

# Every Roma Children in Preschool

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## Introduction

Roma and Egyptians communities in Albania continue to face very difficult living conditions and frequent social exclusion and discrimination, particularly regarding access to health care, social protection, education, employment and housing. Between 2011 – 2014 period, the number of mapped Roma children grew by 7.8% from 1.156 children in 2011 to 1.246 children in 2014<sup>1</sup>. The number of Roma children attending pre-schools grew by 79.1% between 2011 and 2014. In 2011 there were 383 Roma children attending preschool, or 26% of the registered, whereas in 2014 the number of Roma children attending preschool was 686 children, constituting a 55% attendance ratio. The two-year commitment of UNICEF funded project “*Every Roma in preschool*” implemented by a network of three national NGOs has contributed positively to improve access of Roma children in early education. The project has influenced policymaking both at central and local level with regard to social inclusion of Roma community. It has contributed to increase registration and attendance of Roma Children in pre-school and school by using effective tools such as “parenting clubs” (Parents Clubs in Kindergarten). This tool has managed to change the mentality and increase the participation of Roma families about the importance of early education of their children and create a “parenting model”. In addition, it has contributed to consolidate the role of NGOs for ensuring early inclusion of Roma children in early childhood education.

## Background

Albania has yet to ensure the reinforcement and protection of human rights, including Roma citizens and other vulnerable groups within the Albanian society. There is general agreement that to-date efforts to improve Roma’s social inclusion and access to education and health have yet to produce serious positive shifts as against the existing status of affairs.

Roma children are not fully integrated in the education system, a situation that builds up unemployment and exclusion<sup>2</sup>. According to a nation-wide survey on street children (April 2015) up to 2500 children, mostly Roma and Egyptian, live and/or work on the streets. On the other hand, the enrolment rates of Roma children in the education system despite increasing somehow are considered low overall in view of a high drop out rate. About 42 % of Roma children attend pre-school education (3-6), but only 16.1 % finish middle school, 2.1% have high school education, and 0.3% have university education. 40.3% of the Roma population is illiterate.

Soros Foundation (OFSA)<sup>3</sup> has carried out a census on Roma population in 2014. According to the census results, about 21 percent of the Roma live in Tirana, 20 percent in Korça, followed by 19 percent living in Fier and almost 13 percent in the Elbasan. The illiteracy level according to this census accounts for 49 percent of Roma population of 6 years old and above. About 51 percent of all Roma above 18 years old are completely illiterate, while illiteracy is encountered mostly among the female Roma population accounting for 52 percent. Only 12.2 percent of

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<sup>1</sup> The 2011 mapping of Roma Children carried out by UNICEF; The 2014 census of Roma children carried out by Soros Foundation

<sup>2</sup> EC Progress Report 2015 [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/package/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/package/index_en.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Census 2014 <http://www.osfa.al/publikime/censusi-i-banesave-dhe-popullsise-rome>

Roma population was attending school, while 48.2 percent had never attended according to this 2014 census.

Despite some improvement has been made to tackle health inequalities faced by Roma such as vaccination campaigns, community nurses and home visits, it is clear that further efforts are needed to ensure them a proper higher quality healthcare.

Although mapping of Roma population and census efforts have been made, it still remains difficult to register Roma children births, thus hindering possible prevention policies.

The Government of Albania remains committed to implementing policies aimed at supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, especially in education and health areas. Notwithstanding such commitment, the promotion of social inclusion, better access to education and healthcare remain closely linked to the need to lobby, advocate, promote and coordinate efforts of central and local government, service providers and Roma community as well.

The networking of government and non-government actors is a valuable path on which to build future efforts to overcome barriers to Roma Children inclusion. Besides enhancing capacities of all stakeholders, it brings together new evidence, best practices, a closer direct look on the situation subsequently serving to identify needs, gaps and influence policies and local solutions for the Roma. It also creates more room for advocacy and civil society pressure. Increasing awareness through information and examples of success to Roma families, especially for the importance of kindergarten, preschool and school integration of Roma children *vis a vis* better life opportunities in life remains fundamental.

