

EXTERNAL EVALUATION
REF-SUPPORTED PROJECTS IN SLOVAKIA FOR
PREVENTING/REVERSING SEGREGATION OF ROMANI CHILDREN IN
SPECIAL EDUCATION

EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared by Marek F. Hojsík
(Roma Institute Bratislava)

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	4
1. Evaluation Methodology.....	9
Problem identification	9
Clarity of objective and appropriateness of means	10
Targeting.....	11
Project integrity	12
Effectiveness (impact assessment)	13
Sustainability	14
Efficiency	14
Feedback.....	15
2. Evaluation of Projects	16
SLO 005/SLO 020	16
SLO 014.....	24
SLO 016.....	30
SLO 018/SLO 023.....	37
3. Cost-per-child Calculation	45
4. Conclusions	48
5. Recommendations	52
Annexes	58
Annex 1: Terms of Reference.....	58
Annex 2: List of documents provided to the Consultant by the REF	61
Annex 3: List of interviews.....	64
Annex 4: Research instruments	66
Questionnaire for REF beneficiaries.....	66
Questionnaire for adult projects' participants (schools).....	70
Questionnaire for adult projects' participants (parents).....	73
Questionnaire for focus group (with REF beneficiaries).....	75

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

REF-SUPPORTED PROJECTS IN SLOVAKIA FOR PREVENTING/REVERSING SEGREGATION OF ROMANI CHILDREN IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Note: This summary was produced by the Roma Education Fund (REF) on the basis of the report produced by an external evaluator, such that it reflects REF's views on the most significant aspects of the evaluation rather than the views of the external evaluator.

Background

As of November 2009, REF had committed a total of EUR 622 790 to six projects implemented by four non-governmental organizations aimed at directly preventing and/or reversing the streaming of Romani children in special education in Slovakia. REF's decision in early 2010 to commission a comparison of the different approaches supported to date in this area took into account three main factors:

1. Preventing/reversing segregation of Romani children in special education can be expected to remain a priority of REF activity in Slovakia for the foreseeable future.
2. The only external evaluation conducted to date on any of the projects aiming directly at prevention/reversal of segregation in Slovakia provided few quantitative data and no guidance on how the evaluated project might be improved in case of continuation.
3. The Slovak Ministry of Education's expressed interest in the results of one such project suggests that it would be interested in receiving information also on like-minded projects supported by REF in Slovakia, such that the findings of a comparative evaluation of all such projects could serve as a starting point for developing a model in cooperation with the Slovak government.

The evaluation was conducted in mid 2010 under the leadership of Marek F. Hojsík of the Roma Institute in Bratislava, who was selected through an open tender procedure.

Methodology

The aim of the evaluation was to compare the effectiveness of the four different project models and to make recommendations on how elements of one or more models could be applied in Slovakia on a national level. Whereas the desk research undertaken in the framework of the evaluation consisted primarily in a review of project documents provided by REF, the field research included interviews with at least one representative of each grantee organization (the project manager or project coordinator), one other member of project staff, one representative of a school either directly participating in project activities or attended by pupils from the target group and at least one parent of a child targeted by the project in question.

Key findings

1. Although the absence of baseline data on project participants and of counterfactual data on a control group rule out calculation of per-child costs on the level of outcomes, per-child costs can be compared among the projects on the level of inputs, as shown in the table below.

Table S1. Monthly per-child costs for projects included in the evaluation

Project code	Grantee	Duration (months)	Budget (EUR)	Expected number of children	Project costs per child per month (EUR)	Direct costs per child per month (EUR)
SLO 005	LHRA	12	79,740	195	77	56
SLO 020	LHRA	16	155,060	60	162	130
SLO 014	RUCD	11	71,800	200	33	21
SLO 016	CAI	12	80,850	100	67	38
SLO 018	KARI	24	119,000	675	7	4
SLO 023	KARI	7	16,740	260	9	8

2. The input per-child costs can be meaningfully compared with the higher expenditures for education of children within the special education system in Slovakia. As shown in the table below, an intervention that effectively prevents placement of a child in special education decreases public spending by EUR 543.51 per year. Thus, from the standpoint of total input per-child costs, four of the six evaluated projects have potential to compare favourably to placement in special schools.

Table S2. Annual per-child state expenditures for standard and special education

Type of school and class	Minimum annual expenditure (EUR)	Maximum annual expenditure (EUR)
Standard	1,069.24	1,113.92
Special	1,612.75	1,657.43
DIFFERENCE	543.51	543.51

Introduction

This report was elaborated as a part and output of an external evaluation conducted by a team of experts led by Marek F. Hojsík from Roma Institute Bratislava (hereinafter “Consultant”). The evaluation was requested by the Roma Education Fund (REF) and the Consultant was selected by the REF through an open tender. The external evaluation covers six REF-supported projects implemented in Slovakia by four non-governmental organisations (hereinafter “Grantees”) aimed at preventing or reversing segregation of Romani children in special education (see Table 1: List of evaluated REF-supported projects).

The aim of the methodology was to provide a comparison of effectiveness of the four project models and make recommendations on how elements of one or more models could be applied in Slovakia on a national level. A focus had to be made on achievement of quantitative results (number of children prevented from enrolling in or transferred out of special education), which would be compared with project indicators in the project implementation plans. Also costs-per-child of each project had to be assessed.

The products to be delivered by the Consultant were, according to the Terms of Reference (see Annex 1: Terms of Reference):

1. Evaluation methodology and research instruments,
2. Methodology for calculating costs per child,
3. Evaluation report.

The evaluation methodology and research instruments (a semi-structured interview scenario for Grantees, a semi-structured interview scenario for projects’ adult participants – school representatives and children’s parents, and a semi-structured focus group scenario for joint meeting of all four Grantees) were elaborated based on the project documents provided by the REF. The evaluation methodology outline and all research instruments (except the semi-structured focus group scenario for joint meeting of all four Grantees) were submitted for approval to the REF before the field research phase started (see Annex 4: Research instruments).

The desk research included a review of project-related documents provided by the REF (see: Annex 2: List of documents provided to the Consultant by the REF); it is to be stressed that documents related to the most of projects to be examined do not included necessary hard data (such as numbers and identification of beneficiaries and successful beneficiaries). The field research included interviews with at least one representative of each Grantee (project manager, project coordinator), one project staff, one representative of schools in concerned localities (either directly involved into projects or attended by pupils from the target group) and at least one parent of children from the target group. The field research took place in Bratislava, Trnava, Zlaté Klasy, Banská Bystrica, Ružomberok, Martin and Rimavská Sobota between 10 and 22 June 2010 (see Annex 3: List of interviews).

The joint meeting of all Grantees (focus group) was planned for 14 July 2010. As several participants declared later not to be able to travel to Bratislava, it was changed to a joint teleconference via Skype. At the very day of conference two Grantees announced that they would not be able to join it due to technical reasons. For this

reason the joint meeting bringing together all four Grantees did not take place. The prepared scenario of the focus group was sent to Grantees with a request to send back answers to the questions, which had to be discussed during the meeting (but only one Grantee, CAI (project SLO 016), actually sent back the answers). Additional interviews with schools and municipal officials, where the projects had been implemented, were conducted during first two weeks of July.

During the field research phase of the evaluation, in case of most projects to be examined, the Consultant encountered serious problems in access to evidence-based information (it means information that can be objectively verified or sustained by evidence such as attendance list or testimony of a third person) by and quantitative data. As described below, in sections concerning respective projects, the Grantees either did not have the necessary documents available at all, or provided access only to unsorted documents including several other projects (and invited the Consultant to “search for documents he needed”), or had only incomplete documentation. Out of four Grantees, only one, KARI (projects SLO 018 and SLO 023), was able to provide requested complete documents and sorted quantitative data necessary for exercise of the evaluation. Another Grantee RUCD (project SLO 014) provided the Consultant with lists of project participants and children benefiting from the project, however, these data do not match with records provided by interviewed school representatives. Two remaining Grantees, CAI and LHRA, provided only incomplete data. Therefore the Consultant cannot consider the data provided by the Grantees as fully reliable and cannot base on them a credible evidence-based comparative quantitative evaluation, including a credible cost-per-child comparison.

The Consultant experienced also other problems related to data collections. Firstly, some involved schools were not able or willing to provide the Consultant with requested information about projects, children beneficiaries and results; this might be due to relations between the schools and the Grantee, which considerably deteriorated during the project implementation (LHRA – projects SLO 005 and SLO 020). Secondly, there was a considerable time gap between the project implementation and evaluation (the evaluation took place one to three years after the projects’ completion). For that reason several schools were not able to provide the Consultant with requested documents (some documents are archived only two years, according to Elementary School in Zlaté Klasy (SLO 005/020) and Elementary School A. Dubček in Martin (SLO 014)). Also, many interviewees seemed not to be able to remember clearly about details of examined projects or were confusing them with other projects and/or activities focused on schooling of Romani children implemented meanwhile in the same location/community/school. This problem concerned mostly Romani parents and therefore the originally planned interviews with them had to be reduced. Many adult project participants or beneficiaries (families of children) moved away meanwhile or quit working in the involved schools and could not be found.

Third problem – of a more systematic nature – is that even in case of availability of reliable data on achieved results, the real effectiveness of project cannot be assessed if there is a lack of:

- a. Exact evidence-based baseline data and
- b. Counterfactual data (data on a control group).

Without such data, it is not possible to state whether the project actually made difference and funds invested into the intervention brought an added value. Only

availability of exact quantitative baseline data can provide evidence on achieved change and only comparison of occurred change in treatment group (with project intervention) and in a comparable control group (without project intervention) can provide evidence on the causal relation between the occurred change and the project in question (whether results of a project's participants are better than they would have been without the project). Such a control group and measurement of its results was not included in any of the projects, which are object of this evaluation. All the difficulties stated above are reflected in recommendations at the end of this report.

Because of these reasons, the evaluation has rather qualitative character, even if it had been originally planned as a quantitative one.

The Consultant attempted to use data provided by state agency School Information and Forecast Institute (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva, UIPS) for comparison with projects' outcomes.¹ These data together with data from Atlas of Roma Communities 2004² could be used for verification of the baseline data provided by Grantees. However, the UIPS data are not disaggregated according to the ethnicity and the ratio of Romani and non-Romani children in those figures is unknown. If such data on large samples are used for comparison, effect of many unpredicted intervening variables cannot be estimated. For these reasons the data could not be used for measuring the projects impact.

The first section of the present report contains the evaluation methodology as elaborated for the purpose of the evaluation of the six projects, on the basis of provided project documentation and planned data collection methods. The methodology was elaborated in line with the *Program Evaluation Standards* of the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation³ and can be used for evaluation of further project aimed at desegregation of Romani children supported by the REF.

In the second section the six examined projects are evaluated according to the proposed methodology and specific evaluation-related problems identified. Although the evaluation did not include financial control (audit) of the implemented projects, some remarks on the use of REF funds were included, where found appropriate by the Consultant. The third section contains calculation of the projects' costs-per-child. As was mentioned above, due to a lack of necessary quantitative data on both projects' actual outcomes (or such data being only incomplete) and data on a control group (which would allow a counterfactual comparison and assess whether the project made difference or not), it is not possible to calculate effective projects' costs-per-child. Therefore the cost-per-child are calculated only from available data, it means the projects approved by the REF, including expected results, or outcomes declared by the Grantees, which in most cases cannot be considered as evidence-based (or are even of questionable liability). The Consultant considers that even such incomplete

¹ Data concerning special schools and classes with curricular variant A (for children with light mental disabilities), where Romani children are usually misplaced.

² Jurásková, M., Kriglerová, E., Rybová, J. (2004). *Atlas rómskych komúní na Slovensku 2004*. Bratislava: Úrad vlády SR. Some data are available at: <http://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/3554/list-faktov.php>

³ Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. (1994). *The Program Evaluation Standards, 2nd Edition*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

comparison can provide the REF with a useful feedback on the funding practices. However, it cannot measure and compare the effectiveness of REF's investment into different projects. On the other hand, the information on the projects' cost-per-child (the REF's investment) could be compared with higher State costs of in special education (so-called per capita normative in Slovak special education is higher in than mainstream school).

The forth section contains conclusions from the performed examination of the project and fifth recommendations to the REF based on observations within the conducted methodology and feedback from Grantees and other institutions and persons involved or concerned by the implemented projects.

Table 1: List of evaluated REF-supported projects

Project code	Grantee (abbreviation)	Project name	Location	Implementation period	Duration	Budget
SLO 005	League of Human Rights Advocates (LHRA)	Integration of Romani Children from Special Schools and Classes to Mainstream Schools and Classes – Phase I	Trnava, Zlaté Klasy	03/2006-08/2007	12 months	179,740 EUR
SLO 020		Integration of Romani Children from Special Schools and Classes to Mainstream Schools and Classes – Phase II	Trnava, Zlaté Klasy	12/2007-03/2009	16 months	155,060 EUR
SLO 014	Romani Union for Civic Development (RUCD)	Advocacy Campaign against Enrolment of Roma Children in Special Schools and Classes	Liptovský Mikuláš, Ružomberok, Martin	11/2006-09/2007	11 months	71,800 EUR
SLO 016	Civic Alternative Initiative (CAI)	Roma Community against Segregation in Schools	District Rimavská Sobota (six locations)	03/2007-03/2008	12 months	80,850 EUR
SLO 018	County Association of Roma Initiatives/KARI Union (KARI)	Awareness Raising in Roma Families: “What are Special Schools?”	Region Banská Bystrica (seven locations)	07/2007-06/2009	24 months	119,000 EUR
SLO 023		Mentoring and Tutoring of Roma First-Form Students at Basic Schools	Region Banská Bystrica (seven locations)	01/2009-06/2009	7 months	16,740 EUR

1. Evaluation Methodology

Within the evaluation, the projects were examined from several points of views in order to assess the quality of their preparation and implementation, impact of their activities in terms of the projects' stated objectives and overall effectiveness of the projects and use of the REF funds:

1. Problem identification,
2. Clarity of project objective and appropriateness of means,
3. Targeting,
4. Project integrity,
5. Effectiveness (impact assessment),
6. Sustainability,
7. Efficiency,
8. Feedback.

The examination was based on review of project documents provided by the REF, records on the project implementation, particularly on project participants, provided by respective Grantees, records on pupils concerned with the project provided by schools (where appropriate), semi-structured interviews with representatives of the Grantees, representatives of involved schools or other stakeholders, as psychologists or municipalities (where appropriate), adult project participants, as teachers or teacher assistants, and with parents of children participating or benefiting from the projects.

Problem identification

This was a basic issue of examination in every project – proper definition of the problem and its interpretation was verified, including the causes of the problem, which had got to be eradicated or reduced by the intervention.

The practice of segregation of Romani children in special education in Slovakia is a well-known and documented problem,⁴ which must be considered as violation of their human rights and has serious negative consequences on Romani children (quality and formal level of achieved education, social stigmatisation, chances of integration on the labour market and risk of social exclusion and others). This phenomenon can be interpreted and operationalised as a consequence of different, mutually non-exclusive, causes: conscious and intentional discrimination against Romani children driven by racist attitudes of authorities, lack of awareness among Romani parents about their children's rights, absence of accessible remedies against Romani children rights violation, or insufficient performance of children in standard schools, due in its turn to insensitive school environment toward children from ethnic minorities or socially disadvantaged family background, insufficient personnel in schools, excessive number of pupils per teacher, lack of a teacher assistant or others. It is probable that

⁴ For example: EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program. (2007). *Equal access to quality education for Roma. Vol. 2. Monitoring Reports on Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Slovakia.* Budapest: OSI. Available at: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/articles_publications/publications/equal_20071_217

the problem of segregation of Romani children varies in different places, where it can have different forms, causes and context. Moreover, the Roma are not a homogeneous group, so in one location one (multiple disadvantaged) subgroup of Roma can be more vulnerable and more exposed to the practice of segregation in special schools (for example Romani children from a segregated neighbourhood or from poorest families can be segregated in special schools, while children from more wealthy Roma families living among non-Roma attend mainstream schools).

In order to make an intervention effective, already in the stage of project designing, the problem of segregation of Romani children had to be analysed in depth in the local context and the main cause(s) had to be properly identified.

Therefore, in the first stage it was important to assess whether the Grantee in question had been actually familiar with the extent, forms and causes of the problem of segregation of Romani children in special schools in context of location(s), where the project was to be implemented, or instead the project's rationale had been based rather on a general and well-known fact that the segregation does occur in Slovakia, but did not take into considerations local specificities and manifestations of this phenomenon.

Sources of data: project documentation, interviews with Grantees, interviews with local schools and/or authorities, interviews with Romani children's parents.

Clarity of objective and appropriateness of means

In the second stage the evaluation examined whether the Grantee had been able to set up a concrete, specific and feasible project objective, necessary for achievement of the aim of eradication or reduction of the problem of segregation of Romani children in special schools and of its causes, or to contribute to this aim. Achievement of the objective had to be measurable and the Grantee had to be able to provide objectively verifiable evidence about the achievement. Documented achievement of the objective (verified through achievement of planned indicators) is interpreted as success of the project.

The objective must match the problem, which was identified in the location, where the project has been implemented, reflect the local context, opportunities and limitation, and be appropriate to the real capacities and possibilities of the Grantee. The specific objective must logically lead to a series of activities. In the other direction, all activities performed within the project must be consistent with and justifiable in relation to the defined problem and project objective.

The effectiveness does matter. For example, in a context where the main cause of overrepresentation of Romani children in special education is their drop out from higher grades of standard elementary school/class because of their low performance, we can expect that awareness-raising project for parents will be less effective than a project aimed at tutoring for children or educational trainings for teachers (nevertheless that a campaign project can raise parents' awareness that they can refuse transfer of their children into special school/class).

Thus, consistency of the logical link: “problem – specific objective – activities – results” was examined in this stage.

Sources of data: project documentation, interviews with Grantees.

