project holders.* Usually, if there are lessons shared in the cyber space, they are in the “advertizing” best practice type of style. Real lessons from what works, cost-

²⁶ Income generation and poverty reduction; Education, [Health, Participation and human rights](#), [Gender equality and the empowerment of women](#); Crime reduction and security; environment and sustainable development

effectiveness, factors that brought for success, but also what blocked the effectiveness are usually not shared.

- *There are a number of interesting practices developed by a variety of civil society organizations all over the region that are not present on the websites.* To a great extent, this is due to the scarce publications of their lessons from practice on the website, as in most cases NGOs have limited resources (time, funds and people) to invest in learning. But another reason is that the UNDP/RBC resources and approach to developing the Roma development portal was limited. It was based on a search of key donors, not on a broader search of other organizations' practice.
- *There was no resource for a pro-active search of practices based on direct communication with broader stakeholders.* Visitors of the website were invited to share their practice too, but there is no data on whether and how many of them actually did it. The regional staff for the project was overloaded with a number of important tasks in order to be able to allocate more time and resource for deeper and proactive updates of the projects database.

The above challenges of effectiveness of use of the Portal relate to the broader issue of shortages in the existing level of knowledge management of different development actors in the area of Roma inclusion. This is among the reasons that delayed the envisaged productions of "How to guides" on reforming the systems of social support to make them more responsive to vulnerable groups' needs. The regional component succeeded in gathering and developing some background materials, but further work will be needed in order to systematize them into how-to-guides.

2. Design and Introducing of Monitoring Frameworks to Assess Progress of Implementation of the Decade for Roma Inclusion

In the past three years the regional team made a lot of efforts in the area of monitoring the progress of the NAPs. This involved a number of interrelated activities in an expanding number of countries, as well as on the level of the Decade for Roma Inclusion international working groups and events. This was also accompanied by intensive fundraising for expanding support from different donors in order to provide for including a growing number of countries.

Broadly activities were in the following directions:

- Design and testing of monitoring framework for assessing the progress of NAPs implementation in different countries that were signatories of the Decade. Developed together with ECMI methodology for the Decade assessment was first tested in Bulgaria in 2007, and later in Macedonia, Croatia and Romania. It involved analyses of the NAPs in the relevant country, cooperation with the Decade Watch from the country to identify areas of complementary action and avoid duplication of effort, a monitoring exercise workshop to elaborate detailed country relevant progress assessment framework with indicators and methods for production of ethnically disaggregated statistics, identification of NAPs implementation gaps and deficits, and elaboration of practical recommendations for addressing these gaps, as well as for approach, resources and organization of effective monitoring of implementation. UNDP raised additional funds for these expanding efforts, mostly from Friedrich Ebert Foundation.
- Promotion work for raising the issue of monitoring of implementation in the three countries involved in the regional project. In Montenegro this involved a number of meetings of the regional team with the coordinator for the Decade (the deputy Minister at the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights Protection), and in Kosovo – with the Office of Prime Minister for Good Governance. The most concrete work was done in Serbia, where the monitoring framework was tested at workshops with different stakeholders, and a concept plan was developed for its application. This was also accompanied with intensive work for promotion of the application of the framework with the RNSS, the Statistic Office in Serbia and the Ministry for Minority and Human Rights
- Focused work on data gathering and monitoring in the framework of the Decade. This involved established close cooperation and a number of meetings within the Decade Progress Indicators Group, a

well as facilitation of special workshops on monitoring of progress of the NAPs implementation during the Serbian Presidency of the Decade.