### Situation analysis

*“Every Roma Children in Preschool”* project supported by UNICEF aims at increasing enrolment of Roma children in organized early learning activities. This initiative has a national scope and is co-funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation and ADA covering the 12 regions of Albania. A network of three partners Organizations is implementing the project with clear territorial divisions thus ensuring the national coverage. The leading Organizations of this initiative are: Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania (CRCA), Observatory for Children's Rights (Observatory) and Young Women's Christian Association of Albania (YWCA).

The *“Every Roma Children in Preschool”* project initially had as its primary objective the identification of Roma children less than 6 years old unregistered in kindergarten. In the process of identification of Roma children and registration to kindergarten, the network of NGOs was sensitized (raised awareness/mobilized) and committed to identify and tackle with economic, social, cultural, bureaucratic, and institutional barriers that hinder access to preschool.

Moreover, the project has contributed to increase participation of Roma families, raised knowledge on their rights and benefits. It has helped change their attitude and mentality towards discrimination and the importance of early childhood education. As a result of these actions combined with the lobbying and advocacy activities the *“Every Roma Children in Preschool”* project has made possible the creation of synergies among all stakeholders to overcome these barriers and resulting in several improvements and changes related to national policies on education, health and local governance.

## Project influence to National Development Policies

### Education

Albania has prepared the National Action Plan for Roma and Egyptian Integration 2020, which focuses on the following issues: i) civil registration; ii) social protection; iii) education; iv) employment and VET; v) social housing; and vi) health. This Action Plan is an integral part of the Social Protection draft Strategy 2016 – 2020. In addition, the Ministry of Education has prepared the Pre-University Education Strategy 2016 – 2020. It comprises a pre-school component aiming to eliminate inequalities, emphasizing the need to early interventions targeting marginalized communities including Roma.

Documentation of the project implementation during its 2 years of life shows that the intervention has been successful in ensuring access to preschool to Roma children. The project has made a significant step in terms of policy framework for Roma preschool inclusion. As a direct impact of the project the Ministry of Education and Sports has issued an Order of Minister no. 21, dated August 8<sup>th</sup> 2014 “On enrolment of Roma children in preschool”. In addition, the project influenced the Government decision to provide free transport to Roma children; the Government has adopted the decree no. 682, dates 29. 07. 2015 “On the use of public for funds for the transport of education employees and pupils, who work and learn outside their place of residence” – by this decision the Roma children that attend kindergarten which is situated 2 km away from their place of residence benefit free transport.

It also has managed to enroll in preschool institutions a total of 877 children<sup>4</sup> from which 409 were enrolled in the first year, and 468 in the second year. Moreover there is a total number of 367 Roma children<sup>5</sup> (74 of which were enrolled in school in the first year and 293 in the second year) that have benefited from the family visits of the NGO-s to be enrolled at the schools although this was not included in the primary objectives of the project.

The project has positively contributed to build a positive parenting model regarding Roma families’ participation and fighting against discrimination. The Parents Clubs in Kindergarten have created solid grounds for shifting social norms of Roma families with regard to their children enrolment to preschool. Initially the Roma parents, taking into account their mentality and education level, were resistant to the idea of sending their children to preschool. In 2 years the situation has evolved and the Parenting Clubs in Kindergarten have proved an appropriate tool not only to change social behavior and norms among Roma families but also to create education and employment opportunities for Roma parents themselves. During the second year of project implementation an agreement has been signed between the VET Regional Office No. 4 in Tirana and CRCA Albania, which resulted in the registration of 9 Roma parents into professional education courses.