Targeting

An accurate and well-adjusted targeting of the intervention is of crucial importance for effectiveness of every project. Since most projects have limited resources and impact, they are able to provide assistance only to a limited number of beneficiaries. Therefore it is important to make sure, that the assistance is provided to those persons, who are most vulnerable and exposed to the problem that the project intends to solve. The projects, which were object of this evaluation, had to focus on Romani children, who were in risk of being segregated in special schools (or already were segregated in such schools), but appropriate intervention could eliminate (or reverse) this risk (or already occurred segregation).

Such profiling, or selection criteria, had to be determined in the phase of programming (project design) or at least in the initial phase of project implementation. The criteria should be explicit, exact and formally articulated; this would allow an ex post verification, whether the project had reached appropriate target group (or whether the project covered also persons that were not intended beneficiaries and in what extend).

Practically, it was to be assessed, whether all children participating in and benefiting from the project actually needed the assistance in order not to become victims of segregation in special schools, and in which extend the project was able to cover the children in risk within the location, where the project was implemented.

Inaccurate targeting implies two threats to effectiveness of the project and use of REF funds – substitutions and net loss. The former mean that instead of providing the project assistance to the children, who are the most exposed to a risk of segregation in special schools, the assistance is provided rather to children who are not under imminent risk of segregation (substitution of participants). In this case, the project can bring some positive results (for example increase of school performance), which are however not matching the project's aim; such project substitutes other possible intervention (for example projects aimed at improvement of children's school performance, higher effort of teachers or parents; substitution of assistance). Due to limited resources and capacities of most projects, the substitution of participants often occurs at the expense of children in actual need of assistance. From the point of projects' outcome measurement it is probable that an inaccurately targeted project would reach the expected targets (children not enrolled in special education), but in terms of original REF project aims (reduction of segregation) we can speak about a net loss, because the outcomes would have happened even without the intervention. A substitution of participants can be attractive of implementer of a project for several reasons: work with different target group can be easier, can bring better outcome indicators and identification and involvement of proper participants can be a difficult process.

It was examined how projects' beneficiaries were defined, how participants were selected and who actually participated (benefited) from the projects.

Sources of data: project documentation, interviews with schools.

Project integrity

At this stage, it was examined whether the project was actually implemented in line with the proposal submitted by the Grantee and approved for funding by the REF. A Grantee should be able to document that the activities took place, how they were executed and who participated. The assessment should go beyond a simple statement by the Grantee that an activity was done and should be sustained by evidence (signed attendance list, tangible products, testimony of participants or independent persons as teachers or others); in case of doubts, statements should be crosschecked from different sources.

If the project activities were not delivered as it had been intended and approved (not delivered at all or delivered in a diluted form), there is a risk of not achieving the anticipated objective and aim or of spending money for other activities or even false pretences. If activities not delivered, there is no project; serious irregularities between the approved project and activities really implemented can in extremis lead to a question whether the approved project was implemented at all (and whether the actually activities do not constitute a different project, possibly with a different objective and aim).

Project integrity assessment can be a problem, when there is no clear agreement about what constitutes the project activities or about how project content can be measured. Ill-defined activities with unclear content (“mobilising, education and awareness raising in communities” – SLO 014, or “to contribute in promoting intercultural interaction and understanding among Roma and non-Roma children and their parents in the mainstream schools” – SLO 016) are particularly risky, as they provide various interpretations and it is difficult to assess whether they actually took place and brought outcomes as planned.

Additionally, sometimes it can be difficult to deliver an activity as it was originally designed. This can be related with inaccurate problem analysis and project development (the actual needs and problems encountered during the implementation can differ from anticipated ones) or non-predictable events and development (changes in partners’ priorities and involvement, participants not interested in joining the activities or dropping out, non-achievement of expected outcomes and others). It was to be assessed whether the Grantee had got a contingency plan for such situations, or alternatives were developed when problem occurred, or no action was taken. A well-developed system of internal monitoring and communication with external agents can provide a necessary feedback on project performance, are useful instruments for project’s quality and effectiveness control. For the purpose of evaluation of risk management’s quality, the evaluation had to examine whether a Grantee was able to detect possible weaknesses in the design or problems in the implementation of a project (an how) and what corrective measures were undertaken (how and by whom) and with what effect.

It was examined whether all activities anticipated in the project approved and funded by the REF were actually implemented and how. This was assessed through comparison of the project against evidence and documentation provided by the Grantee and verified with independent persons.

Sources of data: project documentation, interviews with Grantees, interviews with local schools and/or authorities, interviews with Romani children’s parents.

Effectiveness (impact assessment)

To measure effectiveness of a project questions whether the projects have actually worked and what impact they brought must be answered. For this purpose it must be clear, what the project was supposed to accomplish, and in the present stage the achieved change should be measured. As the projects' aim was to prevent or reduce segregation of Romani children in special schools/classes, we should measure the how many children were not enrolled in special schools/classes or were transferred from special schools/classes into mainstream schools/classes thanks to the projects.

Depending on specific objective of each project, respective definition of successful project beneficiary is to be described (what had to happen with a child from project's target group in order to be considered as successful beneficiary – not to be enrolled in a special school/class, to be transferred into mainstream school/class, to have school performance increased, to pass into higher grade of school, etc.). Subsequently, based on Grantees records, quantitative figures on successful beneficiaries out of all projects' beneficiaries is to be assessed and compared with the baseline data on the target group. We can then state whether the anticipated effect occurred. However we cannot answer a question of causality of the effect and the intervention yet, because there can be a number of intervening factors, which could make the recorded change happen, and the change (i. e. increase/decrease of children not enrolled in a special schools/classes, transferred into mainstream schools/classes, school performance increased, successful advancement into higher grade of school, etc.) would have occur even without the project.

In order to assess actual impact of a project, it must be credibly approximated what would happened to the target group in the absence of the project. For this purpose a change in a control group should be measured and compared with the change assessed in the treatment group (children participating in the evaluated project). The comparison of data on the project with counterfactual data can answer the question whether the project made difference and what was it effectiveness. Statistical significance must be checked.

Table 2: Scheme of the counterfactual measurement

	treatment group	control group
data before project	baseline data (B_T)	baseline data (B_C)
intervention	project costs (P)	<i>no intervention</i>
data after project	outputs (A_T)	counterfactual data (A_C)
outcome measurement	change: A_T/B_T (C_T)	change: A_C/B_C (C_C)
effectiveness measurement	difference: C_T/C_C (D)	
project efficiency measurement	P/D	

Evaluation of the projects' effectiveness is not possible without evidence-based quantitative data.

For example, in case of tutoring provided to Romani children in a mainstream class, who are in risk of being transferred into special class because of insufficient performance, the number of drop-outs within one school year can be measured and the assessed ratio compared with a ratio of drop-outs occurred in a similar class, where no tutoring was provided (control group). Or in case of a campaign against

enrolling Romani children into special schools/classes in one municipality, the ratio of enrolment of Romani children into special schools/classes in a school year before the campaign and in a school year after the campaign can be measured. The assessed difference can be compared with a difference between the ratios of enrolment of Romani children in other municipality, where the campaign had not taken place (control group), measured in the same two years. It is evident, that validity of such a comparison largely depends on a quality of the composition of the control group; the control group should have as similar characteristics as possible to the treatment group (in terms of number of pupils, their ethnic composition, school performance before the intervention, social and cultural background and environment, etc).⁵

Quantitative (evidence-based) baseline data and output data on the project's beneficiaries (treatment group) are to be gathered from the Grantee; also data on a control group to be gathered (it must be verified whether the control group matches the treatment group and thus whether the data are comparable).

Sources of data: project documentation, interviews with Grantees, interviews with local schools and/or authorities.

Sustainability

A project can be evaluated as sustainable if some of its effects persist after the project completion. The effects can be of different character and some of them can be unexpected (positive side-effect):

Institutional: establishment of partnership, seed-money (the project generated additional funding), extension of activities of the Grantee (the same activities toward a larger or other target group or new activities complementary to the project), capacities (expert or technical) of the Grantee strengthened.

Idiosyncratic: change in behaviour, attitudes and awareness of different stakeholders (teachers, school management, officers or others), empowerment of the target group, improvement of relations and trust building (between school and pupils, school and parents or others).

Systematic: if some of its activities were evaluated as successful and effective by stakeholders in the school or locality, where the project had been implemented, or on higher level – regional, national or international level – and mainstreamed into the common policy or were transferred into other locations.

In this stage it is to be examined whether activities aimed at desegregation of Romani children continue to be performed by any actor in the locality or whether there were any systematic changes with the aim to reduce or reverse the segregation of Romani children in special education.

Sources of data: interviews with Grantees, interviews with local schools and/or authorities, interviews with Romani children's parents.

Efficiency

In this stage the empirically obtained data were to be analysed from an economic perspective. The costs of respective activities and effectively achieved results

⁵ However, in case of projects supported by the REF, such a quasi-experimental design seems to be more feasible and appropriate than true randomised experiment.

(difference) were to be assessed against the funds provided by the REF. The costs of the intervention can be compared with costs of other interventions, which bring the same effect (difference). However it is important to keep in mind that an intervention that is to be effective, must reflect the local context. Therefore the same kind of intervention will probably not be equally efficient in different contexts, because the extent, in which will match the real needs will differ, and accordingly its effectiveness will vary, too.

A possible net loss can be identified if any activities would have been implemented and any outcomes achieved even without the project (for example the activities would be funded from the school budget or other public resources).

The efficiency can be considered as higher from a long-term perspective if a project is sustainable.

Invested funds per successful beneficiary to be calculated.

Sources of data: project documentation, interviews with Grantees, interviews with local schools and/or authorities.

Feedback

This was an additional opportunity for Grantees to provide *anonymously* the REF with a feedback on the cooperation and support in different phases of the project cycle during the project development and implementation. (The REF regularly asks the grantees for feedback within their regular monitoring scheme (reports and monitoring visits) but the evaluation is an opportunity to express possible feedback that the grantees would have not wished to communicate to the REF directly.) The Grantees could give their opinions on the access to information about the REF and its funding opportunities. They were also requested to formulate recommendations for further operation of the REF in the cause of desegregation of Romani children and improvement of their education in Slovakia.

Sources: interviews with Grantees, focus group bringing together all Grantees.

2. Evaluation of Projects

SLO 005/SLO 020: Integration of Romani children from special schools and classes to mainstream schools and classes in Trnava region (Phase I and Phase II)

Grantee: League of Human Rights Activists.

Problem identification:

In both municipalities of Trnava and Zlaté Klasy, many Romani children are traditionally enrolled in special schools. This practice is expression of deliberate segregation of Roma. In Trnava, the Romani children are placed in special school and concentrated in standard Elementary School Gorkého (formerly two separate elementary schools – Gorkého and Limbová, merged in 2006), that is the closest to a large Romani neighbourhood (ghetto) Coburgova. In this school several specialised classes⁶ are established and some Romani children attended it. In Zlaté Klasy, Romni children are segregated in special school and one of two standard elementary schools, while only non-Roma children attend the other elementary school. The projects' expected impact was to reduce the number of Romani children in special schools and special classes and increase of Romani children in mainstream (standard) schools.

As the Grantee did not provide baseline data⁷ for the first project SLO 005, the scope of the problem of segregation in special education can be deduced only from publically available data. According to data provided by the UIPS (the data are not ethnically disaggregated and include both Romani and non-Romani children), the number of children in Trnava and Zlaté Klasy in special education was in the year preceding the project (2005/2006) as follows:

⁶ Specialised classes are not part of system of special education (as special classes are). They are established by standard elementary schools for children with a low performance who are not able to follow the education in standard classes, but are not mentally disadvantaged. Four to eight pupils can be placed in one specialised class; up to 20 pupils can be placed in a specialised class if the number of children with learning difficulties does not exceed three and remaining children do not have learning difficulties. In specialised classes standard curriculum is taught. Specialised are a support tool for children with serious learning difficulties and are to prevent their stigmatising misplacement into special education. But we cannot exclude that they can be used as an instrument of segregation of Romani children.

⁷ Information in the Application form is in some extend confusing and it seems that they sometimes interchange information for Romani children in special, specialised and standard (although ethnically homogeneous and segregated) classes. In fact, the projects did not include children in special education, but only with Romani children in standard education. Trnava elementary school included several specialised classes; the elementary school in Zlaté Klasy included no specialised classes.

Municipality	Trnava	Zlaté Klasy
Special schools	282	70
Special classes	0	0
Total	282	70

Estimated number of Roma in those districts in 2004 was, according to Atlas of Roma Communities, as follows:

Municipality	Trnava	Zlaté Klasy
Roma inhabitants	missing data	1,719
Roma 5-14 ⁸	missing data	418

According to the UIPS, specialised classes were established in Trnava since 2007 (no specialised class had been in Zlaté Klasy):

Year	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/8	2009/10
Number of classes	0	0	1	3	4
Number of pupils	0	0	9	24	33

Projects' objective/activities:

The specific objectives of the projects were:

- to advocate for integration of Romani children from special schools and classes to standard schools and classes,
- to assist Romani children in access to quality education in standard schools and classes,
- to promote intercultural interaction and understanding between Romani and non-Romani children.

Activities can be clustered as follows:

- tutoring for Romani children,
- extracurricular activities for Romani children,
- additional material support to Romani children (meals and transportation),
- advocacy with schools and other public authorities.

The projects' objective and activities are theoretically consistent, but as the projects were not implemented in special schools, but rather in standard elementary schools, activities do not match with the projects' objectives. The assistance provided to Romani pupils of standard elementary may be necessary, but it would contribute rather to a different objective (and the projects should have different title): prevention of Romani children's dropouts from standard elementary schools and their transfer to

⁸ According to the 2001 national census, children of age between 5 and 14 year represented 24,3 per cent of the overall Romani population in Slovakia. Despite all limitation (as low number of Roma who actually declared themselves as Roma in the census, regional and social differences in demography of different Roma populations, the sample not exactly matching the age of elementary schools pupils in Slovakia, which is 6 or 7 to 15 or 16) we use this figure for an illustrative comparison.

special education. Only activities with a part of Romani children in specialised classes (although they are not formally part of the special education system) of the Trnava elementary school can be seen as compliant with the original objective (and project title). Only these children can be technically reintegrated into a more standard education – standard classes in the same mainstream school.

The activities aimed at advocacy among stakeholders in order to prevent enrolment of Romani children can be consistent with the projects' specific objectives, if implemented properly.

Targeting:

The projects were implemented in three standard elementary schools (the one in Zlaté Klasy is ethnically homogenous Roma and two other in Trnava have a high number of Romani children); two elementary schools in Trnava merged at the beginning of the first project (SLO 005) into one legal entity with two school buildings. These schools were selected because they agreed on participation in the first project (SLO 005), other schools that the Grantee had addressed had not expressed interest to participate. The school in Zlaté Klasy did not want to continue in the cooperation with the Grantee within the second project (SLO 020) so it was implemented in premises made available by the municipal authority. The Grantee claims that the assistance within the second project (SLO 020) was provided to the same target group as in the first one (SLO 005), but this could not be verified by the Consultant, because the Grantee was not able to provide necessary records and documents about the participants.

The projects targeted Romani children in the above-mentioned schools. To become eligible for participation in the project, the children had to be of a Romani background and from a family in material need according to the Slovak law.⁹ Only children eligible for the State subvention for lunch were admitted to the projects, because the project budget had not expected to pay the whole amount of money for lunches, but only the parents' contribution. The Grantee claimed that the children selection was based on a survey among Romani children's families and teachers done by teacher assistants employed within the projects. Also the director of the Trnava school and mayor of Zlaté Klasy provided a proposal list of possible participants. However the interviewed teachers in Trnava complained, that the Grantee did not included into the project children with the most serious learning and behaviour difficulties, who would have needed the assistance the most. In both schools children were dropped out from the projects if they or their families were not willing to cooperate with the Grantee and respect the projects' conditions. Another eligible Romani child from the schools replaced every excluded participant.

Project integrity:

The Consultant was able to verify the most activities only through the schools involved in the project and adult participants, because the Grantee was not able to provide the Consultant with sorted and complete records and documents related to the projects' activities implementation and outputs. Most of the projects' adult participants could not be consulted because meanwhile they moved away or the contact with them was lost. The schools, on the other hand, cannot be fully considered

⁹ Children from families in material need receive lunches in schools with a higher State subvention (the State contribute 1 EUR per lunch, while parents contribute from 0.03 to 0.17 EUR per lunch).

as independent source, because the relations between them and the Grantee deteriorated considerably during the projects' implementation and unsettled financial issues remain between them. The schools' statements about the projects and achieved outcomes, which can be thus influenced by those relational problems, differed substantially from information provided by the Grantee. The two controversial assessments of the projects could be judged only upon written evidences. However the Grantee seems not to have them, therefore the Consultant was not able to assess which part's statements were in accordance with facts. The Consultant claims that the project records and documents were kept by either the Slovak Ministry of Education that conducted a control of other Grantee's projects or schools from the REF-supported projects. The schools assumedly do not want to give the records back to the Grantee because of unsettled debts for remuneration for teachers' participation in the project. The Grantee asserted that the debts were caused by REF's missing payments for an agreed follow-up of the projects. When the schools were asked about the issue, the school in Trnava said not to have any documents related to the projects (but one hand-written page with names of children beneficiaries that was given to the Consultant). And the director of the school in Zlaté Klasy said that after a bad experience with the Grantee she had liquidated all materials concerning the projects, because she wanted to forget them as soon as possible (the school has a legal obligation to keep such documents during a period of two years).

The Grantee provided the Consultant with records and written documents related to the projects only after several reminders (and declared that he did it as an expression of his good will because he was not obliged to show any documents as the REF owed him money). In fact he made available to the Consultant a pile of unsorted documents related to diverse projects and invited him to take what he needed for the evaluation. (Because of objectivity it is to be stressed that the meetings with the Grantee took place shortly after his moving to new offices and most of his documents were still stocked in boxes.) The Consultant was able to extract some documents relate to the first project (SLO 005) implemented in Trnava. No documents or records related to Zlaté Klasy or the second project were found (although we cannot exclude that they were among the documents made available, but it was not the Consultant's task to reconstruct the projects' records and documentation).

