# Research on Selected
# Roma Education Programs
# In Central & Eastern Europe



# Final Report

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# INTRODUCTION

The Soros Foundation Network has made a commitment to devote greater attention to improving educational programming for Roma[1] children in Eastern and Central Europe. As a foundation for this effort, the Education Sub-Board (ESB) of the Open Society Institute (OSI) commissioned a focused research project in September 2000 to examine and learn from existing educational programs, serving Roma children.

Based on criteria developed and recommendations provided by the Roma Education Working Group (REWG)[2], seven Roma education programs were identified to serve as the focus for this research.

***Intercultural Education Project***
*operated by*
*Interethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation*
*(Bulgaria)*

***Roma Teaching Assistants Project***
*operated by*
*Nová Škola Foundation*
*(Czech Republic)*

***Roma Mentored Scholarship Program***
*operated by*
*Soros Foundation/Budapest*
*(Hungary)*

***Program for Educational Support of Roma Children and Youth from Shuto Orizari Community***
*operated by*
*Nadez (Hope)*
*(Macedonia)*

***Equal Opportunities for Roma Children Through School and School-Related Activities***
*operated by*
*SLO/Educaplan and Centrul Educatia 2000+*
*(Romania)*

***Educational Centers Project***
*operated by*
*Foundation for Romany Child*
*(Slovak Republic)*

***Kindergarten as a Family Center in Roma Settlements***
*operated by*
*Center for Interactive Pedagogy*
*(Yugoslavia/Serbia)*

These programs were intentionally selected to demonstrate a range of program approaches and to examine a variety of operational contexts. Their diversity offers important lessons to guide strategic thinking in developing future educational programming for Roma children, youth and their families.

This document is the Final Report of our research. Its findings, conclusions, and recommendations were based on the research information gathered on the selected Roma education programs during the seven months of the project (September 2000 through March 2001). A shorter Summary Report was also prepared for submission to the Education Sub-Board. This report emphasized conclusions and recommendations about each program and across all seven programs from the Final Report. Specific reports also were prepared individually for the seven Roma education programs. Each of these reports included findings, conclusions, and recommendations relevant to the specific program.

The Final Report is divided into four parts. **Part One (Research Project)** includes three sections. These sections:

- Present the purposes of this research project and list the four key research questions which guided our work

- Summarize our research plan

- Identify significant methodological challenges faced by the research team in carrying out this research plan

**Part Two (Background)** includes two sections. These sections:

- Describe the distribution of Roma populations in Central and Eastern Europe

- Describe the educational conditions of the Roma children and youth in Central and Eastern Europe

**Part Three (Findings)** includes three sections. These sections:

- Describe the characteristics of the seven Roma education programs

- Assess the impact of the seven Roma education programs, in response to the first three project research questions and discuss cost-effectiveness and replication in response to the fourth research question

- Identify recommendations for improving education for Roma students in Central and Eastern Europe

**Part Four (Conclusions)** includes only one section. This section presents our overall conclusions for the research project.

# Purpose of the Research Project

Roma children and youth have traditionally been among the most marginalized and disenfranchised students in the public schools of Central and Eastern Europe. However, the problems facing Roma students and their parents are long-standing, complex, and multi-faceted.

International organizations and university researchers have provided extensive documentation of the continuing persecution facing Roma throughout region. Racist assaults and violence towards Roma continue to occur. However, these are only the "tip of the iceberg". Roma families also face "forced evictions from homes; expulsions from villages and towns (often with the support of local Mayors); physical assaults and murder by skinheads, policemen, neighbors; exclusion from public places; widespread legal discrimination; unduly harsh prison sentences and extortionate fines for petty offenses; and endemic racial abuse." (Brearley 1996)

Economically, the Roma are the poorest of the poor in every country of the region. Unemployment is widespread. Many adults have stopped looking for work because of the prejudices they face and skills they lack. Most survive only through government support payments. Their housing conditions are substandard. Their health and hygiene is poor. Throughout the region, Roma are considered to be at the bottom of the social ladder. They find themselves oppressed even by other minority groups and isolated within poverty-stricken villages, settlements, and urban ghettos.

Over the last five years, several projects have been initiated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in an effort to improve the educational opportunities available to Roma students in the region. Only by providing the next generation of Roma with the knowledge, skills, and experiences denied their parents and grandparents, can we hope to break the ever- continuing cycle of oppression and deprivation..