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<sup>4</sup> Data provided from the three NGO-s December 2015

<sup>5</sup> Data provided from the three NGO-s December 2015

## Health

The documentation of the *“Every Roma Children in Preschool”* project activities show that efforts were made to address the difficult living conditions and frequent social exclusion of Roma, particularly regarding access to health care. Poor health conditions of Roma children relate to diseases in early years of life (0 – 6 years old, time when most of the vaccination takes place). During the two years implementation of the project a number of 434 children<sup>6</sup> have been vaccinated 183 children vaccinated in the first year and 251 in the second year. Initially, the children vaccination was not an objective of the project per se, but it has been pursued since vaccination is mandatory for enrolment in preschool institutions. Furthermore, the project implementation has gone beyond its initial objective as during onsite visits to Roma families vaccination was administered not only to the children at the age to be registered in kindergarten, but also to other elder children present in families

## Project influence to Local Government Policies

In the framework of the project, the network of NGOs has prepared the Preschool Education Priorities for Roma Children for all the 12 regions where the project is being implemented. These documents have been presented and discussed with all local government representatives. The project activities organized with local government representatives have contributed to change the mindset of local service providers and to increase their capacities on how to work with vulnerable families and Roma children. In addition these activities have contributed in the establishment of joint working groups of different local representatives and NGO to deal with Roma community needs<sup>7</sup>; and find the appropriate institutional mechanism to address their lack of access in social health and education services.

In 2015, Albania underwent a Territorial reform and subsequently local elections were held on 23<sup>rd</sup> of June. The network of NGOs, in the framework of the *“Every Roma Children in Preschool”* project, has met with candidates for Municipalities and City Councils and presented them with the *“Priorities for the preschool education of Roma children”* document. It ensured that all candidates became aware of the importance of early childhood education and inclusion, the Roma community needs, existing proposals on how to tackle with these needs. This process influenced the inclusion of Roma development priorities in the platform of several Mayors’ candidates in the main cities.

Documentation of the *“Every Roma Children in Preschool”* project activities shows that it has influenced changes in local government policies with regard to enrollment of Roma children in kindergarten. The Tirana Municipality Council, on September 30<sup>th</sup> 2015, took the decision to remove the Guarantee of Lek 5.000 for all Roma children attending kindergarten, which belong to families benefiting social assistance. This decision was taken in response to an extensive lobbying and advocacy process made by the network of NGOs since 2013. Another successful example of the project advocacy efforts is Fieri Municipality, which have resulted in the introduction of one hour of English lessons for those Roma children that attend school regularly and provision of one additional hour of lesson in a subject that Roma children face difficulties.

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<sup>6</sup> Data provided from the three NGO-s December 2015

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.crca.al/news-every-roma-child-kindergarten/albania-mobilized-%E2%80%9Cevery-roma-child-kindergarten%E2%80%9D>

Moreover, the Fieri Municipality has committed to build a playground for the kindergarten in the Driza village and also build 10 houses for Roma families.

In the village of Mbrostar - Ura is established a drinking water tap as a collaboration between Fier municipality, Mbrostar local units and Observatory for Children's Rights. Municipality of Roskovec financed the road which enabled the transportation of Roma children to school. The road is covered with ballast due to the appointment of new municipal mayor.

During the intensive work of Observatory and meetings with the housing Office in Peshkopi municipality, on-site inspection to Roma families will be provided by a group of specialists of housing and property in the municipality.

### **Project outcomes**

The *"Every Roma Children in Preschool"* project, has contributed to a stronger, direct and beneficial cooperation between Roma communities, central and local institutions and network of NGOs to ensure enrolment of Roma children in kindergarten and also enhance their social inclusion. The implementation of the project activities have provided periodical information, assured data evidence and collection, exchange of best practices, enabled the identification of policy gaps to address Roma inclusion. The involvement of national policy making bodies, local government institutions, civil society organizations, service providers, and Roma community supported by UNICEF in several concerted efforts have established a road map, a consolidated model to be followed in order to tackle with the multifaceted issues related Roma children enrolment to preschool.

More specifically the outcomes and deliverables according to the project objectives are summarized below:

#### ***Objective 1 – Civil society strengthened and holds the Government accountable for its action towards the Roma children.***

Increasing the accountability of Government officials, Members of Parliament, elected officials and ultimately of service providers has been on the focus of the project activities. The network of Government and non-government actors for ensuring early inclusion of Roma children in early childhood education has been further consolidated during the implementation period.