Out of 103 Romani pupils participating in the project (according to the Application Form and reports), personal folders of 80 children beneficiaries were identifies and 12 pupils were kept as substitutes for case of participants' withdraws or exclusion. After a matching of different documents, the Consultant was able to identify the affiliation of 46 participants to different classes as follows:

Grade	0	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	Σ
Standard class	0	1	1	7	1	8	0	0	0	0	18
Specialised class	0	0	17	0	1	6	6	0	0	0	30

The affiliation of remaining participants could not be identified. At least nine participants were excluded form the project for different reasons (withdraw by parents, bad behaviour, family moved away and others).

The projects' core activity was tutoring and extracurricular activities in the afternoons for children participating in the projects. The tutoring was provided by schoolteachers

hired by the Grantee and the extracurricular activities by teacher assistants employed within the projects. The tutoring took place, according to the Grantee, every day in small groups of 15 to 20 children; the teachers reviewed with the children the lessons from the morning classes and helped the children to prepare homework. The project assistants were responsible for extracurricular activities in the afternoons. The interviewed teachers from both schools criticised the work of teacher assistants, who had missed, according to them, necessary skills and pedagogical training. They assumedly inappropriately intervened into the educational process in classes led by teachers and frequently arrived to classes late, what disturbed the education process. Several conflicts between teachers and assistants occurred, sometimes in presence of pupils. Sometimes assistants showed to parents also other pupils' personal information and school results, what was seen as violation of personal data.

Teachers from Trnava claimed that assistants sometimes neglected their duties and sent children home instead of afternoon activities, so the children missed also the activities provided normally by the school. According to a former project staff, such misunderstanding could be caused because the activities used to take place in a different school building, so some teachers were perhaps not informed about the activities with project children. The teachers were not familiar with the activities planned for the children by the project. Teachers from Zlaté Klasy declared that the projects brought only anarchy in school and even more complicated the relations between teachers and Romani pupils, because they lost the respect toward the rules in school and teachers.

The Consultant was not able to verify the implementation of summer activities – summer lessons, rewards for performance, checking of performance – planned in the first project (SLO 005) and assess their extent and quality. The Grantee claimed that they took place in line with the project; teachers and other interviewees in Trnava and Zlaté Klasy denied it. No documents or records related to those activities were provided to the Consultant.

The two meals for free provided to the children participating in the project was identified as the best activity by both interviewed schools. Many parents would not be able to ensure the two meals for them. However, the selective basis on which the free-of-charge meals were provided sometimes contributed to deterioration of relations among children and between children not included in the project and the school. In some cases of older pupils, the assistants employed by the project did not respect their timetables and took them from classes in order to go for lunch with them; some children thus missed some obligatory classes.

The activity of employment of a school bus used in Trnava for travel of Romani children was criticised by teachers. They did not find it very effective, as the school is ten minutes walking from the Roma settlement. However the Grantee found this activity as a substantial simplification of regular school attendance of Romani children. It was useful in bad weather and for assistants it was easier, to ensure that the children actually arrive to school. According to an interviewed Romani assistant the bus substituted a parents' duty. Nevertheless, the teachers admitted, that the activities focused on school attendance brought positive results. The attendance improved, if a child was missing, the assistants checked whether she or he did not arrive to school and if the reason was not appropriate, brought her or him to school.

Effectiveness:

From the projects' Application Forms and Project Implementation Plans we can deduce that a successful beneficiary would have been:

1. a child who was transferred in standard elementary school from special school or class, or
2. a child who would not have been transferred from standard education to special education.

However, taking into consideration the fact that the projects were implemented in standard school, the first definition seems so be senseless.

Because of missing project documentation and records the Consultant was not able to objectively verify the quantitative outputs and outcomes of the projects as declared in the projects' final reports. Evaluation of the impact of the projects' by the Grantee and schools' representatives differ substantially.

Regular school attendance: the school in Trnava confirmed a substantial improvement of school attendance, but the school in Zlaté Klasy denies such impact. The Consultant is not able to assess it, because of missing documentation and records.

Academic performance: the Consultant is not able to measure a positive change in the school performance due to a lack of records. In the partial records provided by the Grantee, four pupil folders contained "agreements" signed by parents and assistants employed within the projects that the children should be transferred from specialised class into a standard class. We do not know whether the children were actually transferred. The Consultant was not provided with any records or documents concerning the remaining six children that had to be transferred into standard classes according to the Final Report. The interviewed teachers in Trnava claimed that only one child had been transferred (and not thanks to the project), but the preparation of children for classes improved and even one year after the completion of the second project (SLO 020) the performance of the children having participated in the project does not decrease. The teachers in Zlaté Klasy declared that no progress was made in school performance of children involved in the project. Although this declaration may be biased because of very bad relations between the school director and the Grantee, the Consultant was provided with no evidences that would allow assessing on this matter.

Integration in mainstream classes: the second (SLO 020) project's Quarterly Report 4 states that thanks to both projects 205 children in total were integrated in Trnava, ten special classes in Zlaté Klasy converted into standard classes and 28 children from special classes in Zlaté Klasy transferred in special education by the end of the second project (SLO 020). These statements were not however sustained with any data or evidence (even if speaking about specialised classes that are not part of special education). According to the UIPS the specialised classes were established in 2007 only and since then in total eight specialised classes operated in the school with 66 pupils. Moreover, there had been no specialised classes in Zlaté Klasy school involved in the project, according to the director and UIPS data (and the local special school was not involved in the projects).

The outputs, outcomes and impacts of the projects cannot be assessed without records and documentation. Moreover, the Grantee's declarations about the results are

controversial to testimonies of the involved schools and official data of a specialised State agency for data collection in education (UIPS).

No child participating in the projects was transferred from standard to special education, while the dropouts recorded by the UIPS in the municipalities of Trnava and Zlaté Klasy were as follows (data are not disaggregated by ethnicity):

year	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10
Trnava	6	19	10	16	8	*
Zlaté Klasy	8	2	7	6	7	*

* Not available yet (data are reported by 15 September for the precedent year).

The Consultant cannot interpret the fact that no child participating in the projects was transferred to special class/school as a consequence of the projects, because the projects' participants had not been selected randomly (interviewed teachers complained that children with the most important learning and behaviour difficulties had not been included in the project, also some children with problems had been replaced). Another problem is that the samples are too small and details about transferred children are not known, so many other variables (not related to the projects) could intervene.

Sustainability:

The interviewed teachers in Trnava find the projects' idea as very good, but are not satisfied with its realisation. The school declared to plan to continue in similar activities in cooperation with the municipal office (and they do not plan to follow-up in some activities as the bus transportation of children to/from school). The teachers believe that such interventions should be continuous during a longer period of time and should target not only Romani pupils from disadvantaged background, but also their community (education of adults) in order to bring a sustainable change. But already a shorter intervention as the evaluated projects were brought an improvement in involved children's attitudes and behaviour in school, but a better targeting will be necessary (focused on children who need the most help).

The elementary school in Zlaté Klasy assesses the projects negatively. After the projects ending, the regime in the school was restored according to them. And the regime is a fundament for education of children from disadvantaged environment, the director claims. If the school joins any further project in the future, it will not be with an NGO but only with "professionals" instead. The director stressed that every project should have a clear plan of activities for children with agreed content and timetable. A priority should be given to socialisation of younger children that is necessary for their future success in elementary schools and work with mothers.

Negative attitudes of the interviewed schools can be linked to a fact that the Grantee owes to schools and teachers payments for two-month work.

Some Romani assistants participating in the project were inspired by their experience and get enrolled in higher education in the field of education of Romani children, according to the Grantee.

Efficiency:

Due to a lack of reliable data about the actual number of projects' participants, their performance (or transfer to/from special education) and outputs, outcomes and impact of the projects it is not possible to evaluate efficiency of the projects.

Feedback:

Teachers from both schools involved in the projects emphasised negative experience with the interaction between the project team and the school staff. Conflicts between the project and school staffs occurred and lead to a deterioration of relation between the schools and the Grantee. Teachers said that the presence of the project staff in schools disturbed the schools' operation and relations between teachers and pupils, their discipline and respect toward teachers' authority. Teachers stressed that communication and cooperation from the side the Grantee was insufficient, they were not approached as partners and their requests and opinions were not respected. Teachers from Trnava school said that there was only one joint meeting with the Grantee at the beginning of the project. When the teachers requested a meeting with the Grantee they were sad to come to Grantee's office in Bratislava, if they want something.

What concerns the projects' content, the teachers criticised that assistants employed within the projects were not appropriately trained and missed necessary pedagogical skills and experience. Its consequence was that they were not able to provide the educational¹⁰ for children on a necessary quality level. The assistants were not willing to accept their methodical recommendation concerning the education of children (as a necessity of activities aimed at psychohygiene of children, differentiation of educational activities and others).

Teachers in Zlaté Klasy spoke even about conflicts between them and the Grantee and the project staff. They guessed that the Grantee had excessive and non-realistic demands (such as request for an office and computer equipment to be provided by the school) that the school was not able to satisfy. The school staffs were frustrated that the Grantee was not taking into consideration their requests and complains.

Following the interviews with the schools and the Grantee, the Consultant must emphasise that the relations between them are considerably problematic and each party strongly criticise the other party's attitude and behaviour. Each party gives responsibility for problems within the projects to the other one. This atmosphere complicated the Consultant's efforts to objectively assess each party's role in the projects implementation. It seems that the problems started immediately after the beginning of the implementation of the projects. The main reason of this deterioration of the relations was probably insufficient communication and a lack of participation of the schools in the projects' implementation and decision-making.

Some administrative and financial problems emerged. Teachers refused to sign time sheets containing reporting more hours than actually had been taught. An interviewed former project staff admitted that such situations occurred, but not because of bad intentions of the Grantee, but rather because of a disorder in the projects' administration by the project manager. Also, the Grantee says that he owes funds to both schools because he had an informal agreement about a continuation of the projects with the REF. Therefore he asked the teachers to continue in activities. But finally the REF did not provide the funds for the continuation.

¹⁰ In Slovak pedagogy education (výchova) and instruction (vzdelávanie) are seen as two different complementary domains. In this context the interviewed teachers spoke about education that was expected to be provided rather by assistants, while the instruction by the teachers.

SLO 014: Advocacy Campaign against Enrolment of Roma Children in Special Schools and Classes

Grantee: Romani Union for Civic Development.

Problem identification:

The project was intended to address a problem of long-term practice of systematic and forced enrolment of Romani children in special schools and classes by local authorities in districts of Ružomberok, Martin and Liptovský Mikuláš. According to the baseline data provided by the Grantee, up to 95 per cent of Romani children in selected localities used to be placed in special education.

The consultant was not able to verify the information from an objective source, because of a lack of ethnically disaggregated data on children attending special schools or classes in the districts. According to data provided by the UIPS, the number of children (Roma and non-Roma) in the districts attending special schools and classes was in the year preceding the project (2005/2006) as follows:

District	Ružomberok	Martin	Liptovský Mikuláš
Special schools	86	162	225
Special classes	0	0	41
Total	86	162	266

Estimated number of Roma in those districts in 2004 was, according to Atlas of Roma Communities as follows:

District	Ružomberok	Martin	Liptovský Mikuláš
Roma inhabitants	643	1278	3242
Roma 5-14 ¹¹	156	311	788

According to interviews with teachers and parents of Romani children, there is an overrepresentation of Romani children in special education in those districts; however, the estimation provided by the Grantee (95 per cent of Romani children in special schools/classes) seems to be exaggerated. All mainstream elementary schools visited within the evaluation had Romani pupils and some of them also specialised pedagogical staff providing additional support to children from disadvantaged background. Different mainstream elementary schools in Ružomberok and Martin try to have an equal representation of Romani pupils in each school. This strategy is to prevent that one school starts to be seen as “Roma” what would decrease its symbolic status and provoke a withdrawal of non-Romani pupils. This practice was confirmed by interviewed Roma, who sometimes complained that some children have to go to more remote schools, while other children from the same settlement can attend a close school.

¹¹ According to the 2001 national census, children of age between 5 and 14 year represented 24,3 per cent of the overall Romani population in Slovakia. Despite all limitation (as low number of Roma who actually declared themselves as Roma in the census, regional and social differences in demography of different Roma populations, the sample not exactly matching the age of elementary schools pupils in Slovakia, which is 6 or 7 to 15 or 16) we use this figure for an illustrative comparison.

All interviewed parents seemed to be informed about the problem of misplacement of their children in special education and spontaneously noted that a child cannot be placed directly into a special school or class, unless he/she is mentally disabled, and can be only transferred from standard education if has insufficient performance.

Interviewed teachers identified this problem as the main cause of placement of Romani children into special education, too. Some schools provide children in risk with additional tutoring, which is paid by schools or volunteered by teachers.¹² A main cause of this problem is that in the Slovak educational system the schools children can be successful only if they have permanent support in their families, who participate in the education (homework, repetition of the subject matters taught in school at home, preparation for next day); families and parents in fact substitute the tutoring, which is usually not provided in schools (in Slovakia, there is usually only half-day education in elementary schools). According to teachers, many Romani parents are able to provide such support to children only in the first grade (or several lower grades) of the elementary school. Later, when parents are not able to support children in tutoring anymore, due to content of curricula for higher grades, performance of many Romani pupils decreases. Interviewed teachers believe that if Romani children would have necessary individualised support, the problem of transfer into special education would be substantially reduced.¹³

Teachers do not have knowledge about a massive problem, that Romani parents would enrol their children into special schools since the first grade. If an elementary school assesses that a child to be enrolled is not ready, they propose to parents to postpone the beginning of school education for next year; in case of insufficient performance of children attending school, schools prefer that pupils repeat a year. Transfer to special education seems to be the ultimate solution in visited schools (this can be connected also to a fact that the funding of schools in Slovakia is based on per capita basis and loss of pupils means loss of funding). Schools are provided with lists of children in schooling age in their districts by birth registers and check whether parents actually do enrol children. If parents do not do so, teachers personally visit and remind the families. Interviewed Romani parents confirmed this practice.

Project objective/activities:

The specific objectives of the project were:

- to provide members of Romani communities with adequate information on importance of educating their children in mainstream schools,
- to work with authorities of targeted nursery schools/kindergartens to enable Romani pupils have access to quality education in mainstream schools/classes,
- to work and cooperate with targeted parents whose children are in nursery schools/kindergartens in order they are not sent to special schools/classes.

¹² Not all schools were able to manage such additional service because of lack of funds or personnel; schools seem to be afraid of projects because of excessive administration.

¹³ A program of school assistants implemented currently in some Slovak municipalities is ineffective for this aim, as they miss necessary pedagogical skills. Previous pilot program of Romani school assistants, who were provided with the pedagogical training, was much more effective, according to teachers.

Activities can be clustered as follows:

- identification of children in risk to be enrolled in special education and in need of assistance,
- awareness rising of Romani parents (campaign),
- advocacy with schools and authorities,
- mentoring for families in risk (to assist in enrolment of children into school).

The project includes also activities assumed to “contribute in promoting intercultural interaction [...] in mainstream schools”. This is a vague description, which does not allow assessing its content from the project proposal. The Project Implementation Plan (but not the project Application Form) indicates as the activities’ deliverables only “parents meetings, list o parents”.

Such objectives and activities would be (in some extent) consistent with the problem defined by the Grantee. However, taking into consideration the real situation in the localities in question assessed by the Consultant, it seems that already the problem to be tackled was not well identified. Most Romani children are placed into special education because of insufficient performance in mainstream schools, due in its turn to a lack of support, which would overcome their social disadvantages and not to low awareness of their parents or intentional and systematic segregation policy by local schools and authorities.

Targeting:

As the project’s essence is a campaign for a dispersed target group, children in pre-school age, who would have to be enrolled in schools for the following school year, an accurate targeting is crucial for success of the project. We can assume, that only a subgroup of Romani children in the target localities are in higher risk of being enrolled directly in special education than other Romani children in the same localities (because Romani children represent also an important portion of children enrolled in mainstream education). In order to make the intervention effective, the project activities should reach this subgroup of Romani children and schools or activities that decide on enrolment of Romani children in special education.

The project Application Form provides little information about how the awareness raising and mentoring activities’ target group would be identified. The project had to focus on Romani children in kindergartens. However such targeting does not seem to be appropriate, because Romani children attending pre-school education are usually less vulnerable to be enrolled in special education or transferred from mainstream education to special schools/classes because of a low performance. In the contrary, the children without any pre-school or extra-school support are in such risk. During the interview the Grantee however indicated, that families in highest need of assistance were selected during visits of the project staff in Romani communities. Such selection of participants/beneficiaries seems to be more appropriate and effective.

Project integrity:

The Consultant was not able to find reliable evidence about implementation of most activities. The Grantee provided the Consultant with:

- lists containing names of 188 children enrolled into mainstream education in different municipalities districts of Ružomberok, Martin and Liptovský

Mikuláš; no list was signed by parents or school representative; in case of some schools two lists were provided with different number of pupils and names;

- lists containing names of 208 parents who attended meetings aimed at awareness raising of Romani parents in different municipalities districts of Ružomberok, Martin and Liptovský Mikuláš; no list was signed by participants, and some of them missing date;
- list containing names of 23 participants (three of them project staff) of a meeting (conference) held 24 February 2007 in Hotel Kultúra in Ružomberok; participants were not signed;
- memos from two meetings (one with a school representative, other without identifiable participants); unsigned.

Interviewed Romani parents, randomly selected from lists provided by the Grantee, did know names of project staff, which had been supposed to conduct the visits in families and assist children in enrolment in schools. However they knew the project staff only in relation to other activities (leisure time activities for Romani children, organisation of cultural events), not in relation to the evaluated project's activities.