In an effort to advance this agenda, the Institute for Educational Policy (IEP) [3] attempted to ask research questions whose answers would be instrumental in defining future strategies for the Soros Foundations Network. The original research questions emerged out of the second meeting of the REWG. They were then sent to various program managers and directors in OSI Budapest and OSI New York for feedback. Feedback was incorporated and questions were refined by all participants at the first research-planning meeting. This process resulted in four key research questions, which have served as the focus of this research project:

**Question #1 –** Have the selected Roma education programs succeeded in (A) getting and keeping more Roma children in school through graduation and (B) improving the educational attainment of Roma children?

**Question #2 –** Have the selected Roma education programs succeeded in promoting (A) changes in attitudes toward Roma children among teachers and other adult school staff, (B) changes in attitudes towards Roma children among non-Roma children and their parents, and (C) changes in self-characterization by Roma children?

**Question #3 –** How have the selected Roma education programs promoted institutional or policy changes in the national education systems which advance the goals of equity and educational success for Roma children?

**Question #4 –** What is the feasibility of replicating aspects or elements of the selected Roma education programs at other sites in the same country, or in other countries within the region taking into consideration factors such as cost, resource needs, institutional support, and culture?

Part Four of this Report provides answers to these four research questions based on the research information collected from the seven projects.

As the reader reviews the information and findings presented in this Report, it is important to understand the nature and purpose of our research. This research was focused only on answering the four research questions posed by the Evaluation Sub-Board. It was not an attempt to evaluate any of the seven Roma education programs nor did it seek to assess any program's effectiveness in accomplishing it own goals and objectives.

Moreover, the responses to the four research questions presented in this report should not be used to judge the ultimate success or failure of these programs. Nor should they be used as a basis for comparing the seven programs. There are four reasons for this:

- The time frame, within which each program operated, varied. Some had started earlier than others. Some built on a foundation of an earlier, similar program.

- Although these are all described as "Roma education programs", the goals and purposes of most of these programs were not limited to Roma education. As such, it would be inappropriate to judge their overall success or failure based only on their accomplishments within this one arena.

- Some programs were designed explicitly as "pilot programs" to test a model, while others were designed as ongoing direct service programs. The different purposes would affect the magnitude of a program's impact and the immediacy with which those effects emerge.

- External conditions in the individual countries and communities could mask some results. Warfare, severe economic problems, and governmental turnover all served as disruptions in individual countries. These factors make direct comparisons between programs opemark in different countries inappropriate.

Finally, it is important to realize that our research did not seek to identify a single "best model" for improving Roma education in Central and Eastern Europe. We believe that such an effort would have been futile for several reasons.

- Different age groups of Roma students have very different educational needs. For example, Roma preschool students generally need to develop greater competency in the national language of the country, greater understanding of basic hygiene, and greater familiarity with the rules and requirements of public school classroom settings. On the other hand, Roma elementary school students often need help with their homework in academic subjects and support in developing social skills particularly with non-Roma. Meanwhile, Roma in secondary schools often have significant financial needs.

- Groups of Roma in the various countries of Central and Eastern Europe can be very different. Even groups of Roma in the same country can be very different. The historical experiences of different Roma groups and their interactions with the national government have varied considerably. As a result, some Roma groups have maintained strong connections with their Roma language and traditions. Others have assimilated the national language, culture, and tradition. Still others have developed links with other minority groups – adopting elements of their language and culture.

- Different countries also present the Roma with very different educational experiences. Some countries formerly or informally establish "Roma schools". Others emphasize the creation of "special schools" for students with special needs and then direct a disproportionate number of Roma children into those schools.

Rather than identify a single "best model", this research sought to illuminate successful strategies and valuable lessons, that together, could contribute to the creation of coherent approaches to improving educational services for Roma children and youth across the region and within each country.

# Summary of Research Plan

This project employed a participatory research approach, which emphasized the active engagement of program designers, staff, participants, and other stakeholders in the research process. Under the project's research plan, independent teams of researchers worked with national and local decision-makers, educators and other experts and Roma parents and children to collect appropriate research data and make sense of its meaning. This collaborative approach has contributed to the creation of a high-quality, utilitarian research project which combined the observations and insights of program "insiders" (program designers, staff, participants, and other stakeholders) with those of program "outsiders" (the independent research teams).

Representatives of the national Soros foundations played a particularly critical role in this participatory research project. They were engaged in this process from the beginning. In April 2000, letters of introduction were sent to executive directors and education directors of national foundations, explaining the purposes and ideas behind the research. National foundations were invited and encouraged to participate in the research effort.