Active steps have been taken to establish and consolidate the relationship with central and local level institutions, such as the update of MPs database and the information of the Parliamentary Group "Friends of Children", Women Alliance in Parliament on the initiative, along with distributing to MPs the National Study on Access of Roma children and the Priorities of Roma Children document.

Furthermore, the collaboration of Ministry of Education has been ensured in the implementation of the "I vote" campaign, which highlights the importance of education in

vulnerable children lives, while the network organizations have voiced out the need for quality education in the hearing session of May 18<sup>th</sup> 2015 when the Parliamentary Committee on Education and Means of Public Information discussed the draft Law no. 69/2012 “On pre-University Education System in the Republic of Albania”.

Efforts have been made by the network of NGO-s to update the lists of key actors at local level, but the consolidated and updated list has yet to be finalized as new local elections took place in June 2015. The network of NGO’s has prepared the list of children that need to be registered in pre-school and school during the academic years 2014 – 2016. Moreover, these data have been duly provided to the Commissioner for the Protection against Discrimination and to all REDs (Regional Education Directorate) as well. The network of NGOs has also monitored the distribution of textbooks to Roma children. Following the provision of Roma children list from the NGO, the Commissioner for the Protection of against the Discrimination has established an investigation team to monitor and ensure the free textbook distribution to Roma children. Observatory has been informed officially for the monitoring of free textbook distribution situation by the Commissioner for the Protection of against the Discrimination.

Several roundtables have been organized by the network of NGOs covering the entire territory to ensure the community mobilization and encourage local government officials at all levels, for the inclusion of Roma children in early childhood education. The network of NGO has organized face-to-face meetings with the candidates for Mayors in larger municipalities including the city council candidates, of major political parties, in order to raise the awareness about the early childhood education of Roma children initiative and presentation of “Priorities of Roma Children” documents in their respective constituencies. The lobbying has been effective as candidates for Mayors included some of these priorities in their electoral platforms.

Capacity building activities have been carried out by the network of NGOs with the participation of local unit’s representatives (Regional Education Directorate, Health Centers, Regional Health Directorate, Social Service Offices, kindergarten staff) to raise awareness in early childhood education and promote cooperation between different institutions for the registration of Roma children in kindergarten. These meetings have tackled both with the identification of social and economic bottlenecks related to kindergarten registration of Roma children, and finding of the appropriate legal and institutional mechanisms to solve them in accordance with shared and gained knowledge and experiences of the Roma children situation.

### *Objective 2 – Advocate, promote and monitor Roma child integration in kindergarten / preparatory school.*

The network of NGOs has continuously made joint efforts with Roma community, local authorities and service providers using a common methodology and unified protocol for the identification, vaccination and registration of children in kindergarten. While the late start of the project has created some difficulties with registration, the network of NGOs has conducted visits in Roma families in the process of identification of Roma children outside kindergarten. The network of NGOs has conducted regular monthly monitoring of Roma children attendance in kindergarten (including orphan kindergarten) and schools.



The network of NGOs has submitted official letters to Regional Education Directorates and Education Offices with the lists of Roma children of 3-6 years old to be registered in kindergarten for the academic years 2014 – 2015 – 2016. This effort is made to help the institutions to retain a clear understanding of the situation with children ready for kindergarten and also equip them with a monitoring tool with regard to the evolution of registration and attendance.

**Table 1: Registrations in Preschool<sup>8</sup>**

Municipalities	Registration in Preschool	
	<i>First Year of project implementation October 2013 – October 2014</i>	<i>Second Year of project implementation April 2015 – December 2015</i>
Fier	18	46
Tirana	52	94
Kukes	4	4
Vlora	43	39
Dibra	12	1
Elbasan	20	38
Gjirokastra	34	30
Korca	48	53
Lezha	41	49
Berat	26	34
Durras (+Fusha Kruje)	34	18
Shkodra	77	62
<b>National Level</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>466</b>

Furthermore, regular meetings are conducted with Civil Status Registry, Municipalities, and Regional Education Directorates in order to obtain statistical data on Roma children and families regarding their location changes and to facilitate the registration process of un-registered Roma children on a case-by-case basis.

