



Input on CEFA Project

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To: *Participants of the 3rd SDC Regional Roma Inclusion Seminar: Transformation, Effectiveness and Sustainability. 30 May-2 June 2016. Tirana-Albania*

From: *Embassy of Switzerland in Albania*

Subject: *History of institutionalization and CEFA's project achievements*

1. The project's approach, effectiveness, sustainability (institutionalization) and transformation

CEFA model implemented by the local organization NPF (Ndhme per Femijet) is one of the very first initiatives in Albania to support Roma inclusion through education and family/community development. In the beginning CEFA project focused almost exclusively on Roma children education, in the so-called catch up CEFA classes, exclusively created for mainly street Roma and Egyptian children, trafficked and/or exploited children or others that were prone to become street children due to aggravated families social and economic situation. The children education was backed by a strong humanitarian approach on food provision in exchange for children and families' participation into the program.

As the project passed from one phase to another (phase 1 started in year 1998), so evolved the approach CEFA applied in order to better respond to the needs of the gradually evolving communities it served, but also to re-address few points criticized by either the donor (SDC)–the food basket or the question of sustainability/institutionalization - or by other stakeholders – such as the catch up classes created only with Roma students might lead to segregation.

The catch-up classes operated during 1998-2013 (please refer to the Annex). In 2009 the Ministry of Education took over the salaries for 8 teachers working with catch-up classes and in 2013 all children were part of the mainstream classes according to their school level. This also meant that in the project areas in Berat, Elbasan, Korça and Tirana there were no more Roma/Egyptian children unable to enter the 9-year school system, while many of them still needed educational additional support and the school needed a transformational support. 2009 was also the year when the food basketed was reduced with 30% and a different new approach started gradually with the aim of empowering families through income generation activities and vocational training for (self) employment. In 2012 the food basket was completely skipped and the new approach was fully functional. Roma language extracurricular courses were also part of the support. Years 1998 – 2013 served for the creation and gradual development of the social services (social services of this typology was almost missing in the country) while from 2013 up to date the project capitalized the experience and is transferring the knowledge, practices and know-how to the local social services and school staff in the four cities.

Some of the positive effects at the system level were:

- Education of Roma/Egyptian children were put high in the agenda of the Ministry of Education;
- By supporting projects like CEFA – among others –, the Ministry of Education accepted that there was a problem with the education of Roma children that the system was not covering and that were –for different raisons – left out of the system. NPF/CEFA and other non-governmental actors filled that gap. That meant, in other terms, that the ministry had to create other (legal) dispositions and venues to accept Roma children more easily into the public system. Such were i.e. the order that every child should be in school with or without a birth certificate, a zero-drop out strategy was in place, collection and analysis of school statistics segregated by ethnicity which served to provide new instructions and orders of the regional

education directorates to the schools on the issue of hidden drop outs and creation of a school friendly environment for Roma and Egyptian children

- Another example is the one of teachers working on CEFA classes that were paid by the Ministry of Education since 2009 and became thus part of the school teaching staff. The Ministry covered also for the space provided in public school and other facilities that were part of the school structure and system (books for free for all the children, etc.). In that sense CEFA classes became part of the education system; however, the Roma children were not accepted easily into the school. The training of teachers and the constant work of social workers to build bridges between the CEFA and other mainstream classes overcame finally the barriers of communication and integration in the schools CEFA works. The changes at the school level CEFA materialized only after many training sessions to strengthening teachers' capacities. One could affirm that this allowed that the overall school environment became more attractive and friendly for Roma children, in the areas where NPF works.
- A second mainstream pre-school class was opened in the project school in Tirana which helped to increase the number of Roma children going into pre-school education, as well underlined the importance of the application of the early child development principles.
- Reform actions. CEFA supports with a multidimensional and institutionalized approach the social inclusion of the Roma in four main municipalities of the country. It served as a vehicle to test the ongoing Swiss supported reform actions related to social sector and fed the reform with consolidated practices and experience.