The Grantee provided the Consultant with a copy of hand out elaborated and printed within the project. Interviewed parents in Romani settlements said they know the hand out, but were not informed about any other awareness raising activity aimed at prevention of enrolment of Romani children in special education. Some parents noted that they do not need to be taught about this topic, as they know that a child cannot be enrolled into special school without consent of parents, but the problem is that some Romani children achieve only weak performance school, which finally lead to their transfer from mainstream to special education.

Six schools interviewed within the evaluation (two in each town: Ružomberok, Martin Liptovský Mikuláš) did not have knowledge about the project that would assist Romani parents to enrol their children in schools. A director of school, whose name was indicated at the memo from a meeting, denied that such meeting had taken place. All schools declared that if they have information that a child in schooling year was not enrolled school, a teacher visits the family and arrange enrolment (this fact was confirmed by Romani parents). They declared that no NGO representative was present at children registration to school. School representatives did know the Grantee's project staff, but not in relation to the REF funded project, but in other context (other activities, former teacher assistant, staff's children attending the school). Interviewed schools were asked to compare the Grantee's lists of children assisted in enrolment into school with the school's records. It was found that the lists contained an important number of children who either never attended the school, or have different date of birth than indicated in the Grantee's list (they were younger, so in the time of the project's implementation could not be enrolled in elementary school). Also the dates of enrolment of children to school did not match the dates of actual enrolment registration organised by schools.

Out of three conferences planned within project, only one was documented by the Grantee. One Romani man, whose name was at the attendance list for the conference, denied that he had attended it and had no knowledge about such conference. One teacher confirmed that she had attended the conference, telling that it was a small half-day conference with several lectures about importance of pre-school education

and due enrolment of Romani children in schools. According to her, only very limited number of people attended the conference, including several very young people (she recognised her former student in the age of 16). The Grantee did not provide the agenda of the conference. What concerns other two conferences, which were not documented, the Grantee said that only Romani parents participated, and that the aim of the event was that Romani parents from different locations know each other and get some knowledge, how Roma live in other locations.

The Grantee did not provide any deliverable form activity “Evaluation”, saying, that it was another meeting with parents.

The Grantee admitted that, contrary to the project plan, the actually implemented activities did not focus on Romani children in kindergartens, but rather on Romani children in “zero grades” of mainstream elementary schools (in special education they are called “preparatory grades”).

The Grantee was not able to explain differences between the project as approved and implemented, saying that all activities were actually delivered. When asked about concrete differences, the Grantee said not to be able to answer.

Effectiveness:

Project’s successful beneficiary was defined as a child who was enrolled in standard elementary school instead of in special school or class.

The Grantee did not provide any evidence-based baseline data, to which the project’s output could be compared and any achieved change assessed. It means that it was not possible to measure, how increased the number and rate of Romani children enrolled into first grade of mainstream elementary schools and decreased the number and rate of Romani children enrolled into first grade of special schools/classes after the project was delivered. No data on a control group are available as well, which would have determined whether the increase/decrease of Romani children in mainstream/special education could be caused by the project and measure such added value of the REF-supported intervention.

Data on enrolment of children in mainstream and special education provided by UIPS are not disaggregated by ethnicity of pupils. They show some changes occurred in enrolment into first or zero (preparatory) grades both types of education in municipalities where the project had been implemented between the year before the implementation of the project and in the year when the project was implemented (and when the impact would have manifested):

Ružomberok	2005/2006	2006/2007	change
Elementary Schools	648	643	-5
<i>Special Classes</i>	0	0	0
<i>Special Schools</i>	6	10	4
∑ Special Education	6	10	4
Ratio in Special Education	0,92%	1,53%	0,61%
Martin	2005/2006	2006/2007	change
Elementary Schools	933	964	31
<i>Special Classes</i>	0	0	0
<i>Special Schools</i>	1	4	3
∑ Special Education	1	4	3
Ratio in Special Education	0,11%	0,41%	0,31%

Liptovský Mikuláš	2005/2006	2006/2007	change
Elementary Schools	685	679	-6
<i>Special Classes</i>	17	10	-7
<i>Special Schools</i>	40	30	-10
∑ Special Education	57	40	-17
Ratio in Special Education	7,68%	5,56%	-2,12%

A small reduction of children (both Romani and non-Romani) in special education was recorded only in the municipality of Liptovský Mikuláš (in two other municipalities where the project was implemented, the number of children in special education slightly increased). However we cannot assess whether this change was caused by the project, because we do not know the portion of Romani children among children in special education and we do not know the actual change in the treatment group (i. e. among children, whose parents were the project's target group).

Taking into consideration the context, where the project was implemented – findings about the actual reasons of (possible) overrepresentation of Romani children in special education – and observations about the project implementation, there is a probability that the project's impact is very limited, if any.

Sustainability:

The Grantee does not follow up in activities started in the project, however some of the project staff continues in community activism, according to the interviewed Roma. Interviewed schools have own ongoing activities focused on Romani pupils, but those are do not have any relation to the REF supported project.

Efficiency:

Due to a lack of reliable data and serious doubts about the activities actually performed within the project, it is not possible to evaluate efficiency of the project. However, it is possible to point out several activities were highly over-budgeted taking into consideration their potential effect on achieving project objectives and real price level in Slovakia even in case if they would have been correctly implemented.

Feedback:

The Grantee admitted that in order to achieve a more substantive change in improvement of education of Romani children and to resolve the problem of their overrepresentation in special schools, a long-term assistance would be needed. Help should be provided not only to children of the pre-school age, but also children in schools in order to improve their performance. Interviewed teachers supported the idea of tutoring for disadvantaged Romani children; such individualised assistance provided by trained staff (teachers or assistants with pedagogic training) would substantially decrease their drop-out and transfer to special education. An ideal model would include, according to them, a full-day system of instruction and education (classes, tutoring, leisure activities) with use a child-friendly methods and available courses for parents.

SLO 016: Roma Community against Segregation in Schools

Grantee: Civic Alternative Initiative.

Problem identification:

The project Application Form does not contain an appropriate justification, which would explain the causes of a high rate of Romani children in the region, where the project had to be implemented (it states a high rate in six municipalities, however the real scope of the project was far wider). During a conversation with the Consultant, the Grantee defined as the main problem of education of Romani children in the region of Rimavská Sobota a low level of Roma's participation in the local politics and subsequent low influence on the public policy making. This has a direct impact on the quality of education. Due to a different demographic dynamics of Roma and non-Roma population, the number of non-Roma in schooling age decreases and of Roma in schooling age increases dramatically; most of pupils in local schools (mostly standard elementary schools) in villages are thus Roma, while few non-Roma pupils from the same villages are daily driven by their parents to elementary schools in towns, attended mostly by non-Roma pupils. Elementary schools in Slovakia are established and managed by municipalities. And as the public decision-making in villages is in hands of non-Roma (even in municipalities, where they do not constitute majority anymore), whose children do not attend local school, municipal political elites are not motivated to ensure a high quality education in local schools attended by Romani children only. Due to a weak quality of education and subsequent unsatisfactory school performance, many Romani children are in higher grades transferred in special education. Pressure on municipalities to improve low quality of education in schools with Romani children can be exerted from top by the State (that fails in this task) or from bottom by Roma. But Roma are kept in their inferior position, which is reaffirmed also by the educational system. The Grantee believes that Roma's national awareness and civic and political participation must be raised in order to increase their interest representation.

According to the baseline data provided by the Grantee, up to 99 per cent of Romani children in selected localities used to be placed in special education. And the reduction thanks to the project would be 25 per cent.

The consultant was not able to verify the information from an objective source, because of a lack of ethnically disaggregated data on children attending special schools or classes in the districts. According to data provided by the UIPS, the number of children (Roma and non-Roma) in the district in special schools and classes was in the year preceding the project (2005/2006) as follows:

District	Rimavská Sobota
Special schools	400
Special classes	114
Total	514

Estimated number of Roma in those districts in 2004 was, according to Atlas of Roma Communities, as follows:

District	Rimavská Sobota
Roma inhabitants	16,415
Roma 5-14 ¹⁴	3,988

Although a high number of Romani children in special education can be presumed in some municipalities, the baseline data provided by the Grantee seem to be highly exaggerated. Most interviewed local elementary schools in the region were actually standard and did not have special classes (many of them single-class or with a low number of classes). Children with learning difficulties (officially labelled as mentally disabled, who would therefore go to special schools or classes) are individually integrated in standard classes. However it is to be stressed, that even those standard classes were ethnically homogeneous and mostly attended by Romani children only.¹⁵ If children were transferred into special schools (often in towns or larger villages), many local elementary schools would be closed because of insufficient number of pupils. On the other hand, according to the Grantee, where special schools are established, they have only Romani pupils.

Project objective/activities:

The specific objectives of the project were:

- to mobilise members of Romani communities in the region against enrolment/registration of their children in special schools/classes,
- to advocate among local authorities against enrolment of Romani children in special education and for access of Romani children to a quality education.

Activities can be clustered as follows:

- identification of children in risk to be enrolled in special education and in need of assistance,
- awareness rising of Romani parents (campaign),
- advocacy with schools and other authorities.

The activities were delivered through meetings with respective target groups – Romani communities, standard and special education institution representatives, mayors and other stakeholders (including psychologists who are responsible for diagnostics of Romani children). The activities with Romani communities included a large-scale (2,454 interviewees) questionnaire survey about their level of awareness about issues as racial discrimination, racially motivated attacks and segregation into

¹⁴ According to the 2001 national census, children of age between 5 and 14 year represented 24,3 per cent of the overall Romani population in Slovakia. Despite all limitation (as low number of Roma who actually declared themselves as Roma in the census, regional and social differences in demography of different Roma populations, the sample not exactly matching the age of elementary schools pupils in Slovakia, which is 6 or 7 to 15 or 16) we use this figure for an illustrative comparison.

¹⁵ Thus the special education does not to be used instrument for the mainstream population and dominant ethnic group for maintaining the ethnic segregation in educational institutions.

special education. The survey brought important findings, but cannot be used for measurement of the project's impact, as the data were gathered only once (so we cannot measure the difference before and after the campaign).

The project specific objective is partially consistent with the problem in the region identified by the Grantee. It has potential to deal with the problem of misplacement of Romani children into special education where this happens. But it is not sure, whether the project can actually resolve the problem of low representation of Roma's interests in local decision-making, which is, according to the Grantee, the main reason of low quality education (even in standard schools) provided to Romani children.

The activities aimed at Roma's empowerment and awareness raising and advocacy among stakeholders could be consistent with the project specific objective, if implemented properly.

Targeting:

The Application Form states that the project would target 25,000 Roma, what can be the whole Roma population of Rimavská Sobota region (the Atlas of Roma Communities indicates a number of 16,415 Roma in 2004, but as the data are incomplete and out-of-date, the actual number can differ). At the same time, the Application Form selects six municipalities with large marginalised Romani communities, where the activities had to be carried out:

Municipality	Number of Roma*	Roma share in population*	Children enrolled/ transferred in special education in 2005/2006**
Tisovec	210	5 %	22/0
Hnúšťa	missing data	missing data	107/0
Hrachovo	missing data	missing data	23/0
Klenovec	675	21 %	41/3
Rimavská Píla***	missing data	missing data	***
Rimavská Sobota – Dužavská cesta	900	100 %	180/10****

* According to the Atlas of Roma Communities.

** In schools in the municipality.

*** Rimavská Píla is part of municipality of Tisovec and does not have own schools.

**** Data for the whole town of Rimavská Sobota.

The Project Implementation Plan includes one additional community – Ožďany:

Ožďany	missing data	missing data	15/0
--------	--------------	--------------	------

The Grantee explained that the communities had been selected based on his knowledge of the region that he acquired during his long-term engagement in the Roma cause in the region and tried to focus on those communities with low quality education available in the municipality, but with better schools in nearby municipalities where the Romani parents could send their children instead. Most of the communities are known to the Consultant as communities strongly affected by social exclusion. But the Grantee did not provide evidence-based baseline data for those communities and available data seem to be largely incomplete or possibly misleading (because Romani children from those communities can attend schools in other municipalities).

The project was designed and implemented as campaign; its target group were whole Romani communities, or their members who did attend the meetings. The Grantee declared that the project staff and volunteers did effort that parents of Romani children in risk actually attended the meetings. The project staff motivated them by providing them with refreshment and some of them with gifts for children (toys or material for school).

It is very difficult to assess the quality of targeting of the project, as its real specific objective is ambiguous – it is not clear whether it was a campaign with an aim that Romani parents do allow enrolment of their children in special schools, or that they request a better quality of education for their children (Roma civic empowerment and participation).

Project integrity:

The Consultant was not able to find reliable evidence about implementation of several activities and due to a confusing information provided by the Grantee was not fully able to assess which activities had been actually implemented and how. The Grantee provided the Consultant with:

- questionnaire distributed and completed with the parents during the meetings and summary of results (2,454 interviewees);
- attendance lists from meetings in 18 communities containing 924 names of participants (signed and dated);
- list containing names of 11 children from community of Abovce who received school bags and school material (signed and dated);
- lists containing names of 13 children from six communities enrolled in Elementary School M. Tompu in Rimavská Sobota (mainstream); the list was not signed by parents or school representative and undated;
- lists containing names of 11 children from two communities enrolled in Elementary School in Sútor (standard school; 89 per cent Roma in the village); the list was signed by school representative and dated (24 June 2008).

No output from the activity 1.1.1 aimed at identification of specific Roma communities to become direct beneficiaries and stakeholders to cooperate in the project was presented to the Consultant. According to the Grantee the selection was based on personal experience of the Grantee's leader (who is a well-known long-term Romani activist in the region).

Meetings with members of Romani communities and stakeholders were the core activities of the project. While the Application Form and the Project Implementation Plan expected meetings only in six (or seven) communities, according to the documents provided by the Grantee to the Consultant, the meetings took place in 13 communities. Out of communities included in the original plan, only in community of Ožďany a meeting was documented, evidence about meetings in remaining six communities from the Application Form were missing. Representatives of several municipalities, schools or communities are aware about Grantee's activities, but did not know about the project; they said that meetings, lectures or survey did take place, but found them rather as general Roma rights and identity awareness raising, although also educational issued (including the problem of misplacement of Romani children in special education) were discussed, as this is an important problem for Roma.

During the meetings the Grantee conducted a survey about the Roma's level of awareness about issues as racial discrimination, racially motivated attacks and

segregation into special education. Answers from 2,454 participants were collected. This can indicate that the Grantee organised even more meetings, than the 13, from which the attendance lists were provided to the Consultant (the available lists contained only 924 names). According to the Grantee, the survey took place within the meetings aimed at awareness of the participants. Therefore, the meetings' content was not based on the level of awareness of the participants identified in the survey. Nor the effect of the meetings could be measured, as the survey was not conducted twice – before and after the meeting. The communities were visited only once within the project.

During the project the Grantee was distributing a booklet “Special schools are not for Romani children, also Romani children belong to standard schools”. The booklet was printed in three languages (Romanes, Slovak, Hungarian) and presented to the Consultant. The form and content of the booklet does not seem to be fully appropriate to the purpose and target group of the project. It included a large part on the history of Roma and their journey from India to Europe (this is an important topic, but is not linked to the project objective) and many technical and legal terms and concepts (segregation, discrimination and others without concrete examples concrete illustrations that would better inform about their dangers and negative impact and practical instructions how Roma parents can identify segregation and discrimination and can defend themselves from them). The booklet is printed in small types that are uneasy to be read.

The Grantee claims to have several meetings with mainstream elementary schools aimed to negotiate about admission of Romani children. The Consultant was not provided with list of such meetings or any evidence how they took place and what was their agenda or outcomes. The Consultant positively verified that one meeting with a Pedagogical and Psychological Centre in Rimavská Sobota took place within the meeting. The director of the Centre confirmed that the project staff met with her and discussed about the problem of misplacement of Romani children into special education and possible solutions. They agreed on a further cooperation, which did not take place, however. Psychologists or pedagogues did not take part in the meetings with the Romani communities.

The project Application Form envisaged a workshop/seminar for members of Romani communities with participation of psychologists, teachers from both special and standard schools, municipal officials and representatives of the Slovak Ministry of Education. The Consultant did not find any information about such workshop/seminar. It seems that it was merged with the community meetings.

The Grantee declared that volunteers had an important role in the project (although it was not mentioned in the project), because they participated in communication with the target Romani communities. The volunteers had to be trained. However the Consultant was provided with no evidence about their involvement or training (such as list of volunteers, attendance list or agenda of the meeting, or their tasks).

The Grantee did not provide any other deliverable form activity “Gathering of statistics on the number of Roma children registered into standard primary schools and preschool year”, but two lists of 24 children enrolled into standard elementary schools in Rimavská Sobota and Sutor.

Effectiveness:

Project's successful beneficiary was defined as a child who was enrolled in standard elementary school instead of in special school or class.

The Grantee achieved and exceeded some expected indicators related to the campaigning (community meetings) activities – instead of 500 families in five municipalities the project involved 924 Roma individuals in 13 municipalities (perhaps even 2,454 who participated in the survey). However the impact of these activities on the awareness of Roma, whose rising was one of the project's specific objectives, remains unknown, because its level was not measured before and after the campaign (it was measured only once during the meetings).

The Grantee was not able to provide a complete list of Romani children enrolled in mainstream schools by 100 and decrease of enrolment of Romani children in special schools by 25 per cent thanks to the campaign as indicated in the project.

No data on a control group are available as well, which would have determined whether the increase/decrease of Romani children in mainstream/special education could be caused by the project and measure such added value of the REF-supported intervention.