The network of NGOs has organized several activities throughout Albania to support and facilitate Roma children in kindergarten. These activities, organized on April 8<sup>th</sup> – the International Roma Day and on June 1<sup>st</sup> – the International Children Day varied from sport and artistic shows, marches of Roma and non-Roma communities, exhibitions, joint-school activities, etc., served the purpose show and prove the new skills learned and progress made by integrated children attending kindergarten. On these occasions, several meetings with parents and authorities to discuss non-attendance of Roma children in kindergarten, what hinders it, and which are the possible ways to tackle with it.

The network of NGOs in cooperation with REDs has also supported with supplies (furniture, books, didactic material, shirts and caps) some of the kindergartens where Roma children are

<sup>8</sup> Data provided by the three NGO-s as of December 2015

enrolled, including Korca Summer Camp, and many kindergartens covered by CRCA, Observatory and YWCA.

The network of NGO-s has facilitated the process of delivering of free textbooks for Roma children enrolled in the schools and collaborated closely with the Regional Education Directorates and schools directorates to ensure that the Roma children have obtained free textbooks for the academic year 2015-2016.

***Objective 3 – Prepare an analytical and consolidated report on Roma Children access to social services, economic aid and child protection services on Albania.***

The three partners' Organization has produced the Report on "Roma Children access to early childhood services in 2014"<sup>9</sup>, lead by CRCA Albania. The Report "Access of Roma Children in Early childhood services" gathered information on Roma children in relation to their education and health by using the collected data of the public services across Albania.

The report contains data and information on early childhood education and early childhood services (crèches and kindergartens, basic education, vaccinations and health issues in general).

Data collection commenced by March 2014 to finish in July. Data collection was set as joint-work of the institutional partners in every municipality and commune across Albania. In total 23 trained team leaders and facilitators conducted interviews and mapping of the situation of Roma children. A specific Protocol was prepared and made available to all the experts' part of for the Study. In total 256 public officials from the staff of Educational and Health services in 12 Regions of Albania were part of this massive exercise of mapping Roma children in Albania. Almost 400 questionnaires were distributed to the directors of crèches, kindergartens, schools and health centres, Educational authorities, Economic Departments at Municipalities, while 381 filled questionnaires were received from the study teams.

The Report collected data approximately on 5,100 children or 75.2% of the Roma children population recorded by Roma Census 2014, or respectively for 46 children in crèches; 665 children in kindergartens; 2625 children in basic education; and 2475 children in health centres. The report warns that they don't represent the overall number of Roma children living in Albania.

The report has produced recommendation on issues related to early childhood services that need to be addressed at the policy level by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health or Municipalities across Albania, duly taking note of the latest developments in the country's territorial and administrative reform.

***Objective 4 – Empower and mobilize Roma families and communities to actively engage in policy dialogue with local government and service providers in Albania.***

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/ALBANIA%20-%20ROMA%20CHILDREN%20ACCESS%20TO%20EARLY%20CHILDHOOD%20SERVICES%202014.pdf>

The network of NGOs has helped establish “Parents clubs” in a number of Roma communities and kindergartens. Besides helping to establish these clubs, the network of NGOs has regularly organized and joined the meetings of the parents clubs in their area of competence.

The meetings of Parents Clubs are organized each week in collaboration with Health Centers, Professional Training Directorate, Social Services, CPU and other NGOs that facilitate and encourage discussions. Collaboration with other NGOs in the process has been positive and encouraging – it has made possible kits (shoes, clothes, hygiene products etc.) for mothers and children that are distributed at the end of each meeting strengthening the inclusiveness and integration message.