From the beneficiaries (Roma children and families) point of view:

- Access to education. The CEFA classes prepared several hundreds of Roma children who continued further into the mainstream education system or into the correspondence one (approx. 1100 children in catch-up classes, 70% of which were sustainably integrated into the mainstream classes).
- Engendered access to education. About 42% of the Roma students in catch-up classes were girls; 70% of the Roma girl's beneficiaries attended public school beyond 5th grade.
- Sustainable access to education. More than 90% of Roma parents participated in monthly school meetings. Through a variety of activities based on human rights, multi and inter-cultural education, parents' activities on co-existence and an inclusive manner of living in community helped in gradually decreasing the resistance on non-Roma parents to continue to send their children at schools where the number of Roma children was increasing.

Those are some hard facts that will remain with the Roma youth who benefited from that.

- Poverty reduction. At the same time, many Roma families were able to break the poverty cycle, which is the ultimate effect the project had on the families. Many families passed from an absolute poverty and lack of financial means, to a level acceptable decency and being self-sustained. About 320 Roma families were able to generate revenues through economic initiatives and 45% of them are sustainable and still up and running.
- Engendered poverty reduction. About 68% of these initiatives are managed by Roma women (137 women), out of which 76% (run by 112 women) are sustainable and continue to work.

2. Tradeoffs between effectiveness, sustainability and transformation

CEFA's long way through several phases was not smooth. Several issues were subject of hard and long negotiations with the state institutions – i.e. the teachers' salaries, or taking over by the municipal services or replicating some of the CEFA's services for a better services provision to vulnerable groups. For different reasons that were out of NPF control, the integrated social services reform has been slowed down considerably and has affected in unexpected ways the further institutionalization of CEFA services at the local level. The project made efforts to tackle these challenges in the best possible way, often using diplomacy and higher up officials (Swiss and Albanian) to achieve some results. Other times, NPF joins forces with other UN agencies in order to move forward the political agendas.

Other challenges were related to the communication, in terms of understanding and sharing the same vision between NPF and the families, such as the question of the food basket (removal of the provision) or the fusion of CEFA classes into the mainstream ones (between the CEFA and the school staff). Such challenges were not easier to tackle, despite the time and energy-consuming efforts put into it by NPF, either through negotiations (with families and school directors), or through several sessions of training (teachers and other support stuff). Roma community leaders have played an

effective role in facilitating communication of CEFA project in times of major changes as it was the skipping of food basket.

Sometimes, although there is a real transformation at the level of the families that remains to an individual level and it is hard to be generalized for the whole community. In other terms, despite the good results at an individual/family level, the changes in the community can – sometime - hardly be observed.

A more evident transformation is related to schools which are becoming more and more open to receiving Roma children while still there is a lot to be done in supporting them and their parents' involvement.

The attitude of the municipalities' social services staff has been gradually transformed into a more respectful and pro-active supporting attitude while the professionalism in providing services still remains an issue.

Annex: Description of Catch-up Classes

Catch-up classes are a practice to fast-track Roma children into mainstream classes in primary schools. A key learning in the implementation has been that the transitory separation of school children can yield positive results if several conditions hold true: the catch-up classes need to be officially and fully integrated into the school, merely teaching must be separated, whereas any extracurricular activities must be open for all children at the same time, and additional resources need to be invested to ensure child-specific education.