Data on enrolment of children in mainstream and special education provided by UIPS are not disaggregated by ethnicity of pupils. They do not show any significant positive changes occurred in enrolment of children into first and zero (preparatory) grades of both types of education in the region where the project had been implemented between the year before the implementation of the project and in year 2007/2008 for which the Grantee provided expected impact indicators:

Year	2005/2006	2007/2008	difference
Elementary Schools	1138	1028	-110
<i>Special Classes</i>	7	11	4
<i>Special Schools</i>	46	46	0
Σ Special Education	53	57	4
Ratio in special education	4,45%	5,25%	0,80%
Transferred into special education	19	25	6

These data cover the whole region of Romavská Sobota. It is not possible to exclude that a positive impact would be recorded on the community level. The director of the Pedagogical and Psychological Centre in Rimavská Sobota believes that thanks to the Grantee's activities (probably also outside the project) local stakeholders became "much more cautious" in misplacement of Romani children in special education. However, the Consultant was not able to empirically verify this statement during the evaluation. Also it is not sure what was the project's effect on the main problem of education of Romani children in the region, that is – according to the grantee – a low quality of education provided in standard elementary schools attended by Romani children only. Its consequence is that Romani children do not continue in secondary education and are subsequently excluded from the labour market.

Sustainability:

The Grantee continues in activities started in the project, most of them are conducted on a voluntary basis in the office equipped thanks to the REF support. The activities include political mobilisation of Roma, rising of their awareness in the domains of

rights and ethnical identity and social counselling. The director of Pedagogical and Psychological Centre in Rimavská Sobota the Grantee's activities actually help to increase Roma's awareness about the problems of education of their children that has for consequence a higher sensibility of authorities to these issues. The Consultant has to note, that Grantee's activities do not seem to be educational sensu stricto, but rather Roma emancipation activism and Roma civic and political empowerment.

Efficiency:

Due to a lack of reliable data about the activities actually performed within the project and their outputs, outcomes and impact it is not possible to evaluate efficiency of the project.

As the project was concentrated mostly on meetings (and those activities were actually documented), we can only calculate project costs per meeting participant that was 87.50 EUR (or 32.95 EUR if the number of participants really equals to the number of survey interviewees).

Feedback:

The Grantee believes that an improvement of the education of Romani children is closely linked to their civic participation and empowerment. The education of Romani children must increase their rights awareness and ethnical identity. For this reason the Grantee appreciate cooperation with the REF that shares similar values, according to the Grantee. The REF should increase support of ethnical emancipation of Roma, also through their education. Also awareness of Romani parents must be raised, in order they politically request better education conditions for their children even in standard schools attended only by Romani pupils. In the future, the Grantee would exclude non-Roma authorities from the project, because for them request of better education of Roma is a political threat. A high priority should be given to education and professional training of teachers and teacher assistants (preferably Roma themselves) who are supposed to teach Romani children, because they should respond to Romani children's specific needs and interests, including their identity. For this purpose an increase of teachers of Romani ethnicity should be supported and Romani culture and identity should be included in the elementary school curriculum. REF's support should not thus concentrate only on support of grassroots education of Romani children but also promote a systematic change of education in Slovakia. Advocacy activities should be strength in order to call public and international attention on problems of education of Romani children that will exercise pressure on Slovak authorities to change the system and improve conditions and chances of Romani children in education.

SLO 018/SLO 023: 'What Are Special Schools?'/Mentoring and Tutoring of Roma First-Form Students at Basic Schools

Grantee: County Association of Roma Initiatives/KARI Union.

Problem identification:

In Banská Bystrica region the Roma represent about nine percent of the overall population (657,119 inhabitants in 2005). The Application Form of the first project (SLO 018) indicates 25 special elementary schools in the region before the beginning of the project with 2,492 pupils (statistics of the UIPS indicate 27 special schools for mentally disabled children by 15 September 2006). According to the Grantee, 90 per cent of pupils in those schools were Romani children; half of them from socially excluded families (long-term unemployed parents). Most of them are transferred to special education because of failure in the first grade of standard education. Among main causes of Romani children's low performance in standard education and subsequent overrepresentation in special education for mentally handicapped pupils the Grantee indicates social deprivation, incorrect diagnostics (consequences of social disadvantage or different cultural background of children are interpreted as manifestations of mental handicap), lack of pre-school preparation and support from their families. Children lack skills and knowledge necessary for being successful in standard elementary education that is insensitive to their specific needs. Also many children with behavioural difficulties (such as hyperactivity, problem of concentration and others) are classified as mentally disadvantaged.

According to the information provided by the UIPS, there were 27 special schools with 3,201 pupils in 311 classes and 2,155 pupils in 213 special classes integrated in 30 standard elementary schools in Banská Bystrica region in 2006. The data of the UIPS are not ethnically disaggregated and include both Romani and non-Romani children and cover also children with more serious mental handicaps (so-called variant B and C, while Romani children are misplaced in variant A only). The baseline data provided by the Grantee can be thus considered as correct.

As the second project (SLO 023) was an add-in and follow-up of the first one (SLO 018), the output data of the first were considered as baseline for the second: in the school year 2007/2008 in total 300 children beneficiaries of the project SLO 018 were enrolled in standard elementary schools while 61 were enrolled in special education in seven municipalities.

Projects' objective/activities:

The specific objectives of the first project (SLO 018) were:

- to decrease the ratio of Romani children in special schools in Banská Bystrica region,
- to increase awareness of Romani families about negative effects of enrolment of their children in special education.

The specific objectives of the second project (SLO 023) were:

- to decrease the ratio of Romani children in special schools in Banská Bystrica region,
- to increase the performance of Romani children in standard elementary schools in order to decrease their dropout to special education.

Activities of the first project (SLO 018) can be clustered as follows:

- identification of children in risk to be enrolled in special schools and in need of assistance,
- awareness raising of Romani parents (campaign),
- pre-school tutoring of Romani children.

Activities of the second project (SLO 023) can be clustered as follows:

- awareness raising of Romani parents (campaign),
- pre-school tutoring of Romani children,
- tutoring for Romani children in elementary schools.

The projects' objective and activities are consistent with the identified problem of misplacement of Romani children in special education and its causes. It seems that project activities as planned addressed several aspects of the complex problem of misplacement of Romani children in special education, including low awareness of their families about children rights to quality education, abusive enrolment of Romani children into special education by authorities (including diagnostics), pre-school preparation (equalising chances of children from disadvantaged background) and tutoring (prevention of drop-outs).

However the projects do not explicitly address the issue of special classes in standard elementary schools. Such classes are (declared) instrument of integration of mentally handicapped children (or children with other disadvantages) in mainstream institutions but practically are used as a tool of institutional segregation of some groups of children, including Romani children (because they are in segregated classes often located in separate parts of school buildings or even in separated school buildings). Also some cases of misuse of declared individual integration (a child with diagnosed special educational needs transferred from special education into mainstream education where individual support is to be provided to him/her) have been recorded in Slovakia when classes with 100 per cent "individually integrated" children were established. On the one hand institutional discrimination of those children was eliminated (they received formally standard education that enabled them to continue in standard secondary education), but on the other hand their (ethnic) segregation remained.

Targeting:

The first project (SLO 018) was implemented in seven municipalities in cooperation with local Roma or pro-Roma NGOs. According to the Grantee, the selection of municipalities where the projects had to be implemented was based on a presence of established local partner NGO (several of them are well-known by the Consultant). Involvement of NGOs with a good knowledge of local Romani communities seems to increase substantially the effectiveness of the targeting. The Grantee's partners who had been familiar with the situation of families in their locations were able to find the children with the most urgent need of assistance. Additionally, their staffs were trained within the projects to ensure their project tasks. Some of them worked at the same time as teacher assistants employed by the schools what could have positive effect on appropriate targeting and effectiveness of the intervention and coordination with the schools.

Among all the Romani families addressed within the first project's information campaign (that took form of community happenings covering a target group of approximately 800 families), some 300 were selected as direct participants of the first project. The second project (SLO 023) continued to work with children that had been assisted within the first project, enrolled in standard elementary schools where they had some learning difficulties, according to the Grantee. Some interviewed teachers from involved elementary schools in Banská Bystrica however said that they had not found fully effective to work with all Romani children in the school, as not all of them actually needed assistance. In one visited school several parents of Romani pupils involved in the projects complained that their children do not need such assistance and one child was withdrawn from the project upon parents' request.

Project integrity:

The Consultant was able to verify the most activities from the first project (SLO 018) only through records and documents provided by the Grantee as this project had been a door-to-door campaign. The interviewed Romani families seemed to confuse the project activities with other activities of the Grantee (it is understandable that beneficiaries do not need to know project affiliation of diverse activities performed by long-term active NGOs). Staff from the local partner NGOs was not interviewed within the present evaluation and the interviewed teachers had not participated in the most activities of the first project.

Within the first project the project staff in cooperation with local social field workers (employed by municipalities) elaborated a database of Romani children in pre-school age in the involved localities and conducted a survey among 300 families. The project staff also visited schools and Pedagogical and Psychological Centres responsible for diagnostics of the children. They found out that all schools and centres were using the conventional diagnostics tools that are seen as not appropriate for diagnostics of children from socially marginalised Romani communities by some experts and none of them used new tools sensitive to specificities of these children (for example the psycho-diagnostic tools developed in 2004 within a project "PHARE 2001 – Re-integration socially disadvantaged children from special needs schools in standard primary schools").¹⁶

The project staffs from local partner NGOs were monitoring the terms or registration of new children in elementary schools and whether their parents had duly enrolled all children participating in the project. This task was easier to be done where the staff worked at the same time as teacher assistant in the respective schools. If any problem with registration of children had been recorded, the project staff visited the family in question and helped them to register their child additionally.

The Grantee provided the Consultant with access to documents and records concerning the trainings of the project staff and of the teachers involved in the project. For this purpose a methodical manual was elaborated within the project. A sample of the handbook was provided to the Consultant together with diverse material for Romani parents (including a bilingual handbook that seems to be appropriate in terms of form and content for the purpose and its target group – terms as discrimination, segregation special education were explained in a clear and simple way with practical

¹⁶ See for example: Salner, A. (ed.). (2005). *Roma Children in the Slovak Education System*. Bratislava: SGI. Available at: <http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/Documents/SGIRomaChildrenintheSlovakRepublic.pdf>

examples and explication why such practice is dangerous for their children and information for parents on possible remedies).

The core activity of the second project (SLO 023) was tutoring to Romani children assisted and enrolled within the first project. The tutoring was provided by teachers from the schools twice a week. The teachers-tutors were selected in cooperation with the school management; all of them were teachers from integrated classes with a long professional experience (participation was voluntary for teachers). Following a request from the REF the same teachers could not teach children in the morning and tutor them in the afternoon. This request was considered as controversial by most interviewees. According to both teachers and Grantee the children in early schooling age need to build a personal relationship and trust to one person who also help in adaptation in a new environment of school (in the Slovak educational system one teacher ensures education of all subjects in a school year until the fourth grade). On the other hand the Grantee admitted that a different teacher engaged in the afternoon tutoring sometimes provided alternative views or observations about pupils, what was enriching and could ensure a better control and objectivity. The interviewed teachers however stressed that a personal knowledge of pupils and their needs is irreplaceable in this kind of additional assistance (a morning teacher knows the best in what area a pupil needs additional help within the afternoon tutoring). According to the Grantee, most teachers appreciated the opportunity to provide children with a more intense assistance and considered it as an effective instrument for increasing children's school performance and positive relation to school (this subsequently increase their chances to be successful in education and not to drop out into special education).

The Grantee admitted that also several children in risk who were not participating in the projects used to attend the afternoon tutoring, after an agreement with teachers and school managements. Several children from the first project without any learning difficulties and with good performance were not tutored within the second project.

The first project (SLO 018) contained also high-level advocacy activities, including a conference in Bratislava with participation of the Slovak Ministry of Education. But according to the Grantee, there was no feedback from the stakeholders.

Effectiveness:

From the projects' Application Forms and Project Implementation Plans we can deduce that a successful beneficiary would have been:

1. a child who was enrolled in standard elementary school instead of special school or class, or
2. a child who was not transferred from standard education to special education because of low performance or learning difficulties.

The Grantee provided the Consultant with a database of projects' participants in Excel format containing 299 names of children assisted within the first project and highlighted 261 names of children assisted within the second project. The database included information about children's school performance. One child was marked as transferred to special education. This information matches with the information provided by the Grantee during the interview and in the reports to the REF that only two children participating in the first project were enrolled in the special education (one missing in the 299-name list compared to declared number of participants – probably directly enrolled in special education – and the other one transferred from the standard education during the project).

According to the information provided by the Grantee during the interview and the project reports provided by the REF, out of 261 children assisted within the second project, 230 children successfully completed the first grade of the standard elementary school. Remaining 29 children either repeated the grade because a bad performance and two moved away and the Grantee do not have any information about their schooling. No child from the second project was transferred to special education.

Although it is not possible to exactly measure the actual impact of the projects in prevention of enrolment of Romani children into special education, as there are no data on a control group, a comparison with data provided by the UIPS (including both Romani and non-Romani children) concerning the enrolment of children into zero grades (or preparatory grades in special education) and first grades in standard and special schools the involved locations allow to hypothesise about a positive effect of the intervention. The data provided by the UIPS represent the whole population and we do not know their characteristics (statistical attributes) that can differ substantially from the sample included in the project. For this reason it is not to quantitatively express the difference (added value) made by the projects.

Class (grade)	School year				
	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8*	2008/9*	2009/10
Standard school (0)	59	66	59	58	79
Standard school (1)	2364	2151	2219	1982	2070
Special classes (0)	0	0	0	0	0
Special classes (1)	1	3	4	9	7
Special schools (0)	13	18	16	17	39
Special schools (1)	110	91	69	56	59
Ratio in special	4,87%	4,81%	3,76%	3,86%	4,66%
Change of number in special	**	-11,38%	-22,02%	-14,12%	34,25%
Transferred	75	51	64	76	**

* Projects' implementation.

** Data not available.

We can state that the results of the children participating in the projects were better than the average results in the population in question: From the 300 beneficiaries of the first project (SLO 018) only two were enrolled or transferred in special education, what corresponds to a ratio 0.67 per cent, while the ratio in the population in concerned municipalities was about 3.8 per cent in the period of the project implementation. During the second project (SLO 023) no project child was transferred to special education because of low school performance.

The Grantee had set up a target of reducing the number of Romani children enrolled in special education by 30 per cent. According to reports to the REF the Grantee conducted a survey among Romani children in the municipalities where the projects were implemented. In 2007/2008 61 Roma children enrolled in special schools in the seven localities in question, while the following year only 18 Romani children were enrolled in special education. The Grantee did not provide any independent resources where these numbers could be verified by the Consultant (this would have been in any case difficult, as ethnicity of pupils is a sensitive matter and schools usually are not

willing to disclose such statistics). From the figures provided by the Grantee this objective seems to be fulfilled, as the reduction of is more than 70 per cent.

According to the information provided by the Grantee in the Application Forms and reports, there were 25 special schools in total in the region where the projects were implemented. This would allow establishment of a matching control group to which the achieved results could be compared and thus the difference made by the projects.

The Grantee indicated in its reports that thanks to the projects a special school in Telgárt was abolished. According to the data by the UIPS, there were no new children enrolled in the special school in Telgárt after the implementation of the projects:

Class (grade)	School year				
	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8*	2008/9*	2009/10
Standard school (0)	0	0	0	0	10
Standard school (1)	28	22	19	22	15
Special classes (0)	0	0	0	0	0
Special classes (1)	0	0	0	0	0
Special schools (0)	0	0	0	0	0
Special schools (1)	4	10	1	0	0
Ratio in special	12,50%	31,25%	5,00%	0,00%	0,00%
Transferred	0	1	2	8	**

* Projects' implementation.

** Data not available.

However the UIPS indicates a number of children from elementary school in Telgárt transferred to special education in 2008/2009. These children could be either of higher grades or from first grade but not participating in the projects.

Sustainability:

According to the Grantee the sustainability of the services provided within the projects is not possible without external support (as by the REF), because the schools do not have available funds to provide similar additional services to vulnerable pupils. The Grantee was able to fundraise from Slovak Government Office for continuation of the project in a period between two grants by the REF. And the municipality of Banská Bystrica bought tutoring services from the Grantee for children from a social accommodation facility run by the municipality following the successful REF-funded projects. However the Grantee does not consider such funding opportunities as sustainable and systematic.

The interviewed school representatives consider the (second) project as extremely useful and are ready to continue in cooperation and participation in follow-up activities. (They do not have enough information about the first one and seem to confuse the two projects.) They stressed that in order to ensure a sustainable positive effect on the children beneficiaries of the evaluated projects it is indispensable to continue in supporting them in the following years. The next risky moment of the education of children from vulnerable groups, when they often dropout into special education is the fifth grade of elementary school (when the second stage of the primary education starts and the system of learning changes) and last grades of elementary school (beginning of adolescence).

Efficiency:

The budget of the first project (SLO 018) was 119,000 EUR, so the costs of the campaign addressing 800 families was 148.75 EUR and the costs per child assisted in enrolment in the first grade of standard elementary school (298 children) were 399.33 EUR.

Within the second project (SLO 023) in total 261 children received support in form of tutoring. The project's budget was 16,740 EUR, so the costs per child were 64.14 EUR.

Due to a lack of data about a control group, it is not possible to evaluate the real efficiency of the projects' interventions.

Feedback:

All interviewed school representatives and Romani parents assessed the tutoring as very fruitful and necessary. According to the teachers the pupils in the first grade standard elementary school, who participated in the projects very quickly overcame their disadvantages; they acquired skills and habits necessary for being successful in school. The teachers believe that this increased their motivation and positive relation to the school that can lead to better school performance also in higher grades.

The interviewed teachers appreciated the cooperation with the Grantee and its local associates NGOs as "above-standard". All emerging problems in schools (for example problems with pupils or misunderstanding with their parents) were resolved with help of the project staffs and the issues regarding the projects' implementation were discussed on a partnership basis. The schools believe that tutoring must continue in the following grades and should not stop after the first one. Only a long-term assistance to vulnerable children can according to them bring a tangible effect (children successful in the elementary school must be motivated and assisted in order to continue in the secondary education, what is the only way to be successful on the labour market). The assistance should not be limited to the tutoring itself. Lunch meal must be accessible in schools for these children; if not they would leave the school to have the lunch at home and would not return for the afternoon tutoring. Out of the tutoring, the children must be provided with attractive opportunities of positive and constructive leisure time activities. A communication and cooperation between the school and pupils' families is very important. This should be even more promoted in the future projects, according to teachers.