The parents club as a tool has been effective to establish a dialogue between families, parents of Roma children and their educators, so as: 1) allowing the Network of NGOs and educators and other service providers understand first hand the issues faced by parents of Roma children which hinder their inclusion and integration in kindergarten, pre-school institutions; 2) enable Roma parents to gain familiarity with kindergarten, services provided and advantages drawn by their children if regularly attending, including immunization and vaccination; 3) deepen the discussion between interested stakeholders on topics of education, health of Roma children, discrimination and stigma; and 4) consolidating the understanding and awareness that children’s early education has an important impact on the Roma children future.

The network of NGOs has organized several Community Mobilization activities and meetings with participation by local authorities, REDs, RHDs, Social Services, Roma community’ representatives, Roma parents, Kindergarten and schools staff. These meeting have served multiple purposes for the network NGOs, such as: i) defining the priorities of Roma communities where they are settled; ii) sharing with all interested stakeholders of the findings of the first year of implementation; iii) assigning awards to stakeholders for cooperation in identification and registration of Roma children, kindergarten staff performance, efforts for the vaccination of Roma children and their inclusion in the immunization scheme; iv) increasing the awareness of Roma families/parents and encouraging them to register their children in kindergarten, training parents and providing basic information on their children education, health, social and economic benefits for the future.

Furthermore, besides carrying out lobbying and advocating activities to actively engage in policy dialogue with local and central government, the network of NGOs (CRCA) has also participated in a donor’s consultative meeting to discuss priorities of Roma children’s education, community mobilization for vulnerable groups, investments in education etc.

*In continuous efforts to empower Roma families and their mobilization to actively engage with service providers YWCA developed a **manual on parenting** focusing on helping parents to take proper care of children development and quality education during early childhood. The manual was based on the best parenting practices in early childhood with a special focus on topics of preschool education and development, health and nutritional needs of young children as indicated in different current studies.*

Some specific topics of parenting are:

- The importance of development during the first years of life;
- Brain development and early intervention;
- Learning and play during the first years;

- How to communicate effectively with young children;
- Nutrition in the first years;
- How to manage different medical problems with young children at home.

**Guidelines** were developed as well, on proper use of parenting manual.

**Table 2: Project Outcomes Data during the first year of implementation<sup>10</sup>**

Region	Children enrolled in preschool 2013-2014 and 2014-2015	Children enrolled in school 2013-2014 and 2014-2015	Number of identified unregistered children	Children registered in civil registry	Children immunized	Number of persons trained by the project	Number of persons contacted in the family	Number of visits to preschools
Dibra	12	3	4	0	8	63	91	18
Fier	18	0	15	9	3	97	200	78
Kukes	4	3	2	0	0	55	14	10
Vlora	43	4	13	5	6	90	150	70
Tirana	52	5	6	1	60	48	443	204
Elbasan	20	6	5	4	9	20	60	82
Gjirokastra	34	48	82	0	17	27	500	85
Korca	48	4	10	10	0	30	500	70
Berat	26	0	9	0	8	152	35	60
Durres (+Fushe Kruje)	34	1	3	0	31	60	45	95
Lezha	41	0	5	3	41	22	64	103
Shkodra	77	0	0	12	0	50	60	85
<b>National Level</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>2162</b>	<b>960</b>

**Table 3: Project Outcomes Data during the second year of implementation<sup>11</sup>**

Region	Children enrolled in the preschool 2015-2016	Children enrolled in school 2015-2016	Number of identified unregistered children	Children registered in civil registry- December 2015	Children immunized April-December 2015	Number of persons trained by the project April-December 2015	Number of persons contacted in the family April-December 2015	Number of visits to preschools
Dibra	1	5	1	0	7	70	200	20
Fier	46	2	16	1	0	80	220	105
Kukes	4	6	0	0	0	95	130	18
Vlora	39	2	18	0	0	110	180	50
Tirana	94	16	48	2	12	264	1013	155
Elbasan	38	24	14	10	34	196	391	53
Gjirokastra	30	11	6	36	2	110	838	62

