

**Mid-term evaluation of the
“Inclusive Quality Pre-Primary and Primary Education for
Roma/Egyptian Children”
project**

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Tirana, 30 March 2011

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List of Abbreviations

CG	Children Government
CoE	Council of Europe
ER	External Review
ERRC	European Roma Rights Council
GoA	Government of Albania
IED	Institute of Educational Development
MoC	Albanian Ministry of Culture
MoE	Albanian Ministry of Education and Science
MoFA	Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoLSAEO	Albanian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-Operation
R/E	Roma and Egyptians
REA	Regional Education Authorities
REF	Roma Education Fund
SCiA	Save the Children in Albania
TdH	Terre des Hommes
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank

1. Introduction

The fall of the Communist regime in 1991 marked the beginning of the Roma's and Egyptians' decline from relative well-being to extreme poverty. Low employment skills, discrimination, and the collapse of various state-owned industrial and agricultural enterprises contributed to their mass unemployment and poverty, along with rising illiteracy rates, deteriorating health and infrastructure. Studies show that the level of their poverty is twice higher compared to Albanian and that this situation comes worsening. A vicious circle has been created; one which reproduces illiteracy and low educational level among Roma and Egyptian, and which furthers deepens their marginalization in the society.

One of the main causes of poverty and social exclusion for Roma and Egyptian in Albania is lack of education. The SCiA project aims to break this barrier and is intended to encourage the Roma/Egyptian students in schools and kindergartens where intervention is done, to progress same as their peers of the majority population.

The goal of the SCiA project is to “provide children from different ethnic groups with the opportunity to interact and socialize, learn about each other, thus improving inter-ethnic relations among the mainstream schools students and wider community”.

This report assesses the progress of SCiA project at the end of the mid-term phase and provides some recommendations for the next phase.

2. Organization structure

Save the Children in Albania (SCiA) started its activity in Albania in 1999 during the Kosova crisis and has been working for over 11 years in the field of education. It is known from high representatives of Ministry of Education as the main international organisation which contributes to education, particularly at the preschool and primary school level. SCiA focus its work on capacity building and strengthening of services for children and the creation of a policy and legislative environment which responds to key child rights issues in the country.

The SCiA project is financed for the period March 2008 – December 2011 by a grant from the Roma Education Fund, Medicor, Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children Norway (Table 1). A full time coordinator work on this project with the close cooperation of the education manager and the director of SCiA.

Table 1. SCiA project funding

Nr	Donors	Value (Euro)
1	Roma Education Fund	155,160
2	Medicor	335,718
3	Save the Children Sweden	50,000
4	Save the Children Norway	70,000
	Total	610,878

The chart below shows the organizational structure of the project which has an organogram that can be considered as a "best practice". By means of meetings, discussions and interviews the consultant observed that the SCiA staff is professional and has deep knowledge in the field of education and Roma issues. It has earned the respect and has created excellent relations with the R/E community, the school teachers and the REA specialists, mediators and other partners of the project in Korca and Gjirokaster as well, as with the MoE and IED at the national level

In Korca and Gjirokastra there are 2 moderators employed as full time and 4 others on part time basis, a good part of whom belong to the R/E community. They have clear job descriptions and they plan to report each month on the project's activities. A part of the moderators have limited education, what brings difficulties on the planning and reporting. Despite this they are successful in the practical aspect. The Consultant participated in some meetings with the R/E community and observed that the moderators have earned its respect and were devoted to their work. The employing as a mediator of Mr. Majko Majko, a Roma experienced teacher marked qualitative changes in the project's staff.

In addition to the moderators, the project is employing part time 31 teachers, in Catch up classes, Help doing homework classes, Language classes and Counter Illiterate classes. They have the obligation to meet twice per month to share experiences and learn from the best experiences and fails.

The SCiA project has good working relations with the MoE, IED and the REA-s. During the field work the consultant observed that the REA specialists in Korca and Gjirokaster seem devoted to maximise the results of the project. During the next phase the SCiA project need to work more regarding the sustainability at the central level.

The consultant thinks that in the next phase the organizational structure of the project can be structured with the appointment of a responsible person in Korca and Gjirokaster able to create synergy between the R/E community, schools and kindergartens, REA and other partners. The coordinators shall have adapted education in difference from the relatively low level of a part of the existing mediators.

3. The project approach

In the course of its implementation the project developed a series of interventions to support the beneficiaries. This approach, which we call the SCiA model, includes the following activities:

- To strengthen the identity of Roma and Egyptians students and increase their association with students of the majority in ekstrakurricular hours talking about history, culture and traditions of the Roma and Egyptians' community;
- Students who lag in school are supported through additional hours in mathematics and Albanian languages, as supported by teachers and R/E mothers in conducting home works;
- An inclusive environment is created within the school;
- Diverse recreational activities are organised (social, cultural, sports, education, etc.) so that children may develop greater self confidence, learn new things and get socialized;

- R/E children are part of Children Governments. This has increased the diversity and communication between children, and give a stronger voice to R/E children;
- For children who have not attended school before, a Literacy class is created in Gjirokastra, which provides part time education;
- Trainings are organized on monthly basis with R/E parents on the importance of education for their children;
- The parents of the R/E children are part of Parents' Class Boards and in the round tables discussed problems related to education and non-discrimination;
- School and kindergarten teachers have been trained through trainings and workshops in order to improve their skills on working in a multicultural environment;
- Infrastructure of the schools and kindergartens are improved to create a child friendly environment and create some facilities lacked there;
- Children without differences are equipped every September with learning materials in order to ease the educational process;
- Schools/kindergarten are equipped with teaching and didactic materials in order to create the facilities for an inclusive environment there;
- Provision of food and transportation for vulnerable children, as an important approach;
- Awareness raising activities with non-Roma parents, as an important barrier of inclusion of R/E children;
- A mediating body is functional in both regions playing an important role in parents' awareness on the importance of education, collaboration with schools and local structures in easing Roma/Egyptian children's problems.

The model applied to 4 schools and 4 kindergartens, in Korca and Gjirokastra, aims to create an inclusive environment in order for the R/E students to progress from the educational point of view same as their peers.

4. The External Evaluation

The external evaluation of the project has been commissioned by SCiA to assess the progress of the project at the end of the first phase and to provide options for the next one.

4.1.Mandate and Purpose

SCiA has mandated an external consultant with the review of the project "Inclusive Quality Pre-Primary and Primary Education for Roma/Egyptian Children". The mandate was made directly with the individual consultant.

The objective of the evaluation, as specified in the ToR, was to present a mid-line status on the progress of the project with a view on how the project, or elements of it, can serve as a model for replication. This includes the following elements: enhancing teachers capacities to work in multicultural classes, creation of an inclusive environment in schools, supplementary school lessons, children transportation, children food, cooperation with parents, extracurricular classes on history, Roma tradition and culture etc.

4.2.Methodology

The goal of the pilot project on Roma Inclusive Education in Albania is to provide children from different ethnic groups with the opportunity to interact, socialize and learn about each other, improving thus inter-ethnic relations among mainstream school students and the wider community. The four-year Roma Inclusive Education project started in April 2008 and has been financed by Roma Education Fund, Medicor, Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children Norway.

This evaluation assessed the progress of Roma Inclusive Education in Albania project at the end of the first phase and provided recommendations for implementation of the second phase and on how the project can serve as a model for replication.

During the evaluation, the Consultant, Mr Ilir Gedeshi, closely cooperated with the staff of Roma Inclusive Education project, its partners and beneficiaries. This report represents the opinion of the Consultant.

During the evaluation, the Consultant strictly followed the approach outlined in the ToR¹ as follows:

- Gained familiarity and analyzed the project documentation (project proposal and the budget, as well as some of the school records and statistics, annual and quarterly work plans, progress reports and other documents as relevant);
- Organized briefing and debriefing with Roma Inclusive Education Project staff in Tirana;
- Carried out field visits in Korca and Gjirokastra regions where the Roma Inclusive Education Project has been operating;
- conducted questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion with staff, beneficiaries and partners (students, Roma parents, Regional Education Authorities, teachers, moderators and other relevant actors) to assess the quality of implementation and the impact of project activities in terms of the projects' stated objectives;
- conducted meetings with the Ministry of Education officials, Institute of Curricula and Training researchers, NGOs representatives and other donors active in the field of Roma inclusion and education;
- submitted a draft report one week after debriefing to Roma Inclusive Education project staff in Tirana;
- Revised the draft report based on comments given by Roma Inclusive Education Project staff in Tirana.

¹ Term of Reference: Mid-term evaluation of the Roma Inclusion pilot project

The analytic work for this report included primary and secondary data analysis. It involved: a desktop review of relevant literature; quantitative and qualitative methods, and; one stakeholder workshop. The primary data was obtained by carrying out field-work in 2 regions (Korca and Gjirokastra). For each selected site, the Consultant collected and analyzed information across a variety of categories such as men, women, children and youth. In establishing the contacts with beneficiaries and partners, the Consultant was assisted by the Roma Inclusive Education pilot project staff.