Parents of Romani children involved in the project seem to realise the importance of the tutoring for their children. An interviewed mother said that she is not able to help her child with the homework and preparation for school, because she has several younger children and also she does not have necessary knowledge, too. She said that she could see how her child's school performance increased during the project assistance. Also the afternoon activities for children are very helpful for her, as she can concentrate on care of younger children and housekeeping.

The Grantee sees as problematic a rigorous application of a REF's principle not to provide support to schools with majority of Romani children, as was the case of elementary school in Fil'akovo that had to be excluded from the second project. A high portion of Romani children does not have to be consequence of an intentional segregation policy by the school or local authorities, but also of a more Roma-friendly policy of an individual school or different demographical trends of Roma and non-Roma populations. But even in Romani children are deliberately concentrated in one

school, children in this school can be in the most urgent need of assistance. In such cases, the too rigorous application of the above-mentioned principle can be at expense of the Romani children.

The Grantee believes that a very effective measure for improving Romani children's success in elementary education would be establishment of kindergartens (term used in Slovakia for accredited pre-school facilities) by elementary schools (this option is possible according to the Slovak law).

3. Cost-per-child Calculation

The projects' costs-per-child can be calculated on different levels: as granted funds per planned beneficiary (project development), spent funds per actual participants (outputs), spent funds per successful participant (outcomes) and spent funds compared to added value of the project (impact).

The basis for calculation of the per-child-costs should not be the overall project budget that include also costs for project management and other indirect costs, but only from costs directly connected to the exercise of the activities aimed at solution of the identified problem.

The evaluated projects' budgets were reviewed and the budget lines sorted between direct costs (including salaries of project management staff, equipment for purpose of the project management, administration costs, office supplies, rent of offices, project staff meetings and travel, monitoring, evaluation and audit) and direct costs (including salaries for staff working directly with project target group¹⁷, equipment for purpose of the project activities with the participants, rent of rooms for activities, meetings with the target group and travel, supplies and meals for participants). The disaggregated budgets of the projects and ratio of indirect costs are indicated in Table 2: Direct and indirect costs of the projects. Usual overheads of a social service-oriented project are 20 per cent.¹⁸ If the indirect costs exceed this limit, the project must be considered as institutional building support; the REF can have higher expectation about the project sustainability and Grantees continuation in the exercise of the mission in such case.

Table 3: Direct and indirect costs of the projects

Project code	Grantee	Budget	Direct costs	Indirect costs	Ratio of indirect costs
SLO 005	LHRA	€ 179 740	€ 131 740	€ 48 000	27%
SLO 020	LHRA	€ 155 060	€ 125 060	€ 30 000	19%
SLO 014	RUCD	€ 71 800	€ 45 100	€ 26 700	37%
SLO 016	CAI	€ 80 850	€ 45 150	€ 35 700	44%
SLO 018	KARI	€ 119 000	€ 70 700	€ 48 300	41%
SLO 023	KARI	€ 16 740	€ 14 820	€ 1 920	11%

In order to provide a comparative perspective and taking into consideration different project durations, the costs-per-child were calculated per month (see Table 3: Costs-per-child per month). These figures however do not provide a comparison of efficiency of respective projects and approaches. It is possible that a project that was more expensive per child did actually bring a more important improvement or vice versa that a costly project was less effective than a less expensive one.

¹⁷ If the same personnel ensured both management and work with the target group, the budget line was included into direct costs.

¹⁸ European Social Fund (ESF) eligibility rules on expenditures.

Table 4: Costs-per-child per month

Project code	Grantee	Duration (months)	Budget	Expected number of children	Project costs per child per month	Direct costs per child per month
SLO 005	LHRA	12	€ 179 740	195	€ 77	€ 56
SLO 020	LHRA	16	€ 155 060	60	€ 162	€ 130
SLO 014	RUCD	11	€ 71 800	200	€ 33	€ 21
SLO 016	CAI	12	€ 80 850	100	€ 67	€ 38
SLO 018	KARI	24	€ 119 000	675	€ 7	€ 4
SLO 023	KARI	7	€ 16 740	260	€ 9	€ 8

Unfortunately, due to a lack of available and reliable records in several projects it is not possible to calculate the cost-per-child on the level of outcomes (in several projects we do not know to how many beneficiaries the services were actually provided). Similarly, due to lack of baseline data, calculation on the level of outcomes is impossible as well. Finally, the real impact calculation is not possible without counterfactual data on a control group.

Additionally, some projects included different activities with different target groups and different expected results (campaign, tutoring, mentoring). In such cases it is important to have costs strictly separated budget for each cluster objective-activity-costs-indicators. Also different definitions of successful participant in respective projects have to be taken into consideration (a child enrolled into mainstream education, a child reintegrated into mainstream, a child that did not drop out from mainstream school, and others).

The input per-child-costs of the projects funded by the REF and included in this evaluation can be compared with the higher expenditures for education of children within the special education system in Slovakia. The financing of schools in Slovakia is based on a per-pupil principle while the State's contribution is set up in Government decrees and depends on several factors including the region, number of pupils in school and type of school. In 2010, the contribution for education of a child in mainstream schools was between 1,069.24 and 1,113.92 EUR per year and the contribution of a child in special school was between 1,612.75 and 1,657.43 EUR per year.¹⁹ The expenditures for education of a child in special school are thus higher by 543.51 EUR per school year (or 54.35 EUR per month). An intervention that effectively prevents placement of a child into special education therefore decreases the public spending by the above-mentioned amounts per each child.

Additionally, a flat sum of 90 EUR per pupil and school year (or 9 EUR per month) is contributed to schools for education of children from "socially disadvantaged background" (the term is usually employed as proxy for "Roma"). This contribution is equally provided for both special schools and mainstream schools for each child qualified as "socially disadvantaged". It is unknown to the Consultant whether all children involved in the REF-supported projects were qualified as "socially

19

http://www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/RegionalneSkolstvo/FinRS/NFIN/Normativy_2010.pdf

disadvantaged” and thus the schools were receiving this additional funding for them. Equally it is unknown to the Consultant (as this issue was not examined during the evaluation according to the Terms of Reference) how the schools used the additional contribution and whether the children involved in the REF-supported projects actually benefited from the additional funding or the State’s support was complemented or rather substituted by the REF’ support.

4. Conclusions

The main problem registered during the process of evaluation of the project in question was an extremely weak quantity and quality of aggregated data and records by the Grantees. This leads to serious concerns about the quality of the projects' implementation and management, because a functioning project implies the existence of project records with useful data.

In case of most projects, the Grantees were not able to provide the Consultant with complete, sorted and reliable data on project outputs (for example lists of children or their parents – as ultimate beneficiaries of the project – who had participated in activities) and outcomes (beneficiaries successful in line with project objective, such as children reintegrated from special education into standard mainstream education). The provided data were incomplete and partially missing (LHRA – SLO 005/020, CAI – SLO 016) or have questionable reliability, as they did not match with official school records, or alleged participants did not have knowledge about the project or denied that they would have participated (RUCD – SLO 014). In case of two projects (SLO 005/020) the Grantee, LHRA, claimed that schools, which participated in the project, keep the records and refuse to give them back to the Grantee. Director of one of the schools (Zlaté Klasy) said to the Consultant, that she had liquidated all materials concerning the projects, because she wanted to forget them as soon as possible (the data had to be kept by the Grantee, the school does not have legal obligation to keep documents of projects that had been implemented by other entities). In case of one project (CAI, SLO 016) it seems that data on the outcomes (children enrolled in mainstream schools) had not been even systematically collected. The only Grantee able to provide and clear complete records regarding the ultimate beneficiaries of the projects was the KARI (projects SLO 018 and SLO 023).

Missing records do not necessary mean that the projects would have not been delivered and the funds misused (even if this cannot be excluded in some cases). The Consultant is of the opinion that quality of records corresponds to the overall quality of project management. It seems that some of the Grantees (mostly the RUCD and CAI) did not have capacities and skills required for a successful implementation of a larger project or were not familiar with practices of a good project management. Imperfections of diverse intensity could be observed in the whole project cycle of the examined projects.

In the stage of the project design the Consultant identified several problems. The first was a low technical capacity of certain Grantees (mostly the RUCD and CAI) to prepare a well-designed project in line with requirements of the REF, including access to information about the opportunities provided by the REF and knowledge of the English language (or standard Romanes) on a level necessary to complete the application. Two Grantees (RUCD and CAI) indicated that they learnt about the opportunity of applying for support by REF from another REF Grantee (LHRA), who also helped them in obtaining funds. This included preparation of the application and other paperwork required by the REF. One Grantee (requesting to be quoted only anonymously), who was asked whether this assistance was provided free of charge or on a paid basis) refused to answer and discuss this question. He/She also said that “NGOs in Bratislava have better opportunities and connections than NGOs in regions” who are consequently dependant on cooperation with them. Ability of preparing a project often indicates ability of managing the project (however it does

not necessary indicates ability of a quality delivery of services or activities; an organisation with low technical capacity unable to elaborate and manage a comprehensive project can have high expert capacity and provide highly effective services, and vice versa).

The problem of low technical capacity of an organisation and outsourced project preparation without sufficient participation of the applicant, can lead to a problem of inaccurate problem definition. If the outsourced provider is not familiar with the context, where the project is to be delivered, it may be unable to accurately identify the real causes of the problem and design specific project objective and activities, which would have potential to resolve them. A good indicator of this risk is inaccurate or too general information on the situation in the locality where the project is to be implemented and baseline data, based on generalised information or clichés about problems that can occur in other localities (such as 95 per cent Romani children enrolled in special education).

Moreover the fact that the project is written by a third part in a language non-comprehensible to a Grantee can bring problems of integral project implementation. It can happen that the Grantee does not exactly know what it is supposed to deliver, with which means and outcomes. Consequently the Grantee can conduct activities seen as useful (or proven as fruitful in the past), but not matching with the project approved and supported by the REF.

Some indications of non-effective or non-transparent use of funds provided by the REF were recorded during the evaluation, when activities were not documented, but spending of the funds reported. Also costs planned for some activities seem to be excessive taking into consideration the price level in Slovakia and localities where projects implemented, and not proportional to actual or even actual outputs of these activities. However, the financial examination of the projects was not objective of this evaluation. In this context it is to be stressed, that despite high amounts of money by the REF, only one Grantee, KARI, included in its projects (SLO 018 and SLO 023) an external financial audit.

In case of some projects the Consultant discovered that relevant subjects, that would have been expected to know about the project or at least some project activities (schools or local authorities), had actually no knowledge that the project would have been implemented. This can indicate an insufficient coordination and cooperation of the Grantee with other subjects involved in education of Romani children, what would mean that a possible synergy was not exploited. A more serious interpretation of this fact would be that the activities reported by the Grantee were not actually delivered. Similarly, some Romani parents, who or whose children were supposed to be among the target group or even participants, did not know about the project or activities. In some extent we could interpret this also as a possible consequence of a long period of time between the project implementation and external evaluation or a misunderstanding between the Consultant and interviewees; however most Romani parents interviewed within the evaluation seemed to be reliable informers.

According to the REF Application Form each project had to include an internal monitoring and evaluation of the project. And in most projects a special budget had been allocated for evaluation or internal evaluation had to be conducted by the project staff, this task was planned within the Project Implementation Plan at the end of the project (and justified expenditures for administration, salaries and travel for additional period of time):

- SLO 005: Activity 3.1.1 “Evaluation” (deliverables: Assessment of project effectiveness, duration: one month, costs: 5,682 EUR),
- SLO 014: Activity 2.1.2 “Project monitoring and evaluation” (deliverable: Evaluation report, duration: one month, costs: 5,000 EUR),
- SLO 016: Activity 1.4.3 “Gathering of statistics on the number of Roma children registered into the standard primary school” (deliverable: Statistics gathered, duration: one month, costs: 3,200 EUR),
- SLO 018: Activity 3.2.3 “Project evaluation with concrete numbers and indicators on the achievements, final countdown, financial and narrative report based on monitoring and activities evaluation” (deliverable: The final countdown, financial and narrative report, duration: one month, costs: 5,600 EUR),
- SLO 023: unnumbered activity “Project evaluation, financial and narrative report” (deliverables: Financial and narrative reports, costs: 0 EUR).

As mentioned above, most projects lack aggregated data about the activities’ outputs (for example lists of participants) or outcomes (children enrolled or reintegrated in mainstream schools) that would be able to present when requested (LHRA – SLO 005/020, CAI – SLO 016) or these data are not reliable (RUCD – SLO 014). This implies that the Grantees could not appropriately internally monitor and evaluate their projects, even if internal monitoring and evaluation had been originally planned. Only two Grantees provided the expected deliverables from internal evaluation (evaluation reports): LHRA (projects SLO 005 and SLO 020)²⁰ and KARI (SLO 018 and SLO 023). The former however had not complete data on outputs and outcomes, so it is questionable how the evaluation had been conducted²¹. No project was evaluated in comparison with counterfactual data, which would measure the difference (added value) made by the project and thanks to the REF investments. This can be linked to a fact that the REF had not clarified with the Grantees what was expected to be done within the internal evaluations of the projects, which data had to be collected, how analysed and what was the expected outcome of the evaluation. The Grantees seemed not to be familiar with evaluation exercise, including its aims and techniques.

²⁰ The report indicates that it was requested by the REF, not the Grantee, so it is not clear, whether it was paid from the funds provided to the Grantee or directly by the REF and thus cannot be seen as a deliverable form project activity.

²¹ For example, the evaluation indicates: „While the director of Zlaté Klasy primary school Mrs. Getrúda Farkasová informed the consultant that prior to the advent of the project in the school, there were one hundred and five (105) Roma children in special classes, but by the end of the school year 2006/7, about (68%) of them (but did not provide any figure to illustrate this fact) had achieved good academic record that led to their integration into the mainstream classes.” However, according to Consultant’s finding, the projects was not implemented in the special elementary school, but in mainstream elementary school (a. k. a. primary school), where, according to official statistics of the UIPS, one special class was established only in the school year 2007/2008 and included nine pupils. In a special school that was not involved in the project there were only 71 pupils in the school year 2006/2007 and 70 in 2005/2006, according to UIPS.

In spite of the REF's high expectations from the present evaluation, it was not possible to measure the effective impact of the projects, to compare different approaches used within different projects and their effectiveness in achieving the general aim of the REF intervention – elimination and decrease of segregation of Romani children in special education – and to measure their financial efficiency. This was due to the above-described lack of available data, which were not provided by the Grantees (it was not in the scope of work and the capacities of the consultant to collect necessary data). Possible additional evaluation would request a more demanding (in terms of time and funds) research including the data collection on control group. However, taking into consideration the identified problems in weak targeting and integrity of delivered projects SLO 014 and SLO 018, such possible research related to these projects does not seem to be very efficient. The situation is different in case of projects SLO 005/020 and SLO 018/023, which were apparently delivered and brought some results, which could be measured and compared to counterfactual data and effective impact assessed (but the projects SLO 005/020 must complete the records and data first).

5. Recommendations

The recommendations provided in this chapter are based on the Consultant's experience from the evaluated projects, including the feedback provided by the Grantees. They do not assess the quality of the internal processes, mechanisms and procedures within the REF (process audit was not in the scope of the present evaluation). If a problem is discussed or a recommendation on a particular issue is articulated in this chapter, it does not mean that the REF actually misses respective internal process, procedure or mechanism addressing the problem or issue. It is rather meant that more attention should be given to these aspects of the project management or support to the grantees. An existing mechanism or procedure (such as technical assistance or emergency procedure if problems in projects' deliver identified) may seem to be ineffective if grantees' technical capacities are too low and therefore they are not able to fully benefit from them or if grantees deliberately do not provide the REF with accurate or actual information.

The REF should strengthen the **publicity** of its activities and granting opportunities among relevant applicants in Slovakia. This will generate a higher number of high-quality project proposals submitted by potential beneficiaries with sufficient technical and expert capacity and promote competition among potential beneficiaries. If the REF will have opportunity to support NGOs with sufficient technical and expert capacity and their high-quality projects, this will limit possible problems caused by insufficient project management, financial management, reporting and lead to a more effective use of REF funds in terms of achievement of expected results and positive change in line with the REF's mission.

The REF should provide potential grantees, whose activities or project proposals the REF would like to support, with a stronger **technical assistance** in preparation of projects. The technical assistance should be provided in Slovak language, as many potential grantees do not master English on a necessary level and communication only in English can be at expense of effectiveness. The technical assistance's aim is to help the potential grantees to generate a good project with clear and measurable specific objective and appropriate activities. The empirical content of the project and how the activities will be executed must be exactly agreed between the potential grantee and the REF and set up in the project.

The technical assistance should not be provided by other REF grantees (whether on paid or free-of-charge basis), which sometimes have problem to properly manage and deliver their own projects and correctly report them to the REF. Such assistance can moreover create concerns about **transparency** (several NGOs believe, as was said to the Consultant, that certain REF grantee have good contacts, which can help to gain support for a project even if not of the best quality).

The assistance in the stage of the project development can guide potential grantees also in the problem analysis and ensure **better targeting**. The evaluation discovered, that the most important cause of overrepresentation of Romani children in special education in the localities, where the examined projects had been implemented, was not primarily a deliberate enrolment of Romani children directly in special schools/classes (such practice is illegal in Slovakia and where identified, it should be addressed with advocacy and litigation tools, possibly in combination with support for children in the education – in order to prevent possible situation that weak schooling

results would be presented as justification for enrolment of children in special education)²², but rather later transferred into special education due to insufficient performance. In order to maximise the effect of the REF investment, the proposed solutions should match the most important causes of problem, which differ in different locations and regions of Slovakia. Campaign, awareness raising and advocacy oriented projects should be supported and delivered in regions where practices of systematic and deliberate segregation of Romani children in schools are positively reported. In regions, where the overrepresentation of Romani children in special education is connected to other causes (as low school performance, lack of support from parents), the REF-supported projects should focus on them and the activities should be appropriate (as tutoring or mentoring for parents). It is evident, that in regions or localities where the segregation of Romani is deliberate and systematic, more intense intervention is needed, because only awareness raising or advocacy for desegregation will not be sufficient, if the children will be in risk to be transferred back to special education because of low performance in mainstream education.