Based on the interviews with the UNDP Bratislava and the three UNDP country offices the *following outcomes and challenges in the area of introducing monitoring of the progress of the Decade implementation can be outlined:*

- *The regional component fostered the overall work of UNDP in the area of data gathering and monitoring of actual impact of the adopted policies for Roma social inclusion.* As compared to the years before the Project, monitoring based on measurable indicators and the need of gathering solid statistical data is much more on the agenda of the Decade. There is a growing recognition of UNDP as a leading expert in this area. This is evident in the growing request for repeating the Roma survey done in 2004 which will provide for comparability of data and respectively for identification of progress in the situation of Roma population
- *There are already developed methodology and country assessment frameworks in five of the Decade countries - Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia.* Based on quick review of the frameworks they are very comprehensive documents, with concrete suggestions for country relevant indicators and some with practical suggestions for the organization of the monitoring processes. In Macedonia the developed indicators were integrated in the revised NAP.
- *None of the Governments in the above countries has started regular monitoring of progress based on the elaborated indicators.* The project has started the initial process of thinking in terms of outcomes, however, creating the culture of results based policy implementation and public accountability on progress achieved will be a long process in all Decade countries, requiring the coordinated efforts of various country stakeholders – Decade teams at the Central government level, line ministries, Roma civil society and the media. Major challenges in this direction include unstable policy commitment for the adoption of sound monitoring systems, and insufficient coordination and missing capacities of both institutions and civil society for its effective application.
- *Based on the experience in some of the new EU member countries, like Bulgaria for example, EU membership does not immediately bring more accountable policies, especially in the area of Roma inclusion and NAPs implementation.* On the contrary, with no outside pressure for meeting the EU accession requirements, this work will be low on the governments agenda.
- *A success of the advocacy work with donors, the UNDP/RBC is continuing the work on monitoring and evaluation of a follow up project in the new EU member countries supported by DG Regio.* As said by some respondents, it is critical that the advocacy and practical work for adoption of monitoring indicators and their application is intensified in the Western Balkan countries in this pre-accession period, where in-country awareness and capacities can be stimulated by outside resources and some pressure.
- *There are also some emerging good practices in the region towards implementation of the Decade.* Countries like Montenegro have invested consistently their own funds for implementation of the NAPs. It is also the only country that has invested its own funds to collect some statistics of Roma – Montenegro, collecting basic data on RAE in Montenegro in 2008. This together with the good approach to community based data gathering in the area of social service and employment, applied by the Montenegro component, need to be further developed as case study to support advocacy for the Decade implementation by good practices generated from within the region..

3. Regional Coordination and Support Services

3.1. Regional Organizational Set up and Support to the Country Components

The Regional organization of the Project included a small coordination unit at UNDP/RBC of one project manager and one regional project coordinator. The work was overseen by a Regional Board, consisting of representatives of the key partners in the three countries (Ministry of Community and Returns, Kosovo, the RNSS/Ministry of Minority and Human Rights, Serbia, and the Roma Circle NGO coalition from

Montenegro), representatives of the donor SIDA as well as the national coordinators from the three countries.

The Board had meetings on a regular basis – twice a year to discuss and adopt the progress reports, as well as decide on needed updates on suggested changes in the strategies.

The regional level team had coordination and advisory functions vis-à-vis the national components. The responsibility for the effective implementation, including decision making on the country level activities was in the authority of the country offices and respectively their Project component teams.

The regional project manager was providing for communication with national partners, coordination of timely implementation of the overall project, regular monitoring visits compiling the progress reports, based on provided reports from each of the countries, on-going communication with the donor, as well as presentation of the project at different events. The regional project coordinator together with the project manager was responsible for the regional level activities. In addition, the regional coordinator participated in two monitoring missions.

Support to the country components was provided through regular contact and communication, as well as within the monitoring visits. For the period of the project (second half of 2007 – first half of 2010) the project manager made 24 monitoring visits, out of which 6 were in Montenegro, 5 in Serbia and 13 in Kosovo.