1. **Desktop Review.** The evaluation took as its starting point a literature review on Roma/Egyptians in Albania. This literature included UNICEF, UNDP, World Bank, ERRC, Soros Foundation, and other studies and reports on the situation of Roma in Albania and other Central and Eastern European countries. The Consultant reviewed all the SCiA documents (Roma Inclusive Education project application form, project implementation plans 1 and 2, quarterly reports, etc). He reviewed school documents for assessing some of the progress related with academic progress, retention rate, absenteeism etc. All sources are listed in the bibliography of the report. The findings are presented in the end of the report.
2. **Quantitative Methods.** A questionnaire survey with 100 Roma parents was applied in Korca and Gjirokastra regions. The surveys contained more than 60 questions intended to produce quantitative data concerning education. The resulting data was analysed using SPSS software.
3. **Qualitative Methods.** The components of this method included:
 - (a) 6 focus group discussions (three in each region) with local Roma community (separate sessions with women, men, young adults, and adolescents) in the two project regions. In addition 2 focus groups (one in each region) were organized like control group for assessing the effectiveness of the interventions in the two regions. Each group was composed of 7–12 participants;
 - (b) 25 semi-structured interviews were organized with project beneficiaries and key stakeholders (Roma Inclusive Education Project staff, schools and kindergarten staff-s, officials of local and national government, partners, and representatives of NGO).

The Consultant facilitated focus group discussions and interviews using semi-structured questions. All focus group discussions and interviews were recorded, and a verbatim transcription was prepared. These transcripts can be made available upon request. All names cited in the report are fictitious. The Consultant has employed other standard procedures to ensure the confidentiality of participants' input.

 - (c) One workshop was organized in Tirana. Participants included officials from Regional Education Authorities, teachers from the schools and kindergartens, parents and representatives from Roma community.

Through these methods the external evaluation:

- (a) compared the effectiveness of the project models and made recommendations on how elements of one or more other can be applied in Albania on a regional and national level;
- (b) assessed the progress of implementation with reference to time-frame and project objectives;
- (c) assessed the quality and relevance of interventions related to stated objectives: changes in attitudes and practices, Roma children's school enrolment and retention, classroom participation and academic performance;
- (d) assessed the involvement of parents' and community in children's education;
- (e) assessed teachers capacity for teaching in a multi-cultural classroom;
- (f) assessed the progress of the children based on the baselines and records provide by SCiA;
- (g) assessed monitoring tools and documentation of impact;
- (h) assessed organizational structure and the capacity of staff and partners to achieve the expected results, ways of cooperating with other actors and recommended improvements;
- (i) identified the main obstacles to project achievement and recommended solutions;
- (j) assessed transfer of knowledge, advocacy and project sustainability;
- (k) identified critical issues that should be considered for the remaining period of project implementation.

In particular, the external evaluation:

- (a) Reviewed relevant project documents, including but not limited to the completed Application Form, Project Implementation Plans 1 and 2, Quarterly Reports;
- (b) compared the effectiveness of the project models and made recommendations on how elements of one or more other could be applied in Albania on a regional and national level²;
- (c) computed the database for keeping the records of project beneficiaries and variables provided by SCiA and/or schools;
- (d) Analyzed the projects' results, including an assessment of achievements of the project against the project indicators in the Project Implementation Plan and the sustainability of project's impact on the children school results progress and compared the results with the average results of the schools where the project intervened;
- (e) assessed the per-child cost of the intervention, analyzed the differences by locality or type of intervention, and compared per-capita cost with national average cost for the same level of education;
- (f) Identified elements of project design/methodology which could be replicated on the regional/national level.

4. Stakeholder workshop. The preliminary findings of the Consultant were discussed in a workshop with the staff of Roma Inclusive Education project in Tirana, officials from the Ministry of Education and researchers from the Institute of Curricula and Training.

² The effectiveness of the project model is made through comparing Roma/ Egyptian children with those of majority.

5. Main Stakeholders

5.1 Roma and Egyptian

Roma and Egyptians are two distinct ethnic groups that have lived for centuries in the territory of Albania. Until few decades ago, the origins of both Roma and Egyptians were unknown. However, based on linguistic studies it is claimed that Roma originate from Northeast India (studies found similarities between Roma and certain Indian dialects), from where they emigrated almost 1000 years ago with frequent migration waves. The historians and anthropologists estimate that Egyptians as well come from India, but since they migrate earlier than the first and were under the multi-centuries' impact of the majority they lost their language and culture³. However, Egyptian associations claim that the Egyptians have Coptic roots and have come to Albania from the ancient Egypt around the IV-V centuries B.C.⁴ They don't speak the Romani language, they have a Syncretic faith (this includes different parts of Islam, Orthodoxy, and Animism) and are sedentary.

Despite their separate cultural identify, both groups suffer poverty due to social exclusion while have low levels of education.

A special attention is given by the project the inclusion and non-segregation. Even the main aim of the project was focused on R/E children's education, they are seen as the part of the whole group. Non-segregation and non discrimination (even positive one) is a feature of the project.

5.2 Project Partners

The SCiA Project cooperates with different partners on various levels.

At the **micro level** are the beneficiaries, children and their parents in the two project locations. Due to the specificity and focus of the project, this level can be considered mainly members of vulnerable R/E communities. The project is supporting the beneficiaries and has tried to involve them during the project design. Further, on this level there are the implementing partners: teachers in the project, mediators, and persons working in different local and central institutions.

At the **mezzo level** are the institutional local partners: kindergarten and schools, municipalities and communes, and regional education authorities. According to the interviews in Korca and Gjirokastra the SCiA project has a very good reputation among these institutions. Furthermore, the SCiA project cooperate with several local R/E NGOs. The project was able to establish MoUs with REA and Educational Economical Centre in Gjirokastra with clearly defined responsibilities for food provision. 73 children, out of which 53 are R/E were supported with food in the project kindergartens in Gjirokastra. 17 new children have been enrolled in Gjirokastra kindergarten because of food provision (12 Roma/Egyptian and 5 non-Roma/Egyptian). This represents a good basis for further formalizing cooperation and for

³ **Bexoli A.**, Minorities in Albania, Tirana 2005

⁴ **ECRI (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance)**. 2002. "EU Support for Roma Communities in Central and Eastern Europe," Enlargement Briefing, Brussels

inducing structural changes at the mezzo level, and for developing a more precise clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the different partners.

At **macro level** the MoE and the Institute for Educational Development can be considered as the main partners. The SCiA project and the MoE have signed a partnership agreement. The MoE allows the SCiA project to operate in selected public kindergarten and schools in Korca and Gjirokastra. The MoE appreciates the SCiA project and aims to reproduce some elements of the model in other regions of Albania. An official of the MoE during an interview stated that: “education officials in Korca and Gjirokaster are very satisfied with the project and its positive results. This is mainly embodied in the academic results, inclusive environment inside schools that motivates the willingness of children to go to school and to awareness raise parents, mainly R/E parents on the importance of education.

5.3. Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries are the children aged 3-16 (2,648 children: 1367 boys and 1281 girls) and from R/E communities (549 persons, 20.7 per percent), in the two locations who are – together with their families – in social need. These children are integrated in kindergartens and schools and are getting (602 children, from which 291 R/E children) supporting classes in mathematics and Albanian languages, as well as receive help for their home works. In addition, the project aims to strengthen the identity, socialization and self-esteem of R/E children through discussion of the history, traditions and their Cultures in extracurricular hours, organization of activities (social, cultural, sporting, and educational) outside the school and participation in the government's students. A part of the children receive free meals in the kindergarten, whilst 21 R/E children from the peripheral settlements in Gjirokaster are supported with transportation to reach the school. Meanwhile, one Literacy class in Gjirokastra is providing part time education for 15 R/E children never being at school.

The second group of direct beneficiaries are the 180 teachers in primary schools and kindergarten that are updating their skills and methodologies of education. About 20 officials from RED in Korca and Gjirokastra are also part of this group. They have assisted in the implementation of the application of relevant strategies for inclusion of R/E Children in the process of mainstream education. They are trained on “Inclusion of Roma culture and tradition in the optional curricula in 6 subjects”, “Equal treatment of all children in classroom” and “Promotion of R/E inclusiveness and educational planning in multicultural classes”. The trainings provided participants with inclusive quality education tools & approaches in curricular and extra-curricular activities to create an inclusive culture in their schools.

Another group of direct beneficiaries are R/E and non-R/E parents, who are trained and offered advice in order to change their mentality, attitude and practices towards the importance of education in their children's lives. About 800 parents in total have participated on monthly basis in trainings on “Inter-ethnic Integration”, “Successful meetings with parents”, “Gender equity” etc, aiming at positive changes in their attitude and practices on their children's education.

The interviews and FG conducted indicate that parents seem to be happy with the progress of their children. “Compared with two years ago - says one of the Roma parents in the FG - our

children have progressed a lot in their studies and behavior”. While Burbuqe, another Roma parent states that there are no distinctions based on the ethnicity and the socio-economic situation between the children at school: “Sometimes we send the children without feeding them to the school because me and my husband are both unemployed. However, my daughter wants to learn and the teachers motivate her. The school director appointed my daughter to participate in the central evening without making distinctions or discrimination...”. Children, on the other side also state that they feel good at school and they feel their progress.