Title	Catch-up classes (NPF): a practice to fast-track Roma children into mainstream classes in primary schools
<i>Problem / issue at stake</i>	Discrimination against the Roma in schools, lack of attention from teachers and extreme poverty left a considerable number of children out of the education system: Many children specifically of the Roma minorities never attended school, received poor education in school and/or dropped out from school. The lack of education is considered to be one of the main reasons for continued poverty.
<i>Description of experience</i>	Catch-up classes operated during 1998-2013 in one or two classes in selected schools in the municipalities of Berat, Elbasan, Korça and Tirana. One class hosted children in grades I and III, the other children in grades II and IV. Each class had between 20-28 children. Pupils in catch-up classes were transferred gradually into the mainstream classes over a period of two to four years. All classes followed the official curriculum, were fully integrated into Albania's formal nine-year elementary education system and all children were registered in the school registry. Roma children took part in all extra-curricular school activities. The catch-up classes were specifically designed to offer quality education to children who had not received any schooling until the age of nine, dropped out soon after they were registered or after one year or two. The target group was 9-16 years old. With a few exceptions, all children in these classes belonged to Roma communities. Catch-up classes required a main teacher (salaries were taken over by the government in 2009) and a supplementary teacher, who was paid by the project. In addition, a Roma language instructor was hired for extracurricular Roma language courses.
<i>Results</i>	<p>The project supported about 1100 minority children, of whom approximately 70 % were sustainably integrated into mainstream classes.</p> <p>Some of the <u>key positive/intended</u> outcomes/outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About 90% of Roma children in catch-up classes regularly attended school in the four cities; • Average retention rate after transfer to mainstream classes did not drop below 80 %; • 42 % of the Roma in catch-up classes were girls; 70 % of Roma girls attended public school beyond 5th grade; • Students' confidence and motivation increased; many pursued further into 8-year mainstream education and 46 went to high school; • More than 90 % of parents participated in monthly school meetings • Capacity of teachers and quality of teaching improved; • Overall school environment became more attractive and friendly for Roma children. <p>Negative/unintended outcomes/outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the number of Roma children in the schools increased, some non-Roma parents withdrew their children from the schools. <p><i>Note:</i> No project-related research regarding the performance of catch-up classes (e.g. whether students in catch-up classes fare better or worse than peers) beyond monitoring and evaluation was conducted. Research outcomes on catch-up classes in e.g. Hungary are mixed.</p>
<i>Sustainability</i>	Catch-up classes were phased out as a result of an improved school environment. The schools and communities reached a stage of maturity in which the catch-up classes would no longer have any reason to exist, exemplified by significantly voluntary 1 st grade registration rates and higher school attendance rates. Sustainability is observed in terms of change of attitude of both Roma community towards the school and of the school teachers and managers towards the Roma community.
<i>Replicability</i>	<u>Framework conditions:</u> Catch-up classes worked in very specific conditions. They were a necessity for a considerable number of Roma children, who were left out of school due to many reasons. However, some conditions had to pre-

	<p>exist in the school environment in order to make the catch-up classes work: the physical space (the classrooms), but also the willingness of the school director and staff to welcome these classes, which was not always the case.</p> <p><u>Complexity:</u> Complexity arose from issues both outside the catch-up classes (unwelcoming and openly discriminatory school environment; conflicting interests of teachers, parents, community) as well as within (mix of age, background and education level of Roma children the classes; resource intensity; simultaneous requirement to learn life skills).</p> <p><u>Resources:</u> The estimated cost per annum for running a catch-up class is approximately 700 CHF per student.</p> <p><u>Other country experience:</u> Similar approaches were implemented by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (e.g. OSCE Kosovo).</p>
<i>Strengths and Opportunities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted education. • Quick educational and life skill gains. • An effective approach to attract Roma parents' interest in the child education. • Transitory measure with clear target to achieve mainstreaming. • Transitory measure to allow the school environment to adapt and improve (e.g. parents of majority children, teaching staff, school directors).
<i>Weaknesses and Threats</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might lead to segregation and alienation and consequently exclusion. • Non-Roma parents might take their children from schools with catch-up classes, as they increase the percentage of Roma. • Resource intensive due to the need of requisite school space and additional teaching staff compared to mainstream classes. • Potential overlap with common "Second Chance" programmes (yet the Second Chance programme reportedly performed poorly in Albania).