Based on the interviews with the national teams the regional coordination and support were assessed very highly in terms of both efficiency and substance:

- *Support was timely and facilitative.* There was a good flow of information and excellent cooperation. Joint work on progress reports was very efficient. The regional team was very helpful in assisting good communication with the donor.
- *The regional team was very helpful in providing for knowledge from practices* in other countries and assisting the national teams in addressing concrete aspects of their project components in a more effective way.
- *It was also a good back up for in-country promotion and advocacy for the needs of the relevant country project components.* During the monitoring visits, the regional team was also meeting with key partners and stakeholders, high level institutions, and other leading actors in Roma social inclusion efforts. This was considered by respondents as an additional factor for the success of the country components, providing for more legitimacy of the Project as a regional effort.
- *A major challenge to the smooth implementation of the Project were the problems within the Kosovo component* - serious under spending and on-going organizational problems (staff turn over and tensions), described in the Kosovo component chapter. This added additional stress to the regional team. As said the monitoring visits to Kosovo were 13 or two times more than the envisaged ones. In 2008-2009 there were periods when the regional manager had to visit Kosovo almost every other month, this way entering almost on an implementation level at the country component. As noted in interviews the regional team succeeded to assist integrating more substance in the search of the implementation approach and strategy in Kosovo. However, due to its advisory role it could not be very instrumental in direct problem solving related to programmatic and staff tensions. As said the decision making on the country project implementation was dependent on the competence of the relevant UNDP country offices

3.2. Codification of knowledge from the Project

An objective of the regional project facility was to stimulate the exchange of practice and codification of knowledge emerging from all components of the project. In 2007 it was decided to assist this process by a web based application of *a common working space*. The idea was to allow project teams to store and exchange documents, allow access of Board members to important documents, and inform the public on achievements of the Project.

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Based on the review of the common working space, as well as on the interviews with country project teams this form of knowledge sharing was not so effective:

- *Existing documents in the common workspace cannot provide the full picture of implementation, especially at the level of developmental learning and exchange of practical experiences.* The level of uploaded documents differs among the different countries and over time. It depended on the time and workload of each of the country project teams. For most of the interviewed country staff, this was more an additional obligation, rather than a practice tool they could use in their work.
- *There was a section in the workspace providing for discussions and interaction among the teams. However, this is empty.* As noted by country team members, they preferred direct communication with colleagues from the other offices (by email or phone) which were more effective in exchange or mutual support in approaching issues. As was well phrased in one of the interviews, “workspaces are kind of Bratislava fashion. Here in the region we use more live communication”.
- The workspace was opened only to authorized users (with different levels of access for Board members and for teams). From this perspective it could not serve for informing the public about the project.

The workspace effectiveness is linked with the broader issue of knowledge management within the Project in all its components. With some varieties among the countries, the substantial knowledge generated throughout the project was not well systematized and documented. The main common frameworks for tracking the learning from practice of the Project were the initial project documents output/outcome format and respectively the progress reports. In cases of serious shifts in the initial design, like for example in Kosovo, the progress reports were struggling to put emerging new activities under sections/titles that had nothing to do with what was reported.

According to all respondents, good forms for the sharing of experience were the regional meetings of the Board and country implementation teams. They provided for discussion on issues and thinking together on possible solutions. However, the documenting of these meetings was a brief outline of decisions made. The substantial discussions were not provided within the memos of the Board meetings.

There was a good practice in the UNDP Montenegro component to develop briefs on project achievements. These were summaries of what the project is about, and what it has achieved produced as internal 2 page documents to serve knowledge sharing within the office, but also the presentations to the public within this project, or more broadly as part of the strong presence of UNDP Montenegro in the public debates and press conferences related to issues of RAE population.

II. Looking Forward: Lessons for Future Applications

1) The importance of regional initiatives that combine regional and country specific actions

The Project Decreasing Vulnerability of Roma in the Western Balkans was a strategic initiative focusing on building institutional capacities for adequate responses to the challenges of Roma inclusion by combining regional and country specific actions. In practice it was a regional facility that brought together four projects within a broad framework of common principles and concrete actions translating them according to the identified strategic niche in each of the participating countries, and on the regional level.

A common ground among all project components was the application of strategies focused on expanding the capacities of local stakeholders for practical implementation of commitments for Roma inclusive policies. This was approached differently in the three countries, depending on the local contexts and the capacity of the relevant UNDP office and project teams. As outlined in the previous chapters each of the four components brought for visible outcomes at different levels, in the case of Montenegro and Serbia much beyond the initial plans and in the case of Kosovo with on-going changes of activities - in other areas than the initially planned ones.