6. Assessment of Performance

The mission of the Consultant was carried out during the 3rd and 29th of March 2011. The Consultant visited the two project locations (Korca and Gjirokastra) and interviewed beneficiaries, community members, local and national authorities, local and international NGOs, etc. The assessments below are based on the information collected during these FG and interviews, intensive discussions with the implementer and the studies of relevant papers.

6.1. Assessment of SCiA indicators

To properly evaluate a project the indicators and means of verifications need to be clarified at the very beginning of a project. The SCiA project has few indicators and some of them were rather vaguely formulated in PIP 1 document. These facts led the consultant see other document of SCiA to make a formal evaluation of the achievements.

The consultant has received indicators from the strategic and yearly SCiA plans, before starting the field work. The assessment below gives rather a picture of the project, but can only partly be used to evaluate the implementing agency. The table below shows the result of the assessments done by the consultant.

Table 2. Indicators

Objectives	Number of indicators	Indicator was met	Indicator in progress	Indicator was partly met	Not applicable
Objective 1	5	5			
Objective 2	7	2	5		
Objective 3	9	7		1	1
Total	21	14	5	1	1

In the annex a complete assessment of the different indicators can be found.

6.2. Assessment with regard to the ER objectives

In this chapter the Consultant would like to presents the general assessment of the SCiA project achievements in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Relevance: The activities implemented by the SCiA project in the schools/kindergartens of two regions are **highly relevant**. The SCiA project has addressed real needs and aspirations of people living at the very bottom of the society. According to the beneficiaries, Roma NGO-s, local

government and partners organizations the project is delivering tangible results at beneficiary level. Based on the interviews and the focus groups, all parents considered the intervention relevant. At the other side, almost 100% of interviewed children and teachers consider the intervention as needed..

Effectiveness: The SCiA project provides *effective help to the target group*. The education of the children creates real opportunities for the students in the future. In addition, the project strengthens the R/E student identity, has increased the diversity and communication among children, and has created a comprehensive environment through different activities. In addition, the SCiA project promotes implementation of Roma strategy and advocate on minority issues and social inclusion.

The gender issue has been addressed within the project and with the beneficiaries.

Efficiency: The project has identified the *most relevant locations* for the development of activities and is therefore able to reach a high number of beneficiaries by applying a concentrated effort. The Consultant thinks that the *activities have been implemented in an efficient manner* and that the staffs working with the beneficiaries have a high level of competence and motivation. As result it is diminished the drop out level as well as the absences, meanwhile it is increased the passing classes level and the average grades in all the schools where the project is being implemented (Fig. 3, 4 and 5). Meanwhile, 22 Roma/Egyptian children have completed the basic education in June 2010. That is 29% more compared to 2009 figures (5 children more). 63% of them (22 Roma/Egyptian) have continued high school in September 2010.

Sustainability: At the *beneficiary level* the results of the activities are *sustainable*. The children learn to read, write and calculate and no one can take this from them. Their progress in learning achievement – compared to the period before the beginning of the project or with the other similar schools – is undisputable. School passing rates and the average grades of R/E students is increased in a sustainable trend from one year to the other in all the schools where the project is being implemented (see Figures 4 and 5). They gain in self esteem and pride. Their parents – through training and workshops - are changing the mentality, attitude and practices towards the importance of education. While the teachers in kindergarten and primary schools have updated their skills and methodologies of education. The Consulnt assisted some school lessons in the elementary school and identified that teachers work with contemporary teaching methods, such as child center methodology, group work, treating with the same attention and care all the children etc.

The *project as a whole* unfortunately looks different; it is *highly depended on the financing of REF and other donors*. Until now is not very clear if MoE will take the responsibility to continue the efforts for the continuation of this pattern after the completion of the project and its expansion into other schools in the country. For this reason, during the second stage of the SCiA project implementation it should be lobbied more with MoE, that it undertakes responsibilities. SCiA as well should lobby more even in the REA, aiming that the basic elements of this model are replicated in other schools in Korce and Gjirokaster. REA in Korca and Gjirokastra should disseminated widely, at the national level, the results achieved in the schools where it is implemented the SCiA project.

6.3 Assess monitoring tools and documentation of impact

Project results are regularly monitored through quantitative and qualitative monitoring tools, such as: school/kindergarten registration, school/kindergarten drop out, passing rate, retention rate and average grade, all these segregated by gender, ethnicity and participation in extracurricular classes. Regular formats are kept for each of these indicators and a comparative analyze is undertaken during the whole project life. As per monitoring tools regular tests are done with children in Math and Albanian Language to see children's progress. School vice-directors and representatives from Regional Education Authorities have regularly monitored classes' and school's climate aiming at improving inclusiveness, strengthening the identity of R / E children etc. They have kept notes on regular formats on this. Once per year (2010 and 2011) is done the reassessment of the "Baseline assessment on teachers' and parents' and children's attitudes toward Roma children included in four schools and kindergartens in two regions in Albania (Korca and Gjirokastra)" (done in 2009) as a monitoring of progress of the project focused on behaviors and attitudes. These results are reflected in the documents of SCiA, as quarterly and 1 year reports that are sent periodically to the project donors. In addition, project staff SCiA continuously assists in the development of model lessons, the school courses, the training of teachers and parents, students' activities, etc. Monitoring of field work is reflected in the "Field visits", an internal document of SC (direct observation, interviews, revision of documentation at school/kindergarten level, work of mediators etc.). Meanwhile, the computerization of the results of students, which has recently started will allow in perspective a more detailed analysis.

Monthly plans and reports are prepared from Roma mediators on progress achieved challenges and problems' resolve and are addressed to SC Programme Coordinator for consolidation and then to the SCiA Education Programme Manager.

Plans and reports are adopted in order to monitor the achievements of the project against indicators set.

Main monitoring tools, whose outcomes are reported, are as follows:

- Focus group discussions and interviews with children and families;
- Focus group discussions and interviews with teachers;
- Focus group discussions and interviews with communities;
- Focus group discussions and interviews with other possible involved actors.

Regular meeting are held with teachers, parents, mediators with clear duties and responsibilities of people involved.

7. Findings

In the ToR a list of specific questions has been provided. These questions have been guiding the Consultant and most of them are answered in the report.

7.1. Project design

The project design addressed three different objectives.

Objective 1: Support the development of quality inclusive education in four schools and four kindergartens in two region of Albania where a considerable number of Roma children are living.

This objective is clear and reflects the core of the project work. The activities support the objective. It is covered with some quantitative indicators. Sufficient resources were allocated to fulfil the outputs.

Based on the interviews and the FG undertaken in the fieldwork in Korce and Gjirokaster, the Consultant needs to provide some evaluations.

Provision of extracurricular subjects such as the R/E history and culture for both R/E and other Albanian students has increased the respect for diversity, and has raised awareness among children about their respective cultural backgrounds and ways of life. This evaluation is based in the interviews and focus groups discussion with students of majority in schools in Korce and Gjirokaster. But the Consultant thinks that this has to go on with a high intensity even during the second phase; efforts should be put in order to find new and varied ways to achieve those same results. Some suggested activities could be: organizing exhibitions with special artistic works of the R/E students, discussions with the representatives of the R/E community or NGOs related to their traditions, performance of the artistic groups, etc. All of these would help develop further the R/E students' identity. The latter, strengthen of the students' identity should be considered as a long run process. Agimi, a CG member in "Asdreni" school in Korçë is concerned, as: "One may be proud to say in the middle of the classrooms that he/she is Albanian. However, one would hardly be proud to state one's identity as a Roma or Egyptian. So, no one in the classroom would raise the hand if the students are asked to be identified either as a Roma or Egyptian".

In interviews and FG the R/E students appreciate school courses and emphasize their importance in educational progress. Development of school courses and assistance given to the students to perform their homeworks also removes a barrier to their education. Many R/E students have no conditions at home and cannot be helped by their parents who are illiterate or with low levels of education. Consequently organization of the school courses represents a significant achievement of the project and is a new element in the Albanian reality. Data showed that 600 children (250 girls), out of which 300 R/E children (150 girls) from 2nd - 5th grade participated in 9 Support Classes in regard to Albanian Language and Math (three times per week/2 hours). Albanian Language classes were expanded in October 2010 to include 6th - 9th grade children, as result of requests by children, parents and teachers. 187 children (61 girls), out of which 81 R/E children (36 girls) from 6th - 9th grade have participated in 8 classes (three times per week/2 hours). Math classes were also expanded in October 2010 to include 6th - 9th grade children. 192 children (67 girls), out of which 74 R/E children (36 girls) participated in 8 Math classes (three times per week/2 hours). 9 R/E mothers assisted 178 children (81 girls), out of which 89 R/E children (48 girls) from 1st-5th grade in doing homework. They were working in close cooperation with teachers and Roma mediators (five times per week/1.5 hours). This led to increase of passing school and average grades of students in these classes. Bujar, a Roma student from Korce says: "Participation in school courses not only has helped me to pass the backwardness in mathematics and albanian language, but has stimulated me to continue school". Meanwhile, the Consultant observed that in Koto Hoxhi school and in Cajupi in Gjirokaster these classes are not facilitated

but proper teachers named by RED. . The Consultant believes that these courses should be developed by school teachers, who know better student deficiencies and are interested in overcoming their backwardness. School students in these courses can also be helped in some other subjects such as physics and chemistry.