The REF should exercise **more rigorous evaluation** of submitted projects, especially in terms of consistency of problems to be addressed, specific objectives, activities and indicators in the projects. Among the evaluated projects several inconsistencies were observed, including objectives not matching the problem (SLO 014 and SLO 016 were campaign-oriented projects while the real problem was rather drop-outs from mainstream education into special education or low quality of education in ethnically homogeneous standard schools) or project title not matching the targeting (SLO 005/020 was implemented also in a mainstream school without any special classes, but the objective was to reintegrate children from special into mainstream education). Therefore the information on the identified problem and data provided by applicants should be checked in field within the evaluation process. Each activity should have allocated concrete budget in separate budget lines (budget for project management and indirect costs should be in separate budget chapter and not dispersed among different activities, as it was the case in most evaluated projects' Project Implementation Plans) and expected output indicators that must be documented measured and objectively verified at the end of the project implementation. This requires a certain knowledge or verification of the situation and identified problem in the localities where the project is expected to be delivered. Therefore local evaluators should be involved, who can assess the quality of the targeting, but also adequacy of budget and costs requested for individual activities (as they are familiar with the price level in Slovakia).

The identified needs of publicity, technical assistance and supervision of the projects are probably above capacity of a single country facilitator. The REF should therefore consider establishment of a wider **country support structure**, which will be able to

²² A child should be normally enrolled into the first (or preparatory) grade of standard school and only if diagnosed as unable to follow the classes (usually because of insufficient performance) transferred into special education. However in certain regions of Slovakia, children are diagnosed upon explicit request of the parents before enrolment into standard school and enrolled directly into special education with authorisation of parents. Such practice is consequence of manipulation of the parents or of social pressure of the environment aimed at conservation of institutional segregation of Roma.

ensure a more intense communication and cooperation with potential grantees and support to grantees in the phase of implementation of the projects. Those tasks can be also subcontracted and provided by a local external organisation familiar with the context and problems of education of Romani children in Slovakia, active NGOs in the field of education of Romani children and project management.²³

The REF should require that the expected outcomes are exactly measurable. This means that too abstract objectives (for example “improvement of interethnic relations” or “higher involvement of Roma in local decision making in the field of education” or “higher awareness of Romani communities”) should be operationalised into well-measurable activities and outcomes with target indicators and agreed **methods of measurement**. Probably it is important to explain to potential grantees, that eventual non-achievement of the indicators in the expected extend is less serious problem than non-reliable or missing data; even a failure extends the knowledge and experience about possibilities of improvement of conditions for education of Romani children. As most potential grantees are probably not familiar with project evaluation, its aims and instruments, the REF should assist them to identify the relevant indicators for each project (what will be measured – enrolment of Romani children into special schools/classes, transfer from special into mainstream schools/classes or vice versa, drop-outs, school performance, attendance, self-assessment of Romani pupils or parents or teachers, mutual trust between Roma and non-Roma or Roma and school staff, attitude/trust of Romani children or their parents to school or others) and methods how to measure them (statistics, project records, survey or others).

It is important to teach the potential grantees that outcome data only are of little use for the purpose of project evaluation, if they cannot be compared to reliable baseline data and the achieved change assessed. And in order to be able to interpret the achieved change as consequence of the project, a counterfactual measurement is necessary, which allows assessing whether the change would not have occurred without the project. (See: Table 2: Scheme of the counterfactual measurement.)

While an accurate problem definition and analysis based on knowledge of local context is a precondition for development of a project, collection of baseline data is a more resource-demanding task (mostly because ethnically disaggregated data on pupils in special and mainstream education are not publicly available information and must be collected ad hoc). It would not be appropriate to require all potential grantees to conduct to make a survey aimed at baseline data collection at the stage of development of an application for REF support, because there is a risk that the investment related with survey will be vain if project not supported. But as such data are indispensable if the project is to be implemented, such baseline data collection should become obligation for projects that are successful and obtained REF support. The REF could consider introduction of an obligatory “**Activity 0**” that a successful applicant will have to conduct before actually receiving funds for implementation of the other project activities. Within this activity the grantee will have to collect exact evidence-based data in the locality and target group where the project is to be implemented relevant to the project’s specific objectives (for example in case of a

²³ Similar national support structures were established within the EU program EQUAL (and others). In some countries this task was exercised by governmental agencies, in other by private bodies (non-for-profit or commercial consultancies). See: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/tools/contacts_en.cfm

project aimed at integration of Romani children from special into mainstream education, such data will include number or ration of Romani pupils enrolled in local special schools, special classes and mainstream schools; in case of a campaign projects the data can include also a survey among parents about their awareness level; in case of a tutoring project information on school performance of Romani children and so on). Although such ethnically disaggregated data are not officially collected and published by educational activities, they can be obtained on personal basis from individual schools or from parents in a Romani community. Ability to obtain these data is a good indicator on whether the grantee is familiar with local context and have contacts established with local educational institutions and Roma community. The exact and reliable baseline data obtained within the “Activity 0” will be compared to the situation after the project, which will be measured within a last activity – evaluation. If the REF wishes to obtain reliable data on effective impact and added value brought by supported projects, also identification of a control group and collection of counterfactual data from on the control group can be included in the “Activity 0” and evaluation activity. What concerns the collection of data after the project, this should be agreed in advance with the schools where the project is to be implemented. The REF should provide the grantees with a methodological guidance while performing the collection of baseline data, identification of adequate control group and collection of data after the project. If the REF wishes the collected data would be analysed by the grantees, a methodological supervision should be provided also in data analysis. Introduction of obligatory data collection and processing and evidence-based quantitative evaluation will not only provide the REF with useful information of effectiveness and efficiency of its investment into diverse types of projects, but thanks to REF’s supervision and methodological guidance also increase the beneficiaries’ capacities to design and implement projects in a more effective way and think about their effectiveness in quantitative terms. Approximately five to ten per cent of the overall project budget should be allocated for evaluation (including the “Activity 0”).

The REF should be more rigorous in the **project monitoring and financial reporting**. If any problems are identified within the monitoring or financial reporting by the REF, corrective measures should be agreed immediately with the grantee. The existing technical assistance provided by the REF will probably not be effective if the grantee’s technical capacities are not sufficient from the beginning of the project. Therefore the applicants’ technical capacities must be assessed and taken into consideration during the evaluation of application for funding. If any problems detected, the funding by the REF should be stopped and resumed only if the identified problems corrected and agreed measures aimed at prevention of similar problems in the future adopted by the grantee within an agreed period of time. If the grantee does not undertake the agreed action the project should be cancelled. The contract with grantee should include a provision that envisages that the grantee will have to return all provided funds to the REF if the project is cancelled by the REF. because if no correction ensured by the grantee). An **external audit** should be implemented in each project above certain amount of money (for example 30,000 EUR). The audit should take place during the project implementation phase (for example after six months of implementation), not only after the completion of the project. The audit will not only ensure an effective and transparent use of the REF funds and appropriate reporting to the REF, but also substantially increase the grantees’ technical capacities. Irregularities in project management and reporting is often not caused by grantees’ bad intentions or frauds, but because of lack of technical skills and unfamiliarity with

accurate practices. The audit report will enable the grantees to introduce and practice better management procedures. Taking into account the share of indirect costs in the budgets of examined projects, some of them had character of institution-building support. Exercise of audits as proposed above will be consistent with this institutional support practice.

The REF should stimulate and support cooperation between the grantees and schools attended by Romani children involved in REF-supported projects **partnership building**. Such cooperation and partnership must include a shared responsibility, thus partnership principle can be promoted already in the stage of REF opportunities publicity and project proposal evaluation. Involvement of schools can eliminate risk of withdraw of school's support that can threaten successful implementation of the project (as it happened in case of projects SLO 005/020 and withdraw of the school in Zlaté Klasy). Schools and NGOs have usually complementary skills (schools are afraid or do not have capacity to develop a project, but have trained pedagogical staff) and exercise complementary activities. In case of school involvement into project, activities of both partners will not substitute each other or conflict, but can create synergic effect instead. As teachers interact with the pupils on a daily basis, they are able to assess, which children need which kind of help. A quality project implementation is in best interest of the teachers, because thanks to the project assistance the children will have better performance. Involvement of the school can also substantially increase the sustainability of the project outcomes and transparency and control of the funds use. On the other hand, a traditional authoritative attitude of teachers and schools can create conflicts with the NGO staff.

Possible models for replication:

REF should continue in supporting initiatives of pre-school education of Romani children, which can improve their chances of being successful in primary education. Such initiatives can involve also parents of Romani children.

Campaigning projects among Romani parents aimed at awareness rising about the danger of enrolment of Romani children in special education should be supported only in localities where such illegal and manipulative practice was positively reported. In locations where the overrepresentation of Romani children is consequence of other problems (as low performance in schools), the investment in an awareness raising campaign is of low effectiveness. The intervention should not be limited on the campaign only, because of no additional support is provided to children, there will be a high risk that they will be transferred into special education anyway because of other reason (such as low school performance).

Among the examined interventions, tutoring seems to bring substantial positive effect not only in improvement of Romani pupils' school performance that minimise the dropouts to special education, but also positively contribute to children's self esteem and building of positive relationship to school. Ideally, the tutoring should be complemented with leisure time (extracurricular) activities for Romani children in a motivating environment that will develop their skills (especially motor skills that a stimulating factor of the cognitive development and social skills).

Personal approach of teachers and teacher assistants with a high empathy for Romani children can improve their performance in school and relation toward school. The REF could thus consider investments into professional preparation of Roma as pedagogical staff for schools.

The REF should give priority to long-term support of Romani children during their whole schooling (for example within the step-by-step model, which involves parents and community into early-childhood education and provides children with support during their whole schooling course – from pre-school to university education²⁴) that can substantially increase the sustainability of the effect of the intervention and investment. There several critical moments in the education of disadvantaged children, after the enrolment in standard education – the passing from the fourth to fifth grade and at the beginning of adolescence.

The REF should reconsider the non-eligibility of mostly Roma standard elementary schools, because the high proportion of Romani children can be consequence of their Roma-friendly policy or demography (a low number of non-Roma children). Such schools can be disadvantaged by the stakeholders so their pupils could need additional help.

²⁴ See: International Step by Step Association (ISSA) website <http://www.issa.nl/>.

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REF-SUPPORTED PROJECTS IN SLOVAKIA FOR PREVENTING/REVERSING SEGREGATION OF ROMANI CHILDREN IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Background

As of November 2009, REF had committed a total of EUR 622 790 to projects aimed at directly preventing and/or reversing the streaming of Romani children in special education in Slovakia. These projects include:

- *Integration of Romani Children from Special Schools and Classes to Mainstream Schools and Classes in Trnava Region (Phases I and II) – SLO 005/SLO 020* (implemented from August 2006 to August 2007 and from December 2007 to March 2009 in the city of Trnava and the village of Zlaté Klasy);
- *Advocacy Campaign Against Enrolment of Roma Children in Special Schools and Classes – SLO 014* (implemented from September 2006 to December 2007 in the towns of Liptovský Mikuláš, Martin, and Ružemberok);
- *Roma Community Against Segregation in Schools – SLO 016* (implemented from March 2007 to July 2008 in six localities in the region of Rimavská Sobota); and
- *Awareness-raising in Romani Families: ‘What Are Special Schools?’/Mentoring and Tutoring of Roma First-Form Students at Basic Schools – SLO 018/SLO 023* (implemented from August 2007 to June 2009 in seven localities in the region of Banská Bystrica).

The rationale for a comparison of the effectiveness of the different approaches supported by REF to date for preventing/reversing segregation of Romani children in special education in Slovakia has three main parts. First, preventing/reversing segregation of Romani children in special education can be expected to remain a priority of REF activity in Slovakia for the foreseeable future. Second, the only external evaluation conducted to date on any of the projects aiming directly at prevention/reversal of segregation in Slovakia provided few quantitative data and no guidance on how the evaluated project might be improved in case of continuation. Third, the Slovak Ministry of Education’s expressed interest in the results of SLO 020 suggests that it would be interested in receiving information also on like-minded projects supported by REF in Slovakia, such that the findings of a comparative evaluation of all such projects could serve as a starting point for developing a model in cooperation with the Slovak government.

Timeframe for evaluation: April-June 2010; 30 working days (approximately 20 days field research and 10 days writing)

Terms of reference

The Consultant will conduct an evaluation of the projects SLO 005/SLO 020, SLO

014, SLO 016, and SLO 018/SLO 023. In particular, the external evaluation should compare the effectiveness of the four project models and make recommendations on how elements of one or more models could be applied in Slovakia on a national level.

Tasks

To this end, the consultant will complete the following tasks:

1. Review relevant project documents, including but not limited to the completed Application Form, Project Implementation Plans 1 and 2, Quarterly Reports and Final Reports.
2. Elaborate an evaluation methodology and research instruments for approval by REF.
3. Conduct discussions with project grantees, including one common discussion bringing together all four grantees.
4. Conduct interviews and/or focus groups with project stakeholders and adult members of the projects' target groups in order to assess the quality of implementation and the impact of project activities in terms of the projects' stated objectives. In the discussions with project stakeholders, particular attention should be paid to the number of children prevented from enrolling in or transferred out of special education. The Consultant is expected to use a semi-structured interview technique for these discussions. The number and selection of stakeholders will be agreed with REF.
5. Analyze the projects' results, including an assessment of achievements of the project against the project indicators in the Project Implementation Plan and the sustainability of each project's impact on the streaming of Romani children into special education in the included localities.
6. Assess the per-child cost of each project. The methodology for calculating this cost will be agreed with REF.
7. Identify elements of project design/methodology which could be replicated on the national level in Slovakia toward preventing and/or reversing the streaming of Romani children into special education.
8. Present the findings of the evaluation described above in a draft evaluation report of approximately 25-30 pages plus annexes in English (Times New Roman, font 12, single line spacing) to be submitted to REF no later than 31 May 2010.
9. Consult with REF staff on the draft evaluation report, revising it according to the comments received and within 10 working days of receiving those comments.

Deliverables

- Evaluation methodology
- Research instruments (interview and focus group guides)
- Methodology for calculating costs per child
- Draft evaluation report
- Final evaluation report

Task Management

The REF task manager will be Eben Friedman, with in-country support provided by

Lýdia Bariová.

Administration

Visits and invitations to stakeholders will be organised by REF in consultation with the Consultant.

All reasonable costs of travel within Slovakia will be reimbursed subject to prior approval of each visit by the REF task manager and provision of receipts for all expenses. Reasonable telephone and internet costs during travel will also be reimbursed.

The Consultant will provide her/his own office equipment and supplies, including computer and telephone.

Qualifications

The Consultant has:

- Professional fluency in Slovak;
- Strong writing skills in English;
- At least 5 years of experience working on social inclusion and/or education issues, with experience working with Roma an advantage;
- Knowledge of the policy and institutional framework for the education of Roma in Slovakia; and
- Demonstrated experience in evaluating project outcomes and impact, with an emphasis on quantitative assessments.

Qualified persons according to the above criteria are invited to send a CV and cover letter in English with an indication of their fee requirements for the assignment by Friday, 2 April 2010 to efriedman@romaeducationfund.org.

Annex 2: List of documents provided to the Consultant by the REF

SLO 005:

1. Application
2. Project Implementation Plan 1
3. Project Implementation Plan 2
4. Final Monitoring Report (by REF, 18 September 2007)
5. Monitoring Report (by REF, 18 December 2006)
6. Project Final Evaluation Report (by Beneficiary, 1. August 2007)
7. Reports (from Beneficiary):
 - 7.1. External Evaluation Report
 - 7.2. First (narrative, financial, interim financial, PIP without annexes)
 - 7.3. Second (narrative, financial, PIP without annexes)
 - 7.4. Third (narrative, financial, PIP without annexes)

SLO 014:

1. Application
2. Project Implementation Plan 1
3. Project Implementation Plan 2
4. Final Project Monitoring (by REF, 11 March 2008)
5. Reports (from Beneficiary):
 - 5.1. First (narrative, financial, PIP without annexes)
 - 5.2. Second (narrative, PIP)
 - 5.3. Third (narrative, PIP)
 - 5.4. Final (Financial report, Project final evaluation report without annexes)

SLO 016:

1. Application
2. Project Implementation Plan 1
3. Project Implementation Plan 2
4. Final Project Monitoring (by REF, 13 March 2008)
5. Reports (from Beneficiary):
 - 5.1. First (narrative, financial, budget, PIP, report-deliverable)
 - 5.2. Second (narrative, financial, implementation table)
 - 5.3. Final (Project final evaluation report without annexes, Financial report, Narrative report 2, Financial report, Questions to grantees)

SLO 018:

1. Application

2. Project Implementation Plan 1
3. Project Implementation Plan 2
4. Monitoring Report (by REF, 12/13 March 2008)
5. Monitoring Report (by REF, 25/27 November 2008)
6. Monitoring Report (by REF, 18/20 May 2009)
7. Participants Database (by Beneficiary)
8. Survey Report (by Beneficiary)
9. Reports (from Beneficiary):
 - 9.1. First (narrative, financial, PIP)
 - 9.2. Second (narrative, financial, PIP, letter to the REF Director)
 - 9.3. Third (narrative, financial, PIP)
 - 9.4. Fourth (narrative, financial, PIP)
 - 9.5. Fifth (narrative, financial, PIP)
 - 9.6. Quarterly Reports 6 (narrative, financial, PIP, reallocation table)
 - 9.7. Quarterly Reports 7 (narrative, financial, PIP)
 - 9.8. Quarterly Reports 8 (narrative, PIP)
 - 9.9. Final (narrative, financial, PIP 1, PIP 2)

SLO 020:

1. Application
2. Project Implementation Plan 1
3. Project Implementation Plan 2
4. Monitoring Report (by REF, 3 July 2008)
5. Monitoring Report (by REF, 24/25 February 2009)
6. Reports (from Beneficiary):
 - 6.1. First (narrative, financial, PIP)
 - 6.2. Second (narrative, financial, PIP)
 - 6.3. Quarterly Report 3 (narrative, financial, PIP)
 - 6.4. Quarterly Report 4 (narrative, PIP)
 - 6.5. Final (Project Final Evaluation Report, Financial Report, Table of expected results and actual outcomes for projects SLO 005 and SLO 020)

SLO 023:

1. Application
2. Project Implementation Plan 1
3. Project Implementation Plan 2
4. Monitoring Report (by REF, 18/20 May 2009)

5. Participants Database (by Beneficiary)
6. Database of Children non Tutored (by Beneficiary)
7. Table of Impact Indicators (by Beneficiary; without data filled in)
8. Reports (from Beneficiary):
 - 8.1. Quarterly Reports 1 (narrative, financial, PIP)
 - 8.2. Quarterly Reports 2 (narrative, financial, PIP)
 - 8.3. Final Reports (narrative, financial, PIP 1, PIP 2)

Annex 3: List of interviews

SLO 005 and SLO 020:

Mr. Columbus Igboanusi, leader of League of Human Rights Advocates.