<sup>10</sup> Data provided by the three NGO-s as of October 2014

<sup>11</sup> Data provided by the three NGO-s as of December 2015

Korca	53	17	22	43	28	202	702	100
Berat	34	11	23	4	18	189	240	138
Durres (+Fushe Kruje)	18	36	7	27	80	178	180	75
Lezha	49	30	5	3	48	179	350	146
Shkodra	62	133	90	13	22	115	153	120
<b>National Level</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>1562</b>	<b>4597</b>	<b>1042</b>

### Next Steps

The “Every Roma children in preschool” project during its 2 years implementation has faced several challenges but some of them have been successfully solved with the participation of the different actors involved in implementing and supporting the process.

Challenges to be addressed in the framework of the project are:

i) The need to increase collaboration of policy makers, both at central and local level regarding the integration of Roma children in early education in view of new legislation related to Organization and Functioning of the Local Government and the determining of clear roles and responsibilities for creating an enabling environment for Roma children.

ii) The opening a budget line in the budget of local units, which targets the fulfillment of the needs of Roma children (provision of free lunch meals in kindergarten and free transport and construction of new kindergarten facilities etc)

iii) The limited capacities of local government staff due to changes in personnel after local elections, which deal with Roma children inclusion and other vulnerable groups.

iv) The maintaining of a permanent dialogue between national and local decision makers, UNICEF, NGOs and Roma community to scale up the initiative based on positive results achieved so far, in order to ensure the sustainability of the established model for Roma children inclusion so as it does not remain a donor driven initiative. Its continuation may be hampered by the lack of financial support.

v) Roma community traditional mobility hinders the registration efforts and programing of support and prevention policies.

## Annex Success Stories

### The Jenifer Case

Jennifer is a child born from an Albanian mother and an African father, she is 4 years old. The family lives in the town of Mamurras near Mosque of the city, living in his parents' home Fatusha. The conditions in which they live are very difficult, and the house is amortized. They are unemployed and have no income, their life is getting harder. They are unable to afford to live, because they have no income from any source.



*Parents meeting*

### Accomplished standard

During parents meetings in the city of Mamurras in the area where the Roma community lives, we talked about the importance of educating children and its benefits in the life of children. Immediately after we provided information to the kindergarten director, she immediately sent educators to talk with the mother of Jennifer and follow the case more closely. Jennifer was enrolled very quickly in the kindergarten and she was very happy to meet her peers. It is very well integrated in the kindergarten at a very short time. Now she regularly attends kindergarten. Jennifer was also present at the celebration of June 1, where she sang, danced and played with their peers.



*Xhenifer celebrating June 1, in the kindergarten*

### **Senada case**

Senada Ymerllari is the girl with impressive eyes. One day as we went to pick up the Roma children to take them to the kindergarten, Marjana her mom, told us the hard night spent with Senada, due to her epilepsy crisis. With our help we got her to the hospital. Her mother was hopeless because whenever she went to the hospital, the staff did not accept her. Thanks to our persistence and continuous meetings Senada the 6 years old, did her EZHE and was treated regularly. For several months she was treated regularly, with therapy and with our help she got the medicines as well. Now Senada is a healthy child healthy and completely healed. She was the first Roma child to register in kindergarten. Senada has attended every day kindergarten and is learning a lot. This September she will go the school and it will be our wish to the long road of integration of Roma children in education.



*Senada during medical check-ups*

### **Berat Qark**

This is Daniel Rexha, born on October 10 2010, son of Sokrat and Anxhela. Our first meeting with him was very impressive. He accompanied us to visit all Roma families. He understood Albanian very well, but spoke very little and he would only laugh. He looked smart and was paying attention during all the conversation. He had never attended the kindergarten, but sometimes was seen begging for money in the city center.

His story was painful. He lived with his paternal grandmother since parents were away in Greece (so they said). They left when he was 3 months old and had never contacted him. He did not know his parents and for him his grandmother and his cousins were everything. Although very young, he collects cans and sometimes begs for money in order to provide something to eat.