During the field visit the Consultant observed that three month tests are done with the children in the language and math classes. These tests indicate the sustainable progress of R/E pupils. Moreover, the vice-directors of the schools monitor according to pre-set formats the regular and additional classes. Furthermore, an inspector in each of the regions is responsible for monitoring the schools and kindergartens of the project. During these classes monitoring the inspector takes notes in some reporting forms, which are sent to SCiA (Look Annex). These notes are linked with the explanation, teaching strategy, students participation, class management, participatory climate etc. Nevertheless, the performance of these school courses should be carefully monitored. The progress of students participating in these school courses can be assessed through continuous tests from school directories or REA inspectors.

The project has served to create a *child friendly* environment in schools and has increased communication between R/E students and those from the majority of the population. During the interview and FG, the students have expressed themselves about many positive aspects of those relationships, which we consider to be another achievement of the project. However, cases of self-isolation of the R/E students have been noticed. One of the main reasons for the R/E students' self-isolation appears to be also the difficult economic and financial situation of their families. Arben, one of the students in the "Asdreni" school in Korce, notices that: "Many of the R/E students miss some of the learning activities, such as in excursions which are supposed to entertain children. They do not have the economic means (...). Their parents try, but they don't have a job and the necessary stable income. Hence, those children will miss the excursions, although providing different justifications". The Consultant thinks that the project should find ways and possibilities – maybe in the synergy with the local government and other stakeholders – to finance some of these activities, in order to increase the R/E students' participation.

In Korce and Gjirokaster 60 children R/E and from majority go to the kindergartens where they get free food. The Consultant talked with children and their parents and appreciates the commitment of educators in their work. They have a significant role not only in educating children, but also their parents (through talks, workshops, training) with regard to nutrition, hygiene, health, social services, etc. 60 parents participate monthly in these meetings. Children of different ethnic groups (and their parents) set their first contacts to each other, communicate and socialize among themselves. In addition, registration and integration of children in kindergartens is a prerequisite not only for the continuation of school by them (almost 100% of kindergarten children enrolled in school), but also for their future results in schooling. Interviews with educators show that kindergartens need some funding to improve their services, which could be realized during the second phase of the project and through a redistribution of its funds.

During the second phase the project should pay more attention to the vocational program for R/E children over 16 years old. These vocational programs should be anticipated by an analysis of the local labor market demand for skills. Meanwhile, links of the R/E education with the vocational training programs would be another achievement of the project. In this case, it would be useful

that a synergy between the local government, private enterprises and other agencies of interest be created in order to facilitate the R/E employment that would complete the vocational training. Employment of some R/E would be a good motivation for the children that go to school, and their parents as well, who could thus observe the long-term benefits of education.

Objective 2: The transfer of the experience (on inclusive education) to the Ministry of Education and Sciences structures.

This objective is important and regards to the project's sustainability. It is covered with some quantitative indicators. Sufficient resources were allocated to fulfil the outputs. At the next phase of the project more efforts need to be focused on this objective.

During the interviews and FG the Consultant observed that the teachers were well informed and discussed with passion on the history, culture and traditions of the R/E community. 180 teachers had participated in trainings, workshops, study visits and conferences organized by SCiA project⁵. However, this knowledge shall be distributed systematically and in an organized way by means of extracurricular hours and different kind of activities to the students. Consequently, there shall be coordination between the teachers especially at the high cycle of the primary school regarding the information transmitted to the students.

In Gjirokaster the Consultant observed that at the low cycle the students were well informed regarding the history and origins of the Roma. Many drawings, notes and photos of the R/E children were put on the frames of the class while the children of the majority and the R/E ones communicated and behaved with love towards each-other. This shows the devotion of the low cycle teachers, who succeeded to establish very good personal relations with children and their families.

In the interviews and FG the R/E students and parents positively estimate the teacher's work and talk with compassion about them taking care of their children. The Consultant observed that in schools and kindergartens in Korca and Gjirokaster there was a lot of devotion by the teachers towards the R/E children. However there are still cases when Roma and Egyptian students are made to sit at the back of classrooms or they are not activated during the classes. Mirela, a student from Korca says: "In my class there are some students that the teacher (...) pays more attention to, says good words to them and says that they are good and this and that. Regarding Roma and Egyptians they are made to stay in the same row and stay mostly at the end of the classroom (...) The teacher activates most those that sit in the first desks or those that were graded by 8, 9 or 10 and not the Roma and Egyptians who barely receive a 5 or a 6". The Consultant thinks that despite the achieved results, the trainings and workshops with teachers to increase their capacities for teaching in a multi-cultural classroom, shall be continued also during the second phase.

On the second phase the project shall lobby more with the Institute of Curricula and Training that the elements of history and culture of R/E children must be included also in the learning texts of

⁵ SCiA project has organized 4 trainings, workshops every 2 months, 2 study tours and 1 conference in Gjirokaster. In these activities it is discussed on the teaching methodology, problematics of R/E children education, themes on history and Roma culture etc.

history, geography, literature etc. This could be facilitated even from the fact that SCiA project has a detailed work plan in partnership with ICT This was stressed even from the interview with the director of this institution.

Objective 3: The enhancement of the parents/community understanding of the importance of inclusive education.

This objective is clear and reflects an important element of the project work. The result/output level supports the objective. Sufficient resources were allocated to fulfil the outputs.

Based on the interviews and FG conducted during the fieldworks in Korca and Gjirokastra the Consultant wishes to present also some evaluations.

During the field work the consultant observed that the R/E parents participating in the training and workshops in Korca and Gjirokastra were very dedicated and passionate. In the interviews and focus groups they stated that these trainings and workshops were also like a school for them.

Most of the R/E parents have a lack of recognition of the long-term benefits of education for their children in view of limited employment opportunities in the formal sector. The Consultant thinks that it would be interesting if some positive cases could be developed further with the parents. For instance successful models with education and employment of Roma/Egyptian persons may be promoted in the community with parents and children. This would motivate and will help them to change their stance towards the education of their children. For this purpose in the trainings and workshops the moderators can invite for free talks students at universities, teachers, trainees, and public and private sector specialists and professionals from all walks of life, which would act as examples for the R/E parents, sharing their personal educational development, employment, and future aspirations.

In those trainings and workshops some sensitive issues shall be treated as well. One such subject is also the very young age (12-15 years old) the Roma girls get married. This phenomenon constitutes also one of the main causes why Roma girls drop off school after the age of 10. It is related to the tradition as well as with problems of the post-socialist transition such as poverty, lack of security, and weak public institutions. Consequently, the solution of this problem requires also more raised awareness and more engagement of many social actors.

Meanwhile, during the second phase, it will be important that together with the parents, teachers and moderators, also school psychologists shall be engaged. He/she can communicate and help the 10-14 year old girls who due to the mentality of their parents are under consequent pressure for dropping off school.

The registration of the children is another important issue that shall be discussed and trained in these workshops. By means of interviews and focus-groups with the Roma the Consultant observed that in Korca and Gjirokastra there are many cases where the children are not registered in the registration offices. Hasan, an informal leader of the Roma community from the Zinxhiraj neighborhood in Gjirokastra says that: “One of our main problems is the registration of the children. In our neighborhood there are 18-19 children that are unregistered “

During the next phase, it will be important (1) the organization of a training/workshop of local media regarding the characteristics and needs of the Roma and Egyptian communities. (2) Furthermore the publication of articles and documentaries that talk about the positive aspects (the work of the SCiA project, mediators, teachers in the schools/kindergartens, the achievements of some individuals that can serve as an example for the others etc) and promote the values of R/E community.

7.2. Special issues

1. The Consultant estimates that some elements of the model can also be replicated in the actual phase at the regional/national level. One such element is also the conducting of R/E history classes within the extracurricular ones in order to strengthen the identity and the respect for diversity between the school students. In Korca and Gjirokaster teachers and REA specialists are trained and also a manual based on Roma best practices in education, culture and tradition will be prepared by IED. During the second phase of the SCiA project can be invited to participate in the trainings also teachers from other cities where there are large communities or R/E.

2. The per-child cost of intervention has been increased from 25.2 Euro in the first year to 79.6 Euro within the last year. It is in report with the related activities and the number of the beneficiaries. The average cost per student is about 55 Euro.