Interviewed local respondents in the three countries, participating in different roles in the country programs – partner institutions at the central and local level, Roma NGOs or networks, and UNDP teams, considered that the regional nature of the Project was very valuable in two aspects. First, the problems of Roma are of dual nature – they are country issues, but also a regional priority, especially in the framework of a regional policy initiative like the Decade for Roma Inclusion. Second, the project activated a good regional network of country offices of UNDP, which proved to be effective in the practical problem solving of country issues with regional dimension – like the issues for civic documents of Roma in the region.

From this perspective it will be important to continue the practice of regional initiatives with country based components as a good approach to addressing the issue of Roma inclusion. Based on recommendations from respondents follow up initiatives will be needed in several areas:

- data collection and monitoring of the progress of implementation of policies for Roma inclusion, and repetition of the Roma survey from 2004 to provide for comparative analyses of the situation of Roma in the region
- focused work for expanding capacities of local governments and institutions for practical implementation of the measures envisaged in the relevant NAPs for Roma inclusion
- targeted work in addressing the issues for civil registration of Roma, re-integration of returnees from Western Europe,
- identifying new initiatives in the area of income generation and employment, combining targeted assistance for access to jobs and incomes for Roma, with area based development approaches, especially in localities/regions which are economically deprived

2) Lessons for design and implementation of future initiatives

Based on the experience of this Project, some broad lessons that can serve future regional programming of UNDP can be outlined:

a) At the stage of initiating and design of joint regional interventions:

- *Joint design of the overall project and ownership of the design of the country components by the UNDP country offices can bring for more effectiveness and targeted outcomes during the implementation.* This approach was tested in the designing phase of the Project and proved to be effective. Each country component was designed by the relevant UNDP country office, considering its strategic priorities and dynamics of local contexts, following a common design framework assisted by the RBC.
- *Clarity of initial strategy design and feasibility of the suggested activities are critical for the future successful implementation.* Based on the experience of this project, too broad of a strategy may hamper the performance both on the strategic and activity level. This was the case with the Kosovo component, which was struggling with the search for update and reorientation of activities throughout the project.
- *Project components strategies have more chances to lead to success if they are based on a previous record in the relevant area of action, good pre-project feasibility work, agreed partnerships prior to the project and participation of partners in the design.* This was the case of the Montenegro component, as well as the Serbia component.
- *If some of the country components will be in a new thematic area or locations for the relevant UNDP country office, it is better to have a formative stage within the strategy design, which will be providing space for exploring what approaches can work better.* As elaborated in the chapter assessing the Kosovo component, the translation of the envisaged strategies and instruments for income generation, as well as community based work in the two municipalities, required more feasibility work and time for deciding on approach and strategy.

b) decision making and organization

- *More clarity on competencies and channels of supervision in a regional project modality, involving BRC and UNDP country offices can assist better performance.*

The way the project was organized was efficient and effective, but not prepared for problem solving. BRC needs to carefully study the experience with this project. Though, the UNDP country offices have the lead in decisions and systems of supervision in regard to programs in the country, if the relevant project is a component of a regional UNDP effort, part of the backstopping function of BRC should involve provisions on the approach in regard to problematic implementation.

From the outside, it is anticipated that BRC as regional coordination unit for the Project would have some decision making competencies in regard to problem solving in country level activities. It was obvious in some of the interviews with former staff and with local stakeholders in Kosovo, who considered that UNDP Bratislava was too far away and/or not interested in assisting solving problems and tensions within the team.