Our first meeting with his grandmother was difficult. She was afraid to leave his grandchild alone, since she has never separated from him. Their quarter near Pjeshkorja is a very poor area. There are other children who live there too. Their enrollment at kindergarten and school is a real challenge. Our contact with these children was difficult, many of them naked or dressed with few clothes.

The first meetings with YWCA coordinator, kindergarten teachers and psychologist were cold. Playing games and reading books drew children attention including our little cheerful Daniel.



Their first contact with a book was interesting too. They listened to the stories and looked carefully the images. Throughout the summer for about two months, they were in the company of kindergarten teachers.

September came fast and now was not difficult to convince his grandmother since we had gained her trust and the friendship we established with Daniel was strong. In his first day of kindergarten, he was sitting on the table and trying to manage his tears. It was his first time sitting on a chair. But everything went naturally and he adapted very easily.

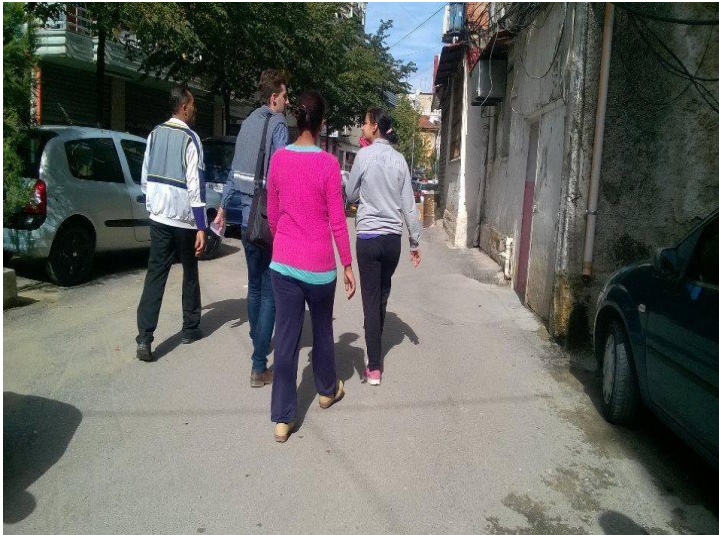
Every day, teacher Shaqja got up early and picked up the children near their residence to go to kindergarten. Daniel was also with the group of children waiting for his teacher to come.





He attends kindergarten regularly now and feels good near his friends and teachers. He also brought Kristian to attend kindergarten. In kindergarten, his attendance is systematic. Everything has changed about him: his appearance, behavior, friends. New Year festivities are coming and maybe a postcard for the parents he misses so much.

#### **Case of the first Mother that gets the prepayment of ALL 5000 guarantees**



A. was one of the 50 children of Roma community registered in kindergarten and preschool institutions of Tirana, during the second year of the “Every Roma Child in preschool”.

A lives together with her mother (20 years old), father (20 years old) and her little sister (1 and a half years old) in the father's aunt's shack, because her father's parents have passed away many years ago.

A very important element worth

mentioning for this new family is the fact that we are dealing with family whose head is mother, because the spouses in question have not yet made marriage documents.

The parents of A. before enrolling their girl in kindergarten were both unemployed, but now thanks to the enrolment in kindergarten of A. the young mother (7 months pregnant) found the time needed to start a job in the market, while the husband continues to be unemployed.

Besides earnings of the A.'s mother, which are not sufficient to meet the basic needs of all family members, they have no other incomes, neither from “Ndihma Ekonomike” nor from Social Assistance.

As a result, the 3-year-old little girl at the time of enrollment in kindergarten 38 benefited free registration, because she belonged to the categories listed in the order of the Municipal Council of Tirana to refund the kindergarten. However she could not prevent the Prepayment of All 5000. The desire of parents of A. to register in kindergarten obliged them to get indebted. They asked money from their relatives to enable A. to obtain proper education as other children.