Table 3. Average per-child cost of intervention

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Number of beneficiaries	2800	2896	2648	2500
Funding	70,627	163,182	162,970	199,102
Average cost per child	25,2	56,5	64	79,6

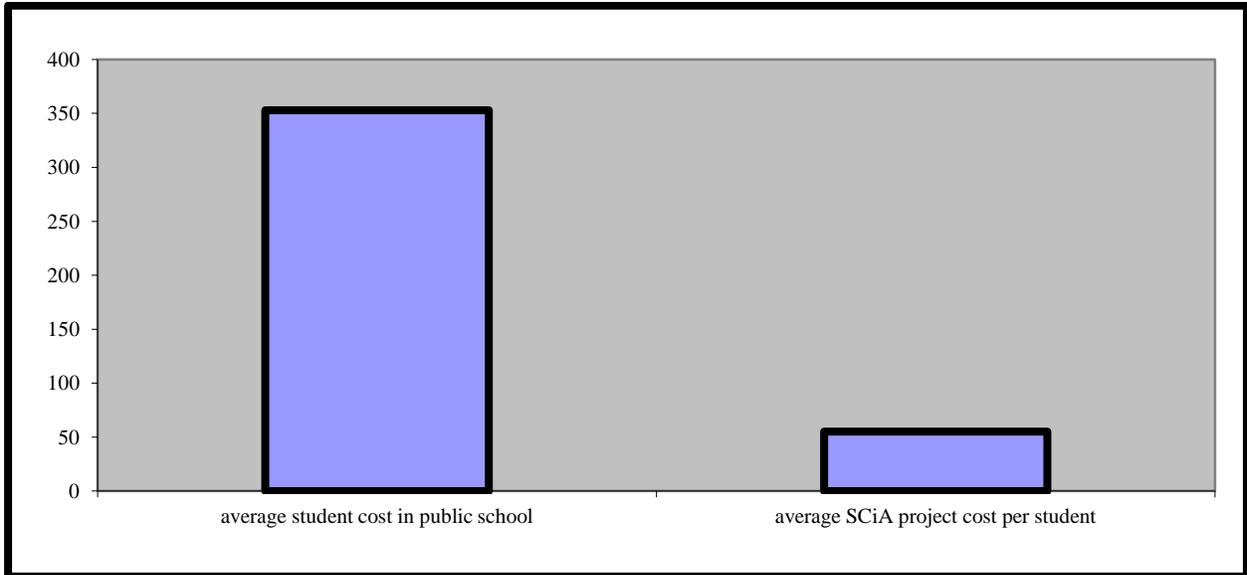
The data analysis shows that some activities like for instance school courses, have a monthly per-child cost of 3.3 Euro.

The average cost of a student in the 9 year public education system is about 510 USD⁶ or about 353 EURO⁷. As a result the SCiA project cost represents between 7.1% and 22.5% of a student cost in the 9 year public education system.

Figure 1. Average per-child cost in public school and SCiA project

⁶ Ministry of Education and Science, 2011

⁷ Exchange rate 1 Euro = 1,445 USD



3. The project has continuous records regarding the registration, absences, the passing rate and the academic progress of the R/E children in kindergartens and schools. In the second phase of the project the data shall be computerized and unified in order to be possible to conduct a deeper analysis for each school, class and individual.

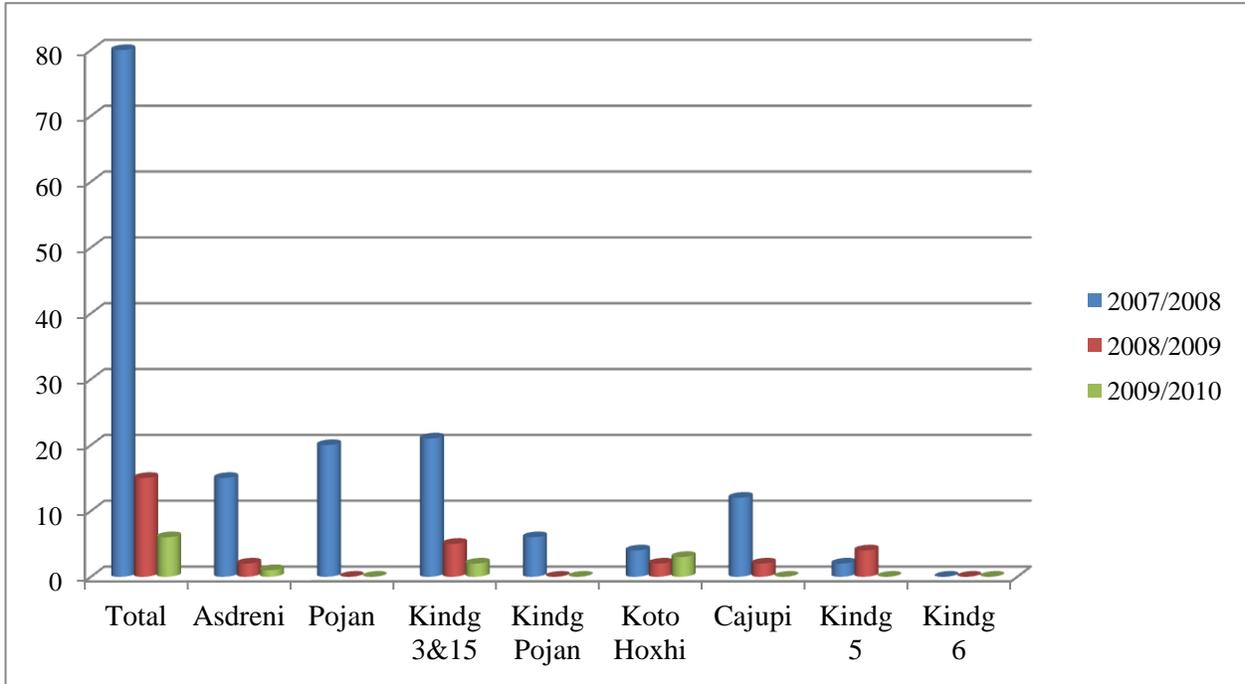
Based on the available data, the consultant observes that the project has signed a deep and sustainable progress has been achieved regarding the given objectives. This progress is visible in the following directions:

A. **School dropping.** In Korçë and Gjirokastrë the school dropping has been a phenomenon almost exclusively for the R/E students. Empirical data show that more than 85 percent of the children that drop out school in Korçë were R/E. A study of UNICEF showed that 89 percent of the R/E children that dropped out school had as a main reason “the economic difficulties and emigration to Greece”⁸. This phenomenon is almost equally spread between the Egyptians girls and boys. While among Roma children boys are more likely to drop schools. However whether Roma boys drop out school mainly in the low cycle the Roma girls drop school starting from the 5th grade. The school drop out by Roma girls that are 10 years old or more can be explained by cultural factors and by young age marriages.

The Consultant has observed that the SCiA project by means of its interventions has drastically diminished the phenomenon of school and kindergarten dropping. The below graph clearly shows this tendency. Meanwhile also during 2010-2011, school statistics show that the level of school drop out of R/E children is decreased in 50% compared with the previous year.

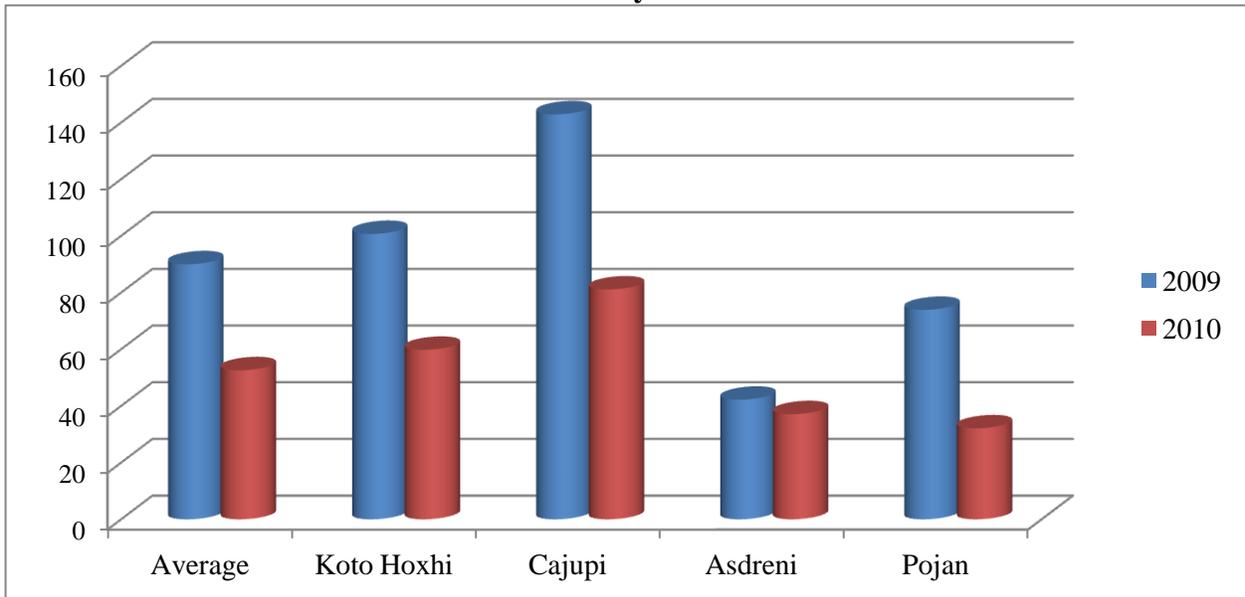
Figure 2. Drop out phenomenon by R/E children during the 3 school years

⁸ UNICEF., “No to School Dropout”, Causes, Recommendations, Korca, January 2008



B. The consultant observes that the SCiA project has noticeably diminished the number of the absences of R/E children. This has been reached by making school friendly for them and by empowering the R/E parents' community that influence their children.