There should be a clear system of problem solving, including assistance with decision on difficult issues. Otherwise, delays and problematic performance in one of the project components can jeopardize the overall project, as well as the image of the UNDP network.

c) Approach to building capacities

- This Project provides a lot of learning on how to approach capacity building by application of different instruments – training, grants and networking. Based on its experience, it is more effective if these instruments are applied in an interrelated way, complementing each other and led by the desired outcomes of the project intervention.
- Targeted grantmaking with clear priorities, and with clear vision on what is the capacity development objective of the small grants proved to be more effective. In Serbia, grants support was designed as incentive instruments to activate participating municipalities to develop and implement LAPs, and to adopt the inclusive approach to Roma inclusion by having local Roma coordinators as part of their structure. In Montenegro, the grants were aimed at focused assistance at activating local Roma civil society to work together with local institutions and RAE communities in the priority areas of the Project
- Trainings are more effective if organized as a systematic capacity building process led by clear capacity outcomes objectives. Among the diversity of applications in the three countries, what was very valuable was the interactive nature of trainings as a consistent process of interaction of different stakeholders around practical tasks for learning and exchange of experiences. Bringing together local institutions and civil society from different localities led to emerging networks and joint initiatives (the network of Roma local coordinators in Serbia or the shared database on the socio economic status of RAE families in Montenegro). Bringing in participants from central levels institutions in all countries stimulated increased access to information locally and raised awareness of central institutions on the importance of local level implementation of national policy priorities. Bringing together diverse representatives of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo, assisted overcoming the traditional divide and distance and search for common initiatives of benefit to all RAE communities.
- Study trips can be also very useful for sharing experience if well prepared, including managing the expectations of participants on what and how they can apply what they have learned after the trip.

d) Codification of development knowledge emerging from practices for Roma inclusion

The Project has started an important and very much needed process of consolidation of knowledge among the variety of approaches to Roma inclusion. The developmental practice portal is a good start for a “one-stop-shop” for practices of various development actors.

This can be further fostered by more pro-active approaches to developmental learning by organizing discussions or pro-active outreach to various actors– donor, civil society or government to share learning from both successes and difficulties in themes or crosscutting challenges in the work for Roma inclusion. More meetings and direct forms of sharing well recorded around clear learning outcome areas can bring for better systematization of developmental knowledge emerging from different projects applications. Facilitation of such processes by the BRC will require more resources – raised for special development methodology/learning projects and/or integrated as part of future regional initiatives.

In future regional initiatives the BRC may consider developing together with the UNDP country offices a clear, shared and agreed monitoring framework that goes beyond the need for progress reports to the donors. It can link the monitoring of progress of project components with the systematic tracking of emerging developmental learning on several levels:

- *Strategic performance monitoring*: providing feedback on key aspects of chosen strategies and their relevance with the dynamics of local and regional contexts
- *Operational performance monitoring*: developing a set of “process” indicators or areas to monitor the way overall project and the different components operate in terms of processes, results, cost-effectiveness and efficiency vis-à-vis envisaged plans
- *Development assistance approaches and practices monitoring*: developing a set of “what-works-and – why” learning areas on the level of effectiveness of methods and their applications towards planned outcomes and impacts.

In practice this can mean developing a set of questions in the above areas that are regularly addressed in monitoring visits (from the regional or country teams), in interactions with key partners and actors; and/or at the regional meetings of all partners. If documented in internal what-works learning briefs they can assist the systematization of developmental learning in the course of implementation.

ANEXES

ANNEX I List of People Interviewed

UNDP Bratislava Regional center

1. Jaroslav Kling, Regional Project manager
2. Andrey Ivanov,

Montenegro Component

1. Miodrag Dragisic, SI Team Leader, UNDP Montenegro
2. Igor Topalovic, UNDP Project Coordinator
3. Aleksandra Visnjic, UNDP Montenegro
4. Veselj Beganaj, NGO Coalition Romski Krug
5. Sabahudin Delic, Deputy Minister/National Coordinator for the Roma Decade
6. Nevena Sukovic, Employment Agency of Montenegro

Stakeholders in localities:

7. Slobodan Djonovic, SWC Bar director
8. Hadzo Ajdarovic, SWC Bar
9. Vesna Jukic, SWC Bar
10. Veselin Orlandic, EB Bar director
11. Natasa Kovacevic, EB Bar
12. Rustem Tusa, Roma Tinsmith
13. Samir Jaha, NGO Mladi Romi, Novi Hercog
14. Radmila Markovic, SWC Niksic director
15. Marija Nikcevic, SWC Niksic
16. Ivan Mitrovic, SWC Niksic
17. Rajko Simunovic, SWC Niksic
18. Goran Simovic, SWC Niksic
19. Jovanka Radicevic, EB Niksic
20. Miljana Pekovic, NGO SOS Niksic
21. Fana Delija, NGO SOS Niksic
22. Nada Drobnjak, NGO SOS Niksic
23. Fatima Naza, NGO SOS Niksic/Cooperative Rukatnice

Kosovo Component

1. Ms. Juliana Oldashi-Berisha, Former RRP Project Manager Kosovo
2. Ms. Sakibe Jashari, Former Roma Regional Project Staff
3. Ms. Vlora Elshani, project coordinator Prizren, and project manager at the end
4. Mr. Senad Shajkovci, National UN Volunteer Project Associate
5. Mr. Atdhe Hetemi, former project coordinator Ferizaj/Urosevac
6. Ms. Angela Mazer, UN Volunteer Programme Analyst, Social Inclusion Cluster
7. Mr. Parviz Fartash, Kosovo Director
8. Mr. Dejan Radivojevic, Head of Social Inclusion Cluster
9. Ms. Enesa Kadiq, Ministry of Science, Education and Technology (MEST)
10. Mr. Ismet Hashani, Former Deputy MCR Pristina
11. Ms. Keriman Sadikay, Senior Human Rights Officer OGG/OPM
12. Ms. Vera Pula, Minority and Roma Program KFOS

Stakeholders in localities

13. Mr. Hyzri Hasani Head of Municipal Community Office (MCO) Ferizaj/Urosevac
14. Mr. Selajtin Dudoki – Director of NGO “Center of Ashkali Community” Ferizaj/Urosevac
15. Mr. Osman Osmani – Director of NGO “Joy of Youth” (Ashkali) Ferizaj/Urosevac

16. Dr. Drita Lumi, Senior staff member of Sallahane Health Center, Ferizaj (and other staff members)
17. Mr. Bashkim Hyseni, Director of the Department of Health and Social Welfare, Ferizaj
18. Mr. Islam Elshani, MCO Prizren
19. Mr. Afrim Melicevic, NGO Për mendje të shendoshë (and staff members)
20. Mr. Nexhip Menekshe, NGO Durmish Aslano (and staff members)
21. Mr. Sylejman Elshani, NGO Durmish Aslano

Serbia Component

1. Jelena Tadzic, Program Officer UNDP Serbia
2. Bogdanka Tasev, UNDP Project component coordinator (work with municipalities)
3. Group Interview with representatives of the UN Roma Theme Group – Marija Raus, UNHCHR, Davor Rako, UNHCR, Marija Rakovic, UNFPA, Milena Milojevic - IOM
4. Group Interview with UNDP project officers, leading other programs: Olivera Puric – UNDP Assistant Resident Representative Milena Isakovic – Programme Officer responsible for Youth Employment and Migration Projects; Jelena Manic – Programme Officer; Danijela Djurovic – Gender Coordinator
5. Ljuan Koko, *Head of the Roma National Strategy Secretariat*, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights.
6. Dubravka Velat, Program Director, Civic Initiatives, Belgrade (member League for the Decade)
7. The coordinator Roma Program, Civic Initiatives, Belgrade
8. Osman Balic, Coordinator of the League for the Roma Decade