Several national foundation representatives were instrumental in helping to identify qualified, local researchers to participate on the research team. Many of these representatives also directed local researchers to appropriate sources for information and assisted in interpreting and analyzing research information gathered on the Roma education project in their country. Finally, these representatives were encouraged to react to the ultimate findings, conclusions and recommendations of the research team.

## Research Design

The research design for this project balanced centralized direction of the research process, decentralized collection and synthesis of the research information and collaborative analysis of the resulting information. This design reflected the nature of the research project which sought to answer key research questions on a regional basis, using information that was available only at the local level in sites scattered throughout the region.

The research design was initially grounded on a regional research framework, which defined a generalized process for the identification, collection, synthesis, and analysis of appropriate, relevant, and accessible research information. This framework incorporated general research methodologies and tools for carrying out this process.

A series of seven local research plans were then built upon this regional framework. Each local plan adjusted and elaborated upon the generalized process to reflect particular considerations associated with the specific Roma education program under examination, the nature and operation of the specific national school system, and other relevant national conditions, factors, and issues. The resulting plans were variations of

the general process which incorporated more specific research methodologies and tools and fitted into the regional framework.

## Research Team

The composition of the project's research team reflected the balance between centralization, decentralization, and collaboration in the project's research design. It included independent research consultants working for OSI, staff from OSI, and expert advisors from the region.

A conscious decision was made to recruit and engage local teams of researchers for this project, rather than using only external researchers for the work. First, this approach was more cost-effective, given the scale of the research project. Second, the experiences and perspective of local researchers were qualitatively different from those of the outside researchers. This provided a diversity of perspectives in the research. Third, obtaining access to educational data over a sufficient period of time proved difficult for individuals familiar with the country and the national school system. It would have been enormously more difficult for an outsider, with limited time and limited knowledge of the language of the country, the culture of the schools, or the key individuals controlling the data. Finally, the use of local researchers provided long-term benefits to the country, by building capacity to continue work of this kind in the future and raising further awareness of the difficulties Roma encounter within their respective education systems.

The regional research framework was initially developed by a Lead Researcher, an OSI program officer, and a three-person Expert Committee assembled as advisors to the research project.[4] Two-person local research teams were recruited in each of the seven countries in which one of the selected Roma education programs operated. These local research teams were brought together with the Lead Researcher, OSI staff, and the Expert Committee to review and develop the final, regional research framework. (See Appendix 1 for a copy of the original regional research plan) Each of the local research teams then worked separately with the Lead Researcher to develop their individual local research plans.

Implementation of each local research plan was the responsibility of the local research team under the oversight and with the support of the Lead Researcher and his assistant. Administrative and management support for the project was provided by OSI staff. The Lead Researcher was responsible for coordinating the collaborative, regional analysis of the resulting research information and the preparation of the preliminary and final research reports.

## Research Process

The project's research plan incorporated the collection of both statistical data and qualitative information. Statistical data included student educational records, program service levels, and program expenses. Qualitative information focused on the goals, structure, implementation and operation of the selected Roma education programs. It also examined changes in the attitudes, behavior and educational attainment of Roma students, as well as changes in the educational policies and practices in the schools. This

statistical and qualitative information served to complement each other – helping the researchers build a balanced, holistic picture of the selected programs, of their impact, and of their potential for replicability.

The research process was divided into three broad phases. Each phase incorporated data identification, collection, synthesis, and analysis activities. Within each phase, each of these activities – particularly those related to data analysis – were informed by and built on the results of the earlier phases.

The **first phase** of the research process focused on the collection of background information on each national school system, descriptions of each Roma education program and assessments of the educational conditions of Roma in each country. It involved a review of print and electronic information sources, interviews with program designers and directors, and interviews with other appropriate, national experts. This phase resulted in the preparation of background papers for each country and a descriptive profile of each Roma education program.

The **second phase** of the research process focused on the collection of both statistical and qualitative data from both program sites and schools on the program's implementation, operation, and impact. It involved the collection and synthesis of student educational records, interviews or surveys of program staff and/or school staff, and observations of program sites and/or schools by the research teams. This phase resulted in revised profiles for each program, as well as statistical and qualitative data on the program's impact.

The **third phase** of the research process involved the collection of information from a sampling of Roma students and their families. This information will be gathered through individual and small group interviews in program sites, schools, homes and community sites. This phase will result in further revisions to the program profiles and in additional qualitative information on the program's impact.

(See Appendix 2 for information on all data sources used in this report.)

# Methodological Challenges and Lessons Learned

During the course of this research project, the local research teams confronted conditions and situations which limited the effective and efficient collection of some, relevant research information. Some of these challenges were unanticipated. Others were anticipated, but their extent and magnitude were more significant than expected. These conditions and situations required the research teams to employ alternative strategies in gathering particular types of research information, or to collect alternative types of information entirely.

## Time Limitations

The most significant limiting factor in this research project was time. Data collection and analysis associated with this research project occurred during a six-month period: from October 2000 until March 2001.[5] This severely compressed time frame was made necessary by the compelling need for immediate information on Roma education programs by the OSI Education Sub-Board.

The project deadlines forced the researchers to accelerate the initial preparation of the research plan. This meant that some aspects of the plans were still under development, even as their implementation was begun. It also meant that the research teams were unable to conduct a more extensive review of the national education system and legal framework in each country. A more extensive review may have allowed the teams to identify and better anticipate some of the challenges which later emerged during the project and to develop plans that more effectively responded to these challenges. The researchers consistently reported that a longer preparation time would have enabled the development of better approaches to their field research.

The limited time frame forced the research teams to emphasize the rapid and timely collection of relevant research data during each phase of the research plan. This pressure caused the researchers to reduce the amount of time they devoted to reflecting on the information being collected. This meant that some issues and problems relevant to the programs and their impact did not emerge until later in the research process. At times, they emerged too late for additional information to be collected to address some of these issues and problems. This time pressure also meant that the research teams could not engage program stakeholders in reflecting on the research information to the degree desired in a participatory research model. However, it is important to emphasize that key program stakeholders were effectively engaged in the research process – even if their level of engagement could have been increased had more time been available.

## Collecting Student Records

A second significant and consistent set of challenges faced by the research teams related to student records. Access to student records was difficult across the entire region. There were few, centralized repositories for student records. Generally, student records were located only in individual schools. Most were under the control of individual school

administrators (also known as school directors, headmasters, or principals), although some were even maintained only by classroom teachers. There are, apparently, few requirements for maintenance of these records or for permitting public access to these records for research purposes. As a result, obtaining access to these records often required negotiations between the research team and individual school administrators. For the larger, nationwide programs, this requirement could be particularly time-consuming.

Once access was achieved, the challenges did not end. Compiling and synthesizing student records was made more difficult by the condition of some of the records. Time often had to be spent physically locating the records and searching for the relevant information in the records. Given the limited resources available in the region, it came as no surprise that few records were computerized. However, this added to the challenges of collecting the information.

These comments should <u>not</u> be taken in any way as a criticism of the administrators, teachers, and other staff in the schools. The economic situation in many of these countries has resulted in reductions in national funding for education. With these cuts, have come reductions in salaries and personnel. With such pressures facing educational professionals in the schools, it should come as no surprise that record-keeping efforts might fall by the wayside. Even in countries where such pressures are less significant, school administrators and teachers understandably direct most of their efforts towards helping their students. Record-keeping was generally seen as a bureaucratic distraction, rather than a contribution to the education of children.

This attitude toward record-keeping was actually only a manifestation of a deeper set of attitudes among school professionals, which created another challenge for the local research teams. Most educators in the public schools failed to appreciate the value of the research and assessment activities being conducted as part of the project. In some cases, this led to reluctance and even outright resistance on the part of administrators and teachers. In most cases, this lack of understanding limited their capacity for effectively participating in, contributing to, and benefiting from the research work.

Of course, educators in the public schools of Central and Eastern Europe are not alone in these attitudes toward educational research and assessment. These attitudes can be seen in public schools around the world. Often they are based upon the real failures of traditional research methodologies and approaches, which treat the educators and their students as subjects to be studied, rather than people from whom to learn. These approaches have produced esoteric and sterile products, which possess little relevance to the daily needs of the educators and their students. In an effort to maintain an illusory "objectivity", many researchers have created barriers to communicating with educational practitioners and made it almost impossible for these practitioners to build a greater understanding of the research process.

Obviously, our participatory research approach was designed, in part, to address these limitations of more traditional research models. Despite this intent, our research has continued to suffer from the mistakes of the past researchers.

We also found that some school communities exhibited tremendous suspicion of all outsiders. In some cases, this attitude reflected past conflicts with national or regional governmental authorities. In others, it was a response to critical news stories about the school or related to minority education issues. In either case, these educators were unduly sensitive to outside scrutiny and were reluctant to cooperate with the local research teams. This required the researchers to invest more time in building the trust and confidence of these staff – an effort that was not always successful. As our research progressed, it became obvious that development and use of personal relationships and informal networks of colleagues were particularly effective strategies for gaining access to student records and other relevant research information.

## Identification of Roma Students

In some of the countries, the local research team faced considerable difficulties identifying Roma students. Several of the countries included in this research project (particularly the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic) prohibit the use of racial or ethnic identification of students. Given the history of prejudice and oppression of these minority groups, such a decision can be readily understood. At the same time, such a policy makes documenting the educational condition of Roma students and tracking changes in their situation very difficult.

Even where such policies do not exist, the identification of Roma children and families can be problematic. Relying on self-identification results in some Roma identifying themselves with a less oppressed ethnic minority group in the country, or even with the majority ethnic group. Given the prejudice and oppression directed at Roma throughout Central and Eastern Europe, such a decision on the part of some Roma is not surprising. However, it does make the identification of Roma students more difficult and less reliable. In general, our local research teams, like most other researchers, were forced to rely on self-identification of Roma, despite the limitations inherent in the approach. No ready alternatives presented themselves.

It also became evident during this research that national legal policies developed to prevent ethnic discrimination were also limiting the collection of information for the purposes of education research, program documentation and program evaluation. This occurred because policies failed to distinguish between ethnic identification for discriminatory purposes and that conducted for the purposes of research or program development, assessment, and documentation. From a research perspective, information on the ethnicity of individuals could be collected but then maintained and used in an anonymous manner to protect the identify of any individual. This would be sufficient for research or program-related purposes, while preventing the potential for discriminatory action against any individual. Unfortunately, current policies in several countries are sufficiently broad to prevent the official collection of data in this manner, even for research purposes. Our data collection experiences suggest the need to review existing national policies regarding ethnic identification of individuals, to ensure that mechanisms are established to allow legitimate research and program development aimed at improving the living conditions of the disadvantaged and oppressed groups.

## Finding Comparison Groups of Students

In order to provide a context for assessing the impact of each program on Roma students, the research teams sought to identify appropriate comparison groups. However, several teams reported that Roma comparison groups were both difficult and time-consuming to find.

Those programs which provided direct services to Roma students (including those in Macedonia, the Slovak Republic, and Yugoslavia) often focused their efforts on specific neighborhoods, settlements, and communities. The researchers found that within these communities, most Roma children were participating in the programs. This meant that there were few Roma children available to serve as a comparison group. This forced researchers to identify Roma children in other communities to serve in a comparison group. Moreover, the researchers had to seek this data without the connections that had been built between the program staff and school staff. This further compounded the challenges facing the research teams.

Past research suggested that most Roma children did not enroll in public school without some program interventions. As a result of this, the researchers found that students sought for comparison groups, were more likely to <u>not</u> be enrolled in school. However, this fact also made them much more difficult to locate. Compulsory education laws in each country often meant that parents and other Roma in the neighborhood were reluctant to admit that these children even existed. Again, this required an investment by researchers in trust-building within these communities.

Researchers also found that it was difficult to collect comparable student data from earlier points in time. They found that in some cases past student data was not archived or easily accessible. This made it more difficult to identify baseline data in order to determine changes over time. The rapidly changing governmental, social, and economic conditions in some of these countries over the last two or three years added to the complications. In fact, the researchers recognized one important benefit of the data collected as part of this research project, is that it can serve as a baseline for assessing further changes resulting from these and other Roma education programs in the future.

## Assessing Student Progress

Little use is made by the public schools in the region of standardized student achievement tests. Despite the real limitations of standardized tests as a measure of student achievement, particularly when used alone and with minority populations, these tests are a useful tool for comparing student achievement over time and over different sites.

One alternative would have been for our project to administer a standardized assessment instrument to different Roma and non-Roma populations across the region. Although this would not have provided us with information on change over time, it would have provided some useful comparison data. Unfortunately, this project lacked both the resources and the time to conduct such a mass- testing effort. This project chose instead to rely on multiple indicators of student growth and progress, including

mark level and school completion rates, class marks, attendance rates, and student behavior. Nevertheless, standardized achievement test results would have been a valuable, additional tool for the research project.

## Isolating the Impact of Program Interventions

Another challenge mentioned by some local researchers was their difficulty in isolating the impact of the specific intervention being studied on the participating institution and target population. This was particularly true, when several interventions were being implemented in a single site. The reality in most countries and most schools was that multiple programs were being employed and that often complex interactions arose. Rarely was just one program operating in isolation.

Although this research project sought to gather information and understand the context within which each project operated, our time and capacity to collect and analyze this information was limited. Moreover, many of the projects being examined have only operated for a short time and in only a relatively small number of sites. This also made it difficult to identify and understand the different interactions that may be occurring among different program interventions under different educational conditions. Ultimately, further research must be focused on these crucial issues.

## Implications of Methodological Challenges

Taken together, these challenges did create unexpected limitations in the research activities. However, these problems did not fatally compromise the quality of the research project.

At the same time, these challenges have important implications for future research on Roma education in the region. Given the growing importance of assessment and accountability on the part of private and government funders of education change efforts, issues of record collection, maintenance, and access will take on increasing importance. Equally important will be the development of a greater understanding on the part of school administrators and staff to the importance and value of program research and assessment efforts. Building such greater understanding is a potential result of projects like this one, using a participatory research approach. Such benefits justify greater use of such a participatory research approach in the future.

# Roma Populations in Central & Eastern Europe

Much has been written about Roma and the plight that they face during the transition years in Central and Eastern Europe. This section has drawn on the relevant literature, in order to provide a context by which the reader can better understand, how education and the crisis in education is further deepened by the overall plight which the Roma face.

No one knows exactly how many Roma currently live in Central and Eastern Europe. Official figures published by national government agencies over the last decade differ ( often by wide margins) from estimates developed by international agencies, university researchers, and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) over the same time period. Table 1 documents various recent estimates of Roma populations in the seven countries that serve as the focus for this research project. The range of sources demonstrates how widely estimates of population vary, from government sources to independent estimates.

**Table II-1. Estimates of Roma Populations in Selected Central & Eastern European Nations[6]**

|  | **Independent Estimates** | **MRG Report Estimates** | **NGO Estimates** | **Official Estimates** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bulgaria | 500,000 – 800,000 | 700,000 – 800,000 | 800,000 – 1,000,000 | 600,000 |
| Czech Rep. | 150,000 – 300,000 | 250,000 – 300,000 |  | 32,903 |
| Hungary | 550,000 – 800,000 | 550,000 – 600,000 |  | 400,000 |
| Macedonia | 110,000 – 260,000 |  | 150,000 – 200,000 | 43,707 |
| Romania | 1,410,000 – 2,500,000 | 1,800,000 – 2,500,000 |  | 430,000 |
| Slovakia | 458,000 – 520,000 | 480,000 – 520,000 |  | 260,000 |
| Yugoslavia | 400,000 – 600,000 |  | 600,000 | 138,645 |

Independent estimates suggest that there are about 5 million Roma living in Central and Eastern Europe (Druker, 1997; Clark, 1998). Roma are estimated to make up 8% to 10% of the total populations of Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, and Slovakia. They

comprise about 5% to 6% of the total populations in Hungary and Yugoslavia, but only 2% to 3% of the total population in the Czech Republic.

Due to issues discussed below, census data is controversial and most likely significantly underestimates the Roma populations. Not only are populations currently higher than governments estimate, but according to the World Bank, are likely to increase in the near future because of the high population growth among Roma(and decreasing fertility among the majority populations).

## Difficulties in Counting the Roma

Reliable statistics on the Roma minority are crucial in order, to plan and carry out effective research projects, and are important, more broadly, to help formulate and achieve effective, democratic changes. The difficulties involved in attempting to count the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, however, are numerous, which makes achieving the above two aims arduous. The problem faced in counting the Roma is the result of a variety of factors.

### Law and Government

In some countries (such as the Czech Republic and Hungary), laws were passed in the early 1990's forbidding the collection of data on citizens related to their ethnicity. Justification for passing such laws was based on the issue of privacy. Governments justify the lack of data on the Roma ethnicity by saying it is a 'civic principle', that refuses to distinguish between citizens on the basis of their ethnicity.[7] It has, therefore, been common practice to suggest that there are no accurate statistics on the distribution of Roma/Gypsies within the education system.

There is a very important legal and policy issue to consider which is related to research and data collection. A distinction must be made between ethnic identification for discriminatory purposes and for program evaluation/documentation purposes. The distinction might be around issues of anonymity. It would be appropriate to ask for and maintain data about the ethnicity of individuals, if that data is not made public. It could be used for analytical purposes only, in an anonymous manner (with names and addresses removed). Numbers could be used instead for longitudinal analysis and raw data for summative analysis.