Figure 3. Average absence rate of the R/E students during 2008 - 2009 and 2009 - 2010 school years

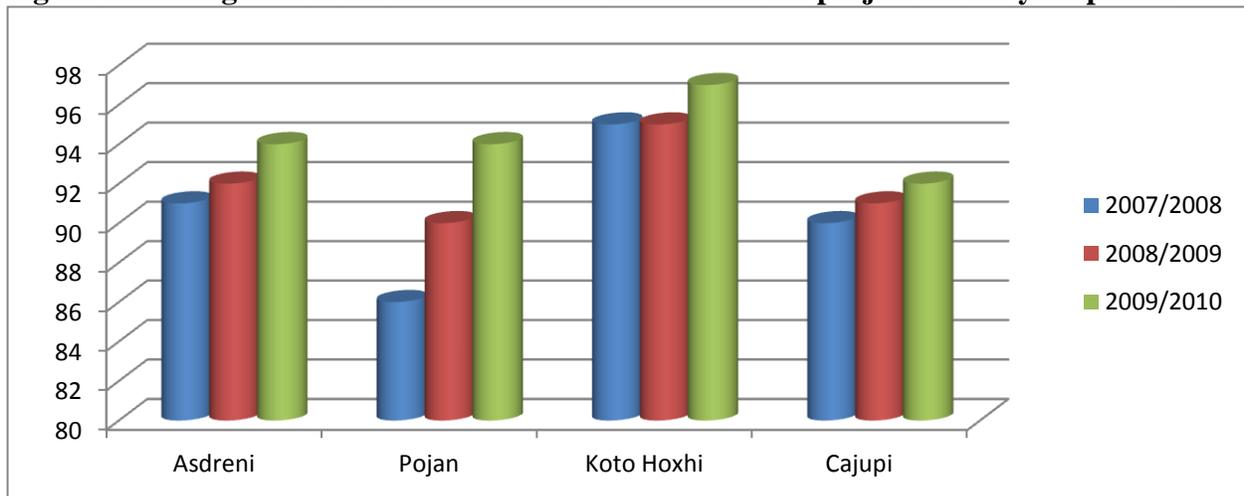


The average number of R/E student's absences is however a little higher than the total average of the schools included in the project. However this difference has showed diminishing trends. During 2008-2009 school year the average number of the absences for the R/E students was 90

while it was 34,9 absences per each student. In 2009-2010 the average dropped to 52.6 for R/E students while in total it was 35.5.

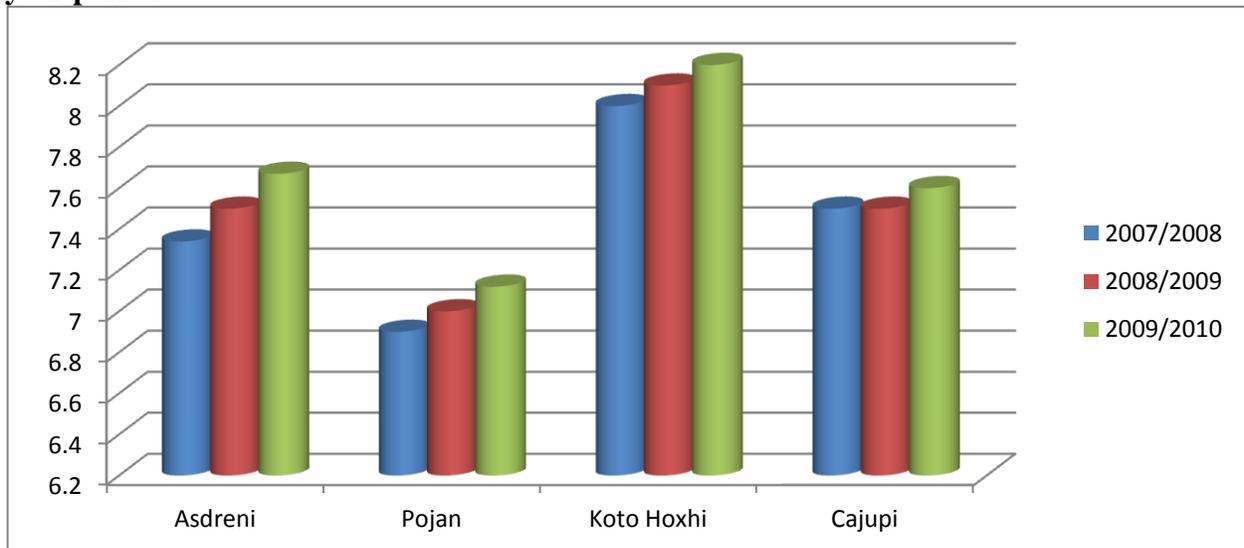
C. Passing rate. The consultant observed that SCiA project by means of its intervention has increased the passing rate of R/E students. This achievement of the project is reflected also in the increase of the passing rate in the schools included in the project (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Passing rate of the school students included in the project for a 3 year period



D. The average mark of R/E students has been increased and the difference with the average of the whole school has decreased. The academic progress is seen especially in math and literature in project schools. The increase of the average mark of the R/E students has brought to the increase of the average mark in all project schools.

Figure 5. Average mark of the students of the schools included in the project during a 3 year period



4. The project's sustainability is one of the main issues that must be considered during the second phase by SCiA. Despite the fact that the MoE appreciates the project, it is not clear whether it will take care of its continuation and the replication to other regions where Roma and Egyptian communities exist. Therefore the Consultant thinks that:

- SCiA shall lobby more with the MoE and REA-s regarding the ownership of the main elements of the project, especially regarding the a) performance of the R/E history and culture during the ekstrakurricular hours, in order to strengthen the identity and respect for diversity among students; and b) the conducting of extra classes. For this purpose SCiA shall cooperate also with the national and local media in order to promote its activities and the results of this project.
- SCiA shall create a partnership and lobby with the local governance, NGO-s and international organizations regarding the continuation of some services after the end of the project. For instance, the financing of the feeding of a part of R/E children in the kindergartens is a measure that triggers their participation in such institutions and their later registration in schools. The same thing can be said about the financing of some school activities for a part of the R/E children.
- SCiA by means of the REF funds must review the possibility to continue the project for another period and to expand it also in other schools of Korca and Gjirokastra. It has already acquired an experience that can be replicated.

8. Conclusions

1. The SCiA project is addressing a real need. The socio-economic situation within the locations the project targets is desperate. Poverty levels, unemployment and illiteracy in these locations is very high.

2. The project has chosen the most problematic locations. In few other location in Albania inhabited by large groups of R/E is the situation so problematic. This shows that the targeting and relevance of the project in the two locations is good.

3. The project has built good relations with R/E communities, local and central government and other partners. These relations need to be deepened and formalized in the future, while R/E communities should have a more and more active role in the project. This process should take place in a context where local and central government shall take growing responsibility regarding R/E communities. Furthermore, the project should continue to build upon synergies with other local partners as well as with international ones.

4. The project has contributed to empowering the R/E communities and this is the novelty of it. To consolidate these results and to grow the project's sustainability it is necessary that the project continues for another period. The time factor is necessary considering the low education level of R/E communities.

5. The project team is highly dedicated and motivated. During its mission, the Consultant observed that the team of the project received a great deal of respect from the concerned R/E communities, and that the team was dedicated and motivated in solving their problems. The participation in the team of the moderators from R/E communities has markedly impacted on the level of trust, respect and engagement of the community.

6. The project has addressed a gender balance. More than 1/3 of mediators and more than half of parents, consultative body, etc is comprised of women and girls.

7. The project is multidimensional.

9. Final remarks

The consultant is expressing its gratitude for getting an inside in a very interesting and impressive project. The SCiA project is offering hope for the poorest in the Albanian society. The cooperation with SCiA project was excellent and the staff has been very helpful throughout the mission. The consultant would like to thank all involved in the review, particular Mr. Refik Cela, Ms. Arberesha Mushani and Ms. Anila Meco for all the support in the preparation and the logistics provided. A special thank goes also to the SCiA staff for the open and engaged participation and for their daily work in the project.

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Project Environment

To adequately assess the performance and progress of the project it is important to understand its environment. Socio-economic conditions and policies have had a major impact on this project's performance, and have accelerated or limited the progress the SCiA project can accomplish.

The timeframe of the consultant mission was limited, and therefore most environmental factors influencing the project implementation were gathered from external sources.

Albania has a population of 3.2 millions inhabitants, of which approximately 95 percent are ethnic Albanians⁹. In 2010 the GDP per capita was 3,950 USD¹⁰. These per capita incomes are lower than in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, despite the growth rates of GDP to have been among the highest in Europe since 1998. The average age of the population is about 30 years. The education level of the population indicates that about 65 percent have primary school, 29 percent high school and 6 percent university education¹¹. Albania spends less on education as proportion of GDP than other countries in the region. In 2005, the population on average had completed 8,6 years of schooling, which is low in comparison with an average of 12 years in the EU-10 countries¹². More than 25 percent of the Albanian population has migrated from 1991, mainly to Greece and Italy, primarily for economic reasons¹³.

Economic Development

During the period 1998-2008, real GDP growth in Albania averaged almost 6 percent per year¹⁴. Starting from 2009 and primarily because of the global financial and economic crises, GDP growth has slowed markedly, although not as sharp as in other countries. It is estimated that GDP has been increased by only 2,5 percent in 2009 and 3,9 percent in 2010¹⁵.