Ms. Marta Šmidáková, director of Elementary School Gorkého (also as successor of the Elementary School Limbová – both schools merged) and three teachers²⁵.

Ms. Mária Sandorová, project staff – coordinator of assistants.

Ms. Etela Farkašová, director of Elementary School in Zlaté Klasy and one teacher.

Ms. Marta Kunyiová, director of Kindergarten in Zlaté Klasy (by phone).

Parents of Romani children in Zlaté Klasy.

SLO 014:

Ms. Anna Pušková, leader of Romani Union for Civic Development.

Mrs. Anna Chrenková, deputy director of Elementary School Zarevúca in Ružomberok and one teacher.

Mrs. Marta Kral'ovenská, director of Elementary School Dončová in Ružomberok and one teacher.

One teacher, Elementary School Jahodnícka in Martin.

Mrs. Viera Poliačková, deputy director of Elementary School A. Dubček in Martin (by phone).

Mrs. Dana Gajdošová, director of Elementary School Aurela Stodolu in Liptovský Mikuláš (by phone).

Mrs. Alena Ridzoňová, director of Elementary School Mária Maráková in Liptovský Mikuláš (by phone).

Parents of Romani children in Martin and Ružomberok.

SLO 016:

Mr. Béla Kökeny, leader of Civic Alternative Initiative.

Mrs. Mária Hudcová, director of Pedagogical and Psychological Advisory Centre in Rimavská Sobota.

Representatives of municipalities (by phone):

- Abovce,
- Blhovce,
- Čerenčany,
- Číž,
- Gortva,

²⁵ As some teachers requested anonymity, no names of interviewed teachers are indicated.

- Hodejov,
- Hostišovce,
- Jesenské,
- Teplý Vrch.

SLO 018 and SLO 023:

Ms. Nataša Slobodníková, leader of County Association of Roma Initiatives/KARI Union.

Ms. Martina Slobodníková, County Association of Roma Initiatives/KARI Union.

Mrs. Jarmila Buková, director of Elementary School Trieda SNP in Banská Bystrica and two teachers.

Mr. Peter Zlevský, director of Elementary School Golianova in Banská Bystrica and one school teacher.

Ms. Mária Filipová, head of social affair department of Municipality of Banská Bystrica.

Parents of Romani children in in Banská Bystrica.

Annex 4: Research instruments

Questionnaire for REF beneficiaries

Initial phase:

1. How would you describe in brief your project's objective?
2. How would you define project's success?
3. How would you define a successful participant of the project?
 - i. *What had to happen with a child in order to be considered as successful or a child actually benefiting from the project?*
 - ii. *What success rate had you expected in order to fulfil your expectations?*
4. Why did you decided to implement the project in this school(s)/locality?
 - i. *Did you select the school(s)/locality because you had known it (them) or worked in before the beginning of the project?*
 - ii. *Did you select the school(s) because children from a community you had known or worked with are taught in it (them)?*
5. How would you describe the situation of segregation of Romany children from the locality/community or their enrolment into special schools?
 - i. *Can you compare the situation with the rest of Slovakia?*
6. How did you select the project's participants?
 - a. How did you select the children?
 - i. *Were all participating children Roma or also non-Roma children from socially disadvantaged families participated?*
 - ii. *They were selected according to belonging to one concrete Romany community? What was the difference in school enrolment of children from the community compared to other communities? What were peculiarities of the community compared to other pupils' background?*
 - iii. *They were selected according to their school performance or school attendance? To which baseline performance or attendance had you compared children's results in order to include them in the project?*
 - iv. *They were selected according to school director or teachers' recommendations? Why did they select those children?*
 - b. How did you select the teachers participating in the project?
 - i. *What requirements they had to meet?*
 - ii. *They were elementary school teachers or special school (special classes) teachers?*
 - iii. *They were teaching in segregated Roma classes or integrated classes?*

- iv. *Have they applied to participate the project themselves or the school director decided that they would participate?*
- v. *Were they provided with any training?*
- c. How did you select teacher assistants?
 - i. *They had to be Roma themselves? What the ethnicity important and why?*
 - ii. *What qualification criteria they had to fulfil and why?*
 - iii. *Were they provided with any training?*
 - iv. *Had they to belong to the same community as Romany pupils and why?*

Activities implementation:

- 7. Questions to be posed in relation to each activity:
 - a. Why did you find important to include this activity into the project?
 - b. How was the activity implemented?
 - c. Who participated in the activity?
 - i. *Number and characteristics of the participant.*
 - ii. *Were there any problems with participants? (For example if you was not able to recruit participant or they dropped out.)*
 - d. Do you have an attendance list or other documentation of the activity? Can you provide us with it?
 - e. What was the impact of the activity to fulfilment of the project's objective?
 - f. How can be the impact measured?
 - i. *Do you have any statistical data about the difference achieved? Can you provide us with it?*
- 8. Could be the activities or services provided within the project funded from other sources? (For example: school budget; labour, social affairs and family offices, state allowances for pupils from families in social need or others.)
 - i. *If yes, why it was necessary to implement them from REF funding?*
 - ii. *If yes, were the alternative sources used? How they were combined with the REF funding?*

Monitoring and evaluation:

- 9. How would you describe monitoring and internal evaluation of the project, if conducted?
 - a. How was the monitoring and evaluation methodology?
 - b. Did the project staff have exact (quantitative) data on the initial situation of education of Romany children (before the project started)? Can you provide us with them?

- c. Was a control group set up (results of the project's target group to be compared with the control group)? Can you provide us with data on the control group?
 - d. How was conducted the monitoring of the project's implementation?
 - i. *Who was conducting the monitoring and how?*
 - ii. *What were results of the monitoring?*
 - iii. *Can you provide us with the monitoring results?*
 - e. How was conducted internal evaluation of the project?
 - i. *How often were the data collected and analysed and how?*
 - ii. *Was a final evaluation conducted*
 - iii. *Who conducted the internal evaluation?*
 - iv. *What are results of the final evaluation?*
 - v. *Can you provide us with the internal evaluation results?*
 - f. Did the monitoring identify any problems or weaknesses in the project implementation or achievement of expected results?
 - i. *Who signalled the problems? School, project participants, parents, project staff, others?*
 - ii. *Which measures were taken to deal with problems?*
 - iii. *Who participated in proposal of corrective measures to be taken? Schools, project participants, parents, project staff, others?*
 - iv. *Who implemented corrective measures?*
 - v. *Did the corrective measures require additional funding? From which sources they were funded?*
 - vi. *Were any unexpected opportunities identifies during the project implementation, which would permit extension of the project scope or quality? How were those opportunities used?*
10. From a retrospective point of view, which activities, components or principles of the project seem to be the most important for achievement of the project's objectives?
11. With today's experience from the project implementation, what would you plan or done differently?
- a. How differently or more effectively would you use the funds provided by the REF?
 - b. If there differences between the initial plan and actually implemented project and achieved results, how would you explain them?
12. Are the project's outcomes and results sustainable?
- a. Which project's activities continued after the project completion?
 - i. *From what they were funded?*

Questionnaire for adult projects' participants (schools)

Initial phase:

1. Who would you describe in brief the situation of education of Romani children in your locality/school?
 - i. *Can you compare the situation with the rest of Slovakia?*
2. How the contact and cooperation between your school and the implementer (REF Grantee) the project was established?
3. What was the project's objective?
 - a. How would you define a successful project participant (Romani child)?
 - b. What success rate had you expected in order to fulfil your expectations?
 - c. Was a control group established, to which the achievements of the project participants was to be compared? Can you describe it and provide us with its achievements?
4. How the project participants were selected?
 - i. *Were all participating children Roma or also non-Roma children from socially disadvantaged families participated?*
 - ii. *They were selected according to belonging to one concrete Romany community? What was the difference in school enrolment of children from the community compared to other communities? What were peculiarities of the community compared to other pupils' background?*
 - iii. *They were selected according to their school performance or school attendance? To which baseline performance or attendance had you compared children's results in order to include them in the project?*
5. How were the teachers participating in the project selected?
 - i. *What requirements they had to meet?*
 - ii. *Were all teachers from your school?*
 - iii. *They were teaching in segregated Roma classes or integrated classes?*
 - iv. *Have they applied to participate the project themselves or the school director decided that they would participate?*
 - v. *Were they provided with any training?*
6. How did you select teacher assistants?
 - i. *They had to be Roma themselves? What the ethnicity important and why?*
 - ii. *What qualification criteria they had to fulfil and why?*
 - iii. *Were they provided with any training?*

- iv. *Had they to belong to the same community as Romany pupils and why?*

Activities implementation:

7. Questions to be posed in relation to each activity:
- a. Does the school know that the activity was implemented within the project?
 - b. Does the school consider the activity important? Why?
 - c. How the activity was implemented?
 - d. How does the school evaluate the activity as implemented?
 - e. Who participated in the activity according to the school's knowledge?
 - i. *Number and characteristics of the participant.*
 - ii. *Were there any problems with participants? (For example if the implementer was not able to recruit participant or they dropped out.)*
 - f. How the activities were documented? Had the school access to the documentation (attendance lists or others)? Can you provide us with it?
 - g. What was the impact of the activity to fulfilment of the project's objective?
 - h. How can be the impact measured?
 - i. *Do you have any statistical data about the difference achieved? Can you provide us with it?*
8. Could be the activities or services provided within the project funded from other sources? (For example: school budget; labour, social affairs and family offices, state allowances for pupils from families in social need or others.)
 - ii. *If yes, why it was necessary to implement them from REF funding?*
 - iii. *If yes, were the alternative sources used? How they were combined with the REF funding?*
9. Had the school an opportunity to modify any activity's implementation in order to achieve the project's objective?
- a. How the school acted if any problems or insufficient performance of project activities was recorded? (If this occurred, what kind of problems occurred?)
 - b. How the project implementer reacted when you had signalled problems with the project implementation?
 - i. *Did the project implementer take your objections into consideration?*
 - ii. *Did the implementer modify the project or its activities implementation?*

- c. Were any unexpected opportunities identified during the project implementation, which would permit improvement or extension of services provided by your school? How were those opportunities used?

Evaluation:

10. From a retrospective point of view, which activities, components or principles of the project seem to be the most important for achievement of the project's objectives?
11. If you had to plan and implement a similar project, what would you plan or do differently, taking into consideration your experience with the project that is being evaluated?
 - a. How differently or more effectively would you use the funds provided by the REF?
12. Which project's activities would you label as good practice, which should be adopted also by other schools?
13. Which arguments would you use in order to convince your colleagues from other schools to join similar desegregation projects?
14. Will your school adopt any practices brought by the project? Why?
 - i. *Does the desegregation of Romani children in your school continue after the project completion?*
15. Would your school join similar project again? Why?

Questions for campaign projects:

16. How the diagnostics of Romani children used to be done before the project?
17. How the diagnostics of Romani children was done during or after the project?
18. Did you record an increase of children enrolled into mainstream school during or after the project?
 - a. How would you interpret the difference?
19. How many children have been enrolled into mainstream school and how many into a special school:
 - a. in the year preceding the project?
 - b. in the year when the project was implemented?
 - c. in the year following the project?

Questionnaire for adult projects' participants (parents)

Participation in project:

20. Do you remember a project *<Name of the project>* implemented by *<Name of the grantee>*, which was focused on education of Romani children?
21. Did any of your children participate somehow in this project's activities?
22. How did you learn about the project and possibility to participate in?
23. Who told you about the project? (For example staff on an NGO, teachers, community workers, social workers, fiends/family.)
24. Why the project drew your attention?
25. What benefit or activities were promised for children who would participate in the project?
26. What did you expect from the project?
27. What have you to fulfil or do in order child could join the project?

Project implementation:

28. What was done within the project? In which activities did you or your child participate?
29. Do you remember that *<each activities concerning the project beneficiaries are to be mentioned separately>* was done within the project?
 - a. What exactly was done within this activity?
 - b. Do you think that such activity has sense and brings any benefit for Romani children?

Feedback:

30. What did the project bring to you or your children?
 - a. What benefits did you obtain?
 - b. What did you learn?
 - c. What the project changed in the school functioning (behaviour of teachers, rules, new possibilities) or in possibilities of education of your children?
31. Do you thin that the project had sense to be done? Why?
32. Compared to previous time, did you record any difference during the project:
 - a. In school attendance of your children?
 - b. In behaviour of your children?
 - c. In school performance of your children?
 - d. In relation of your children to school and teachers?
 - e. Does any activity launched within the project is still being delivered after the project completion?
 - f. Who continues in the activity – school, NGO or other?
33. Have any of your children gone into a special school/class? Why?

34. Do any of your children go into a special school/class today? Why?
35. What does mean (did mean) for your children to be enrolled into a special school/class? Is it better or worst for a child than being enrolled into a standard school/class? Why?
36. Have any of your children gone into a school/class with Romani pupils only or into a class with non-Romany pupils, too?
37. Do any of your children go into a school/class with Romani pupils only or into a class with non-Romany pupils, too?
 - a. What does it mean for a child to be enrolled in a school/class with only Romani pupils or in a class including non-Romani children? What is better for Romani children? Why?
 - b. Do you think that Romani children receive education of the same quality as non-Romani children?
 - c. Do you thin that teachers treat Romani children in the same way as non-Romani children?
38. How relations and communication between Romani parents and non-Roma parents changed since their children attend the same classes?
39. How the project changed your relations and communication with your children's teachers?
40. How do your children do in school today?

Questionnaire for focus group (with REF beneficiaries)

Initial phase:

1. How was the situation of enrolment of Romani children from the locality/community or their enrolment into special schools or segregated schools? Can you compare the situation with the rest of Slovakia?
2. How did you describe in brief your project's objective?
3. How did you define a successful participant of the project?
 - i. *What had to happen with a child in order to be considered as successful or a child actually benefiting from the project?*
4. How successful was the project? Please, try to put into the numbers or percentage, how many of the children were successful according to defined expectations.
5. Which activities helped to achieve the objective of the project?
6. With today's experience from the project implementation, what would you plan or done differently?
 - a. How differently or more effectively would you use the funds provided by the REF?
7. Are the project's outcomes and results sustainable?
 - a. Which project activities continued after the project completion?
 - i. *From what they were founded?*
 - ii. *Who ensured the continuation?*
 - b. How the experience with the project changed the system and practice of education of Romany children in the locality/school/community, where the project had been implemented?
 - i. *Who implemented the systemic change?*
 - ii. *How can be verified, whether the change actually occurred?*
 - c. How the project changed the children's lived and lives of other project participants?
8. What are the main lessons learnt from the project? What can be identified as a good practice or a bad practice in your project, according to your opinion?
9. What would include the ideal project, focused on a desegregation of Romani children?
 - a. Which activities?
 - b. How would be the best way of measuring of success of the project?
 - c. Who (which institutions) would be participating in a project?

Cooperation with the REF:

10. How was you satisfied with the cooperation and support provided by the REF?

- a. How did you learnt about the opportunity to obtain resources for the project by the REF?
- b. How do you evaluate the support provided by the REF during the preparation phase of the project?
 - i. *Did you have an opportunity to consult the project with the REF during the preparation phase?*
 - ii. *Would you have appreciated to obtain more technical support and expertise during the preparation phase of the project?*
 - iii. *Did the REF help you to set up the indicators or methodology of data collection and evaluation of the indicators?*
 - iv. *Do you consider the requests and instructions from REF during the preparation phase of project as appropriate and realistic?*
- c. How would you measure the support provided by the REF in the implementation phase of project?
 - i. *Did you have an opportunity to consult the progress of implementation and possible problems with the REF search for solutions together?*
 - ii. *Did you have sufficient information/skills to prepare the monitoring and financial reports as requested by the REF? Did anybody provide you with instructions or manual for these obligations?*
 - iii. *How were the monitoring visits by the REF carried out? Were they enough sufficient and enabled them to understand the development and possible problems, which you were facing during the project implementation?*
 - iv. *Do you consider the requests and instructions by the REF during the implementation of the project, as appropriate and realistic?*
 - v. *Was the REF helpful during the phase of project implementation?*

11. What would you recommend to REF for the future support of projects?

- a. What do you consider for project focusing? (Which aims/objectives, activities would have to be supported by REF)?
- b. How the REF could inform potential beneficiaries about the grant, about this opportunity?
- c. What kind of support would be helpful by the REF in the phase of project preparation?
 - i. *Should the REF specify methods of data collection and evaluation of success?*
- d. What kind of help should the REF provide in phase of realisation of project?

- i. Should the REF provide training on developing/monitoring/reporting projects?*
- ii. Should be monitoring visits carried out more often? How often? How should they to be carried out?*