Save the Children UK report that concern at such an approach, was raised by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). In 1997, ECRI suggested that "steps should be taken to improve information on the Roma/Gypsy community at the level of local authorities, research institutions and non-governmental organizations in order to facilitate the planning of social policies in relation to the Roma/Gypsy community" (Save the Children, 2001).

From a legal/policy perspective, it is important to emphasize the legitimacy of research, evaluation and documentation to improving the well- being of disadvantaged and oppressed groups and the need to develop mechanisms to allow this to occur.

Some researchers have argued that government agencies actually have few incentives to accurately count their Roma populations. As Clark (1998) noted, "If the figures do not show the Roma to 'exist' then why fund specific social policies directed at them?" Because the political influence of Roma communities in Central and Eastern Europe

remains small, there are few political pressures that exist to counter this viewpoint (Barany, 1998).

Roma are often reluctant to cooperate with government agencies. For some Roma, this attitude reflects long-standing cultural traditions, which encourage Roma to lend their allegiance to their family or group, rather than the central government. For other Roma, this attitude is grounded in historical experiences, characterized by patterns of institutional oppression and violence against Roma over many centuries. Many Roma still cite the pogroms of the Nazi governments and the forced assimilation policies of the Communist governments as reasons for their distrust of government agencies. However, this lack of cooperation with government agencies compounds the problems associated with effectively finding and accurately counting Roma populations in the region.

## **Mobility**

The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe no longer live the nomadic lifestyles historically associated with "Gypsies". The image of the Roma caravan moving from one location to another is rarely seen in the region. Most Roma now have a settled pattern of life – having developed permanent residences as a result of settlement policies during the Communist era in most Central and Eastern European nations.[8]

Despite their abandonment of nomadic living patterns, some Roma remain mobile – usually for economic reasons. The Vlach Roma, for example, who make up about one-tenth of the Roma population in Hungary, have a strong preference for a life as 'independent traders'. This lifestyle was anathema under the previous Communist regime, but now is welcomed by the new non-Communist government. The Vlach Roma 'cultivate family and business ties over large geographical areas'. Though they are not considered nomads in the traditional sense, they are, nevertheless, a highly mobile population (Torzsok and Kallai, 2000).

Other Roma groups are involved in a more seasonally mobile lifestyle. These groups are often engaged in agriculture. Adults and sometimes the whole family, relocate from their permanent residence to a temporary residence in the fall and the spring to 'follow' the crops.

Still other Roma find themselves forced to relocate their residence for a variety of reasons. Some are victims of violence and oppression due to the strong prejudice, which continues to exist against the Roma throughout the region. They are forced to move for their safety and even  their survival. Some flee wars and ethnic conflicts in their countries. They often become refugees in their own or neighboring countries. The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have contributed to these dislocations. Some have been compelled to move by the severe economic disruption of the last decade. A common pattern in many of the countries has been a movement of Roma from rural villages to urban ghettos. This pattern – characterized as the 'long-distance shuttler mode of existence' by Gabor Havas – has Roma families moving to urban environments in search of employment. Prejudice, a lack of employment opportunities, and a lack of legal housing often result in illegal squatting, severe poverty, and social isolation (Torzsok and Kallai, 2000).

Although no longer nomadic, the continued mobility or relocation of many Roma groups make it hard for government agencies to find them and thus makes it likely that

they will be undercounted. This is particularly true when only limited resources are available to conduct such counts – a situation that exists throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

## Self-Identification

Household surveys and censuses often do not distinguish respondents by ethnicity, and even when ethnicity is included, a range of other issues may arise. Roma may seek to protect themselves from  majority racism. Thus, when censuses are taken, many Roma may not willingly self-identify as Roma, but as another ethnicity.

Furthermore, regardless of issues of self-protection from majority populations, many Roma may honestly not consider themselves as part of this ethnic group. They may identify with the majority group, or with another ethnic minority group. This point raises a further issue regarding drawing conclusions about the Roma in general, and this is discussed in the section below: diversity within the Roma community itself is a distinctive feature, and impedes generalization at any level.

All of the above issues had a very real effect on this research project. Often , these factors frustrated efforts of the research teams in their  attempt to collect existing or new data.

# Diversity Among the Roma

The Roma are not a uniform ethnic group, but rather a collection of distinctive groups that can be readily distinguished ethnographically and socially. Historic, political, and economic factors have created enormous diversity among the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. This diversity often makes it difficult to decide exactly who should be considered a "Roma".

Official population estimates generated by government agencies, generally, include only those individuals who formally declare themselves to be "Roma". Researchers and activists who work with the Roma have discovered that many individuals who embrace Roma cultural traditions and speak the Roma language are unwilling to make such an official declaration. Much of this reluctance is grounded in the widespread prejudice, oppression, and violence directed against Roma throughout Central and Eastern Europe. As one older Roma women reported: "My family always tried to appear Romanian. Especially during the war it was much better not be a Gypsy. Actually, it has always been better not to be a Gypsy" (Helsinki Watch, 1991).

Population estimates developed by researchers, independent organizations, and NGO's generally employ more inclusive criteria in identifying Roma. Generally, they include those individuals with Roma ancestry or those individuals who are 'considered' Roma by the general public. However, these criteria include very different groups under the same label of "Roma". One expert (Jenne van der Velde) told us "It depends very much on the way they are asked. Sometimes they declare they are Roma, sometimes they don't declare. Some of them declare themselves Roma without speaking the language in their families and without having any ethnic specificity, customs."

Although these groups may all be considered Roma, their situations are very different. These differences often result in very different interactions with the public education systems in their respective countries. As a result, these differences may be significant to

assessing and understanding the operation and impact of the individual Roma education programs that are the focus of our research project. In our research, local research teams generally employed more inclusive criteria in identifying Roma children and parents. At the same time, the teams sought to distinguish between different groups of Roma to allow a more precise assessment of program effects.

Diversity among Roma groups across Central and Eastern Europe can be categorized using three dimensions. The first dimension involves national differences. Simply stated this means that Roma in the Czech Republic are different from Roma in Bulgaria or Hungary, for example. This situation is repeated for all the countries in the region.

National differences among the Roma emerged due to the different political, governmental, and social decisions made by the different countries. These differences have affected the degree to which the Roma have been assimilated into the majority culture and society. They affect employment, residential, and economic patterns of life among the Roma. They also affect the attitudes that Roma have about governmental institutions. Thus, Roma in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Bulgaria are different because the Czech, Hungarian, and Bulgarian national governments acted differently over many decades, and particularly because each government treated the Roma differently.

National differences also emerge in the language and culture of different Roma groups. Economic and social interactions over time have led Roma to adopt language and cultural traditions from the host country. Efforts to promote assimilation into the majority culture have reinforced and accelerated such patterns. Thus, Roma in the Czech Republic have assimilated Czech traditions and speak Czech (or at least a Roma ethnic dialect of the language), while Roma in Hungary have assimilated some Hungarian traditions and most speak Magyar.

A second dimension of differences among Roma groups is grounded in differences in language and culture.

Some Roma maintain strong ties to their cultural traditions and continue to speak the language. They generally consider themselves to be "Roma", although some may not "officially" claim that ethnic affiliation because of historic patterns of prejudice in the country. Even when they speak the national language of the country in which they live, many of these Roma find them marginalized and oppressed because they "look" and "act" Roma.

Some Roma no longer follow Roma cultural traditions or speak the language. Often this is a result of forced assimilation policies enacted under Communist-era governments. Nevertheless, because these individuals "look Roma" to the general public, they are treated as such – suffering the traditional levels of prejudice and oppression. Moreover, their socioeconomic situation means that they often live in the same communities as others who identify themselves as "Roma". However, many of these individuals do not consider themselves to be "Roma".

Other Roma may not "look Roma", or be treated as Roma by the general public – even when they maintain some connections to Roma cultural traditions and language. Despite their cultural connections, their social standing and economic situation may mean that they live in mixed neighborhoods and don't face the same problems as those faced by other Roma.

Still other Roma have come to embrace the traditions and language of other ethnic groups – even other minority ethnic groups – and see themselves as affiliated with these other groups rather than with the Roma. In Bulgaria, for example, some ethnic Roma actually consider themselves to be Turkish. They are often hostile to any suggestions that they should be considered "Roma".

The final dimension emerges from the existence of distinct, endogamous groups within the Roma community.  Historically, these different groups have been distinguished by the involvement in different occupations, ranging from the prestigious musicians in Hungary, the Kalderash; former and sometimes current pot makers in Romania and Bulgaria; to the Ursari, bear trainers. These distinctions have been maintained by traditional prohibitions against intermarriage not only with non-Roma, but also even with Roma from other groups. Over time, this had led to differences in the cultural traditions practices by different groups. Even when rapidly changing economic