The official unemployment rate was 13.8 percent in 2009 and the inflation rate 2.2 percent¹⁶. In the regions covered by the SCiA project the official unemployment rate is 15.1% in Korca and 14.7% in Gjirokastra¹⁷. Local officials interviewed during this evaluation highlight that these indicators were worsen in 2010 due to the global economic crises. In the city of Korce, for example, according to the interview with an official of the Municipality "many enterprises are closed or have reduced their activity, while the construction sector is in deep crisis." While in the

⁹ **Berxoli A.**, Minoritetet në Shqipëri, Tiranë 2005

¹⁰ **World Bank.**, Albania: The New Growth Agenda. A Country Economic Memorandum, November 2010

¹¹ **World Bank.**, Albania Poverty Assessment, 2003

¹² **World Bank.**, Albania: The New Growth Agenda. A Country Economic Memorandum, November 2010

¹³ **ETF.**, The Contribution of Human Resources Development to Migration Policy in Albania, Torino 2008

¹⁴ **World Bank.**, Albania: The New Growth Agenda. A Country Economic Memorandum, November 2010

¹⁵ INSTAT, 2011

¹⁶ **INSTAT.**, Albania in Figures 2010, Tirana 2010

¹⁷ Shërbimi Kombëtar i Punësimit, 2009

city of Gjirokastra, according to the interview with the mayor, "businesses are shrinking and many of them have 20 percent of the labor force that they previously had"¹⁸.

Moreover, for certain population groups, including R/E, exclusion from employment opportunities is very high and has worsened in 2010 and the first months of 2011. A 2005 WB study¹⁹ indicates that unemployment among the R/E has been at least three times higher than that among the majority of the population (Table 2). Whilst, the interviews suggest that currently "unemployment has affected more R/E, because they have an education and training much lower than others. Consequently the first to have been laid are the R / E workers"²⁰.

Table 4. Unemployment rate among Roma, Egyptians, and total population in 2005

Districts	Roma	Egyptians	Total Albanian Population
Korca	78,5	70,9	21,76
Gjirokaster	89,7	64,5	23,12
Total Albania	67.2	64.3	22.6

Source: De Soto H., Beddies S., Gedeshi I., Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From social exclusion to social inclusion, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2005

Those who are employed are primarily engaged in trade with used clothes, music, casual work (mainly in construction), handicraft trade, and subsistence agriculture²¹.

Social Environment of the Project

Regarding the social environment of the project, two phenomena must be taken into consideration: education level and poverty.

Education

Albania began the transition period with a population with more years of schooling than that in other developing countries with a comparable income per capita. However, during the transition period educational levels declined rapidly. Budgetary allocation for education decreased from 5 percent of the GDP in 1991, to 3 percent in the early 2000s²². School attendance has been falling, with dropout rates increasing, and widespread illiteracy reappearing - especially in poor rural areas²³. However, according to data, the national illiteracy rate was less than 2 percent in 2007.

This decline in educational level is higher for R/E than the general population. The educational attainment level in these communities has further decreased during transition period and is now

¹⁸ Interviste me kryetarin e Bashkise Gjirokaster, Z. Flamur Bime

¹⁹ De SOTO H., BEDDIES S., GEDESHI I., Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From social exclusion to social inclusion, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2005

²⁰ Interview with Ms. Alketa Zalleme, Municipality of Korca

²¹ De SOTO H., BEDDIES S., GEDESHI I., Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From social exclusion to social inclusion, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2005

²² World Bank., Albania Poverty Assessment, Document of the World Bank, 2003

²³ Dudwick N., Shahriari H., Education in Albania: Changing Attitudes and Expectations, Washington D.C., The World Bank, 2000

very low: for instance, 64 percent of Roma and 24 percent of Egyptians aged 7-20 are considered illiterate. Education levels for both vary between districts. According to a World Bank study²⁴, illiteracy rates for Roma and Egyptians are high in Korca and Gjirokastra. While the number of school years completed for Roma children is lower than the average, which shows that the SCiA project is being pursued in problematic districts.

Table 5. Illiteracy Rates and School Years Completed for Roma and Egyptians Ages 7-20 in 2005

Districts	Roma		Egyptians	
	Illiteracy (%)	Number of school years completed	Illiteracy (%)	Number of school years completed
Korca	41,7	3,78	8,3	5,03
Gjirokastra	36,0	3,56	5,6	5,68
Total	62.2	4.02	23.5	5.05

Source: De Soto H., Beddies S., Gedeshi I., Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From social exclusion to social inclusion, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2005

Poverty

As a result of steady GDP growth over the preceding years Albania has experience a large reduction in poverty levels amongst the general population. The fraction of the population whose real consumption per person is below 50 USD per month fell from 25.4 percent in 2002 to 12.4 percent in 2008. Extremely poor population, defined as those with difficulty meeting basic nutritional needs, decreased from 4.7 percent in 2002 to 3.5 percent in 2005 to 1.2 percent in 2008²⁵.

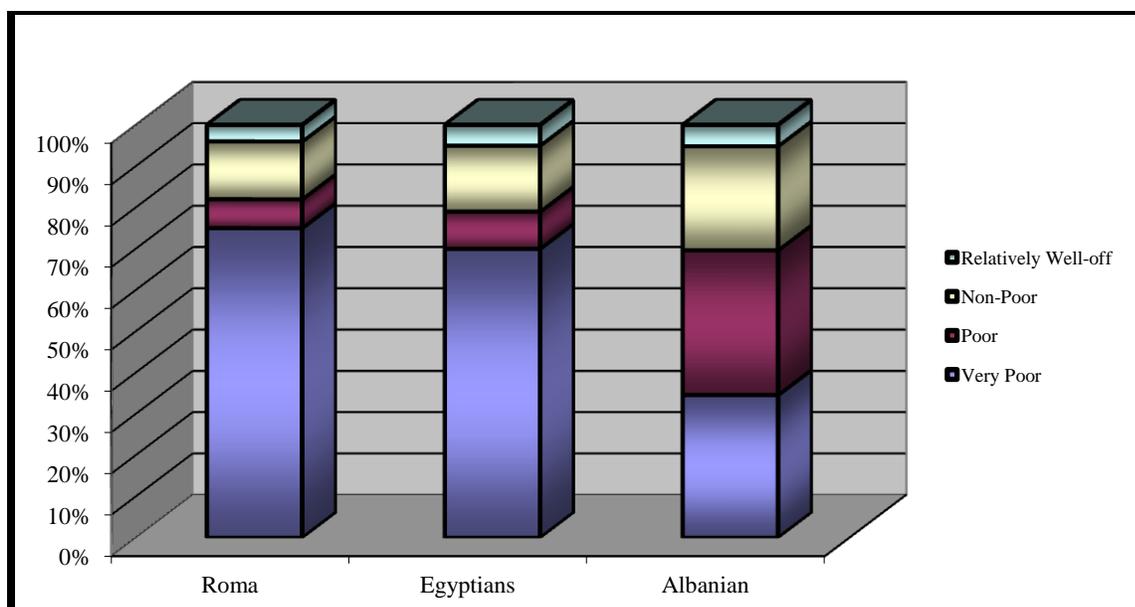
However, distribution of poverty remains unequal. Studies show that poverty levels are at least two times higher amongst the Roma and Egyptian communities, when compared to the majority of the Albanian population²⁶. As seen in Figure 1, Roma and Egyptians fall into lower poverty categories than ethnic Albanians. Very poor and poor families face higher levels of social exclusion as they are less capable of affording daily needs and less likely to participate in processes that affect their individual livelihoods, such as employment and education.

Figure 6. Distribution of Identified Poverty Categories among Roma, Egyptians, and Albanians

²⁴ De SOTO H., BEDDIES S., GEDESHI I., Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From social exclusion to social inclusion, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2005

²⁵ INSTAT/UNDP/World Bank., Albania: Trends in Poverty 2002-2005-2008, Tirana, April 2009

²⁶ De SOTO H., BEDDIES S., GEDESHI I., Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From social exclusion to social inclusion, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2005



Source: De Soto H., Beddies S., Gedeshi I., Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From social exclusion to social inclusion, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2005

The slowing GDP growth, the increase of unemployment and decrease of income during the period 2009 - 2011, as a result of the global economic crises, is reflected with an increase in the poverty level. It is estimated that as much as 4 percentage points of poverty reduction has been lost to due to the effects of the crisis in Albania²⁷. Meanwhile, empirical data from interviews show that in the town of Korca "number of families receiving "economic aid" was increased from 1.400 in 2008 to about 1,600 in 2011 and most of them are R/E families"²⁸. The mayor of Gjirokastra, refereeing to his city, says that "about 300 families get economic aid, but for me there should be more than 1000 families to receive it (...). Almost 40 percent of them are Egyptian and Rome"²⁹.

Policy Framework

Different ethnic groups that exist in Albania have, since 2001, benefited from the status of "national minorities" (Greeks, Macedonians and Montenegrins) and of "linguistic minorities" (Roma and Aromenians). Regarding Egyptians, as a result of assimilation with the local population, it is estimated that they "do not have any of the parameters to be estimated as a distinct ethnic group"³⁰.

On the one hand, it can be said that the transition in Albania marked the beginning of the Roma and Egyptian decline, from relative well-being to extreme poverty. On the other hand, issues concerning these groups have gained more attention following Albania's entrance into international organizations such as the OSCE and the CoE, as well as after becoming signatory to

²⁷ World Bank, 2011

²⁸ Interview with Ms. Alketa Zalleme, Municipality of Korca

²⁹ Interviste me kryetarin e Bashkise Gjirokaster, Z. Flamur Bime

³⁰ Berxoli A., Minorities in Albania, Tirana 2005

almost all UN conventions concerning children rights and the right of education. In addition, the European Union, into which Albania aspires to be integrated, has conditioned the process of implementing the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the fulfilment of certain political criteria (Copenhagen criteria) that include the improvement of human rights and amelioration of the socio-economic conditions of marginalized groups, including the Roma community.

Therefore in 2003, the Albanian Government, with the participation of Roma organizations, drafted a strategy for the improvement of living conditions of the Roma minority. Through this strategy, an inter-ministerial governmental group was created to implement all necessary measures to “upgrade the Roma status” in all spheres of life (education, health, culture, employment, justice, public order, infrastructure etc.). The objectives of the Strategy for the Roma community³¹ are in accordance with the aims of the “National Strategy for Development and Integration, 2007-2013” (NSDI), which constitutes the basis for all the sectorial strategies in Albania. Despite deficiencies, criticism from different sides, and slow progress³², the Albanian government is committed through this document, to improve the living conditions of the Roma community within a fifteen year period.

In 2004, within the MoLSAEO the Sector for Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy for Roma Minority was created. Furthermore, in 2004 the State Committee for Minorities was set up at the Council of Ministers. Its task is to advise the Prime-Minister on issues regarding minorities. The Roma community has their own representative within this Committee. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs includes the Office of Minorities which reports and cooperates on minority issues with international institutions (mainly OSCE and the CoE). Lastly UNDAF has created a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the objectives formulated at the regional level named ‘DevInfo’.

At the same time, it must be noted that no concrete strategy regarding the Egyptian community exists. However, the consensus remains that this community, as a component of the poor part of the population, should be treated within the framework of the NSDI.

Other Partnership programs

Beginning in the ‘90s, interest in the Roma community has increased within international organizations such as: The Delegation of the European Commission in Tirana, the Council of Europe, OSCE, World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), ILO/IPEC, Soros Foundation, Swiss Cooperation, SIDA, USAID, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), Transnational Action against Child Trafficking (TACT), Coordinated Action Against Trafficking (CAAHT) etc. Furthermore, the 2005 – 2015 period has been declared by the World Bank as “The Decade of Roma Inclusion”, a 10 year attempt to integrate the Roma into the European mainstream. Albania has been a part of the movement since March 2008. The Sector for Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy for Roma Minority at the MoLSAEO drafted the Action Plan of the Roma Decade. In the Decade’s

³¹ **Government of Albania.**, National Strategy for improving Roma living conditions, 2003

³² **Komiteti Shqiptar i Helsinkit.**, Studim i politikave për minoritetet dhe strategjitë e financimit në Shqipëri, Tiranë 2007

framework the “Roma Education Fund” was created, from which Albania can profit in terms of grants, scholarships and projects regarding Roma education.

Some of the international organizations have drafted targeted strategies within the last reports regarding the situation of Roma in Albania including: an evaluation of ERRC in 1997, a study of the World Bank published in 2005 and a study of UNDP in 2006³³. Other international organizations have taken concrete projects, in cooperation with local Roma and non-Roma partners, regarding issues such as: the protection of human rights, training and capacity increasing, social services, education and healthcare improvement, the improvement of the infrastructure, the fight against illegal trafficking, etc.

Outcomes	Indicators	Achievements/Assessments	Met?	Quality
Support the development of quality inclusive education in four schools and four kindergartens in 2 regions of Albania where a considerable number of Roma children are living				
Improving academic and non-academic performance of R/E children	Increase of academic results of R/E children	Empirical data for the R/E pupils show that school drop out has decreased, passing rate has increased, the average number of absences has been reduced. All these are expressed with the increase of the average mark of the R/E children and schools project in general	Yes	
	Increase of the number of the children registered in schools/kindergartens	The number of the R/E children registered has increased	Yes	About 30 R/E children registered for the first time in kindergarten in September 2010
All children leave school/kindergarte	R/E culture and traditions are	According to the interviews with teachers and moderators this	Yes	

³³ **ERRC.**, No Record of the Case: Roma in Albania, Country Report Series N. 5, June 1997, Budapest; **De Soto H., Beddies S., Gedeshi I.**, Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From social exclusion to social inclusion, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2005; **UNDP.**, At Risk: The Social Vulnerability of Roma in Albania, Tirana 2006

n with an understanding of minority cultures	introduced to 5% of extra curricular and free hours in the pilot schools	indicator was met		
	Increase parents' participation in the info sessions on R/E culture, history and tradition	According to the interviews with teachers and moderators this participation has increased	Yes	
Children are receptive towards R/E	Children of the project schools improve their social relations	Interviews with R/E children show that the children learn and sit together, play together, etc.	Yes	However, interviews show that there are still cases of isolation from R/E children. There are also cases of self isolation between the R/E children
Transfer of the experience to the Ministry of Education and Sciences structures				
By 2011, the teachers of 149 nation wide spread schools have enhanced their skills on inclusive education practices with a special focus on R/E children	180 teachers/educators and REA inspectors will be periodically trained until the end of the project	According to the interviews with teachers/educators of schools/kindergartens and REA inspectors the trainings took place twice a year	In progress	Teachers/educators of schools/kindergartens and REA inspectors estimate as useful these trainings
Transfer of the experience to the structures of MoE	Preparing of 3 modules for the culture, history and tradition of R/E	The cooperation plan between SCiA and IDE has been drafted. The working group for the preparation of 3 modules is being created	In progress	The director of IDE and experts seem motivated for drafting the modules
	Organization of a conference in Gjirokaster for qualitative education for each child	According to the interviews with leaders of the local governance in Gjirokastra the conference raises interest	Yes	
	Organization of a national conference for qualitative education for each child	The conference will be developed during the next phase of the project and aims to disseminate the experience of SCiA project.	In progress	
	Exchange study visits	2 visits have been realized so far between the schools of Korca and Gjirokaster.	In progress	Moderators and teachers say that these exchange study visits have been efficient.
	Preparation of the manual with best practices of the project for MoE	The preparation of a manual will start in May	In progress	
Normative disposition issued by MoE reflect	Reviews of the normative disposition of the law	REA inspectors in Korca and Gjirokaster helped with the experience of the SCiA project	Yes	The consultant has no doubts that this is the

suggestions given by SCiA in inclusion of Roma Children	for pre-university education	for reviewing the dispositions		case
Enhancement of the parents/community understanding of the importance of inclusive education				
By 2011, R/E communities in the 2 locations targeted via the project are actively involved in supporting their children education	R/E children get enrolled into main stream educations system	According interviews of the consultant with R/E parents and moderators the number of the registered children in schools and kindergartens is increasing . Enrolment of R/E children for the first time in September 2010 in project schools is increased with 18%, compared with September 2009. Enrolment of R/E children for the first time in September 2010 in project kindergartens is increased with 11.4%, compared with September 2009.	Yes	
	Avoid drop out of children from schools	According to the data from the schools/kindergartens the number of drop out has been significantly reduced. During the first semester 2010-2011 there is one girl dropped out, compared with 4 children dropped out in the previous year.	Yes	
Parents of children outside the R/E community accept and support the inclusion of Roma children. Strength of the R/E parents and community participation, raise parents trust in the educational system, increase the percentage of R/E parents into school boards equal to the percentage of the R/E children at schools, training with R/E and Albanians parents into inclusiveness, creating flows of information between the school and parents to	Non R/E parents accept and support the inclusion of Roma children	According to the interviews and FG realized with teachers in kindergartens/schools and mediators most of the non R/E parents accept and support the inclusion of Roma children in schools/kindergarten	Yes	In some cases the parents that are non R/E have expressed the concern for their children in the kindergartens due to the low hygiene of the R/E children.
	R/E parents participate in the trainings one times a month	According to the interviews with the moderators and R/E parents the indicator is met	Yes	The consultant participated in one of these trainings and observed that the R/E parents seems to be engaged and motivated
	R/E parents are involved in decisions of school development	According to the interviews with members of the board of parents of the classes in Korca and Gjirokastra they participate in discussions and express thoughts in the meetings of the boards of the parents of the classes	Yes	The education level of the R/E parents is low and this obstacles them for a more active participation
	R/E parents trust the educational system	According to the interviews with the R/E parents and mediators	Yes	R/E parents seem to be happy with the

improve the quality and effectiveness of the school environment and the home support of the R/E children		the indicator is met		progress of their children
	The % of R/E parents into school boards is equal to the % of R/E children at schools	School boards are elected once in a couple of years and when the project started elections were over	Not applicable	34 R/E parents have been included in the boards of parents of the classes
	9 R/E parents help the children for doing their homeworks and help as a communication bridge with the R/E mothers	Parents have medium and high education. According to the interviews they work with devotion	Yes	
	Creation of the Roma parents boards in communities	In Gjirokaster and Pojan village these boards are functional	Partly	In the Korca city there is no Roma parents board created