Stakeholders in localities

9. Predrag Cvetanovic – President of the Municipality of Odzaci
10. Bogdan Cvejic – President of the Municipality of Beocin
11. Agim Drmaku – Roma Coordinator, Municipality of Beocin
12. Local media representatives Municipality of Beocin
13. Dusko Jovanovic – Director. Roma Inclusion Office – Provincial Office in Novi Sad
14. Romeo Mihajlovic – Adviser, Roma Inclusion Office – Provincial Office in Novi Sad
15. Ivana Koprivica – Consultant, Mentor and Trainer
16. Miodrag Gubijan – Chief of the Municipal Office for the project preparation and implementation , Municipality of Prokuplje
17. Dejan Zivkovic – Member of the Municipal Assembly Prokuplje, Roma NGO representative
18. Safet Susica – Roma Coordinator Municipality of Prokuplje
19. Participants: Zoran Ilic – Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Lebane
20. Sasa Pesic – Roma Coordinator, Municipality of Lebane
21. Nebojsa Silistarevic – Member of the City Assembly Vranje
22. Dejan Bajramovic – Roma coordinator Vranje
23. Sasa Djordjevic – President of the Municipality Municipality of Gadzin Han
24. Goran Jovanovic – Roma Coordinator Municipality of Gadzin Han
25. Milan Popovic – Deputy of the President Municipality of Gadzin Han

ANNEX: TABLES

TABLE 1. KOSOVO: SMALL GRANTS SCHEME IN SUPPORT TO PROJECTS IN FERIZAJ/UROSEVAC AND IN PRIZREN 2008-2010

	Selection process/ Approval rate	Grants disbursement: Number and total amount	Profile of grants (sector, project holders, duration)	Time of Project implementation
Ferizaj/Urosevac	First call for proposals announced beginning 2008			
	21 applications/ 7 projects approved	4 grants provided in total 17,036 euro (size of grants varying b/n 3,120 – 5740)	RAE NGOs initiatives, mostly in various areas of education, duration between 4-8 months,	October -2008 – April/May 2009
	Second call announced December 2008			
	22 applications/5 projects approved	3 grants in total euro 14,730 (size of grants varies b/n 450 euro – 8690);	RAE NGOs initiatives, mostly in various areas of education, duration 2-6 months;	implemented June-July/Nov., 2009
	Third call announced August 2009			
	18 applications/ 5 projects approved	4 grants provided in total 14,386 euro , Size of grants varies b/n 1830 – 10 129 euro;	RAE NGOs, initiatives in the area of education, including scholarship projects; duration b/n 8-12 months	implemented b/n September 2009 – Nov.2010
Additional grants/support in 2010 (6 grants in total 28,534 euro)				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 3 grants to support the Healthcare center through the Department of Health of F/U Municipality in total <i>21,600 euro</i> (10,000 euro for ultra-sound equipment provided in July 2010; and later in August - 9,600 euro for a generator and 1000 euro for books) ➤ 2 grants to support inventory for refurbishment of rooms for pre-school classes, 3,467 euro each, provided in March and in August 2010 through the Department of Education F/U Municipality 				
Prizren	First call for proposals announced beginning 2008			
	18 proposals/6 projects approved	5 grants in total amount 22,367 euro ;size of grants varies b/n 3000 and 6000 euro	RAE NGOs, Mostly education initiatives, and one media project; duration 1-6 months	August/September 2008 – ;January/February,2009
	Second call for proposals announced December 2008			
	9 proposals/ 1 project selected;	1 grant of 5,547	Thematic Emissions of Radio Avazo	June- November 2009
Third call proposals announced August 2009				
6 proposals / 3 projects approved 1	3 grants in total 12,418 Euro (2 grants in the range of 3,500 euro and 1 around 5,500 euro	RAE and non RAE NGOs, Mostly education initiatives, work with children; projects' duration 7 months	3 projects October 2009 – May 2010	

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	Additional grants 2010: 7 grants in total 40,525 Euro		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ 34,777euro– awarded to a company for two projects for school playgrounds;➤ 5748,5 euro for five NGO projects, 3 projects in the range of 240-790 euro, and two b/n 1,277 and 2,695 euro	Projects are of duration between 1-3 months and mostly in the areas of education, media, women empowerment	4 projects started/ completed 1st half of 2010; 3 – in the 2nd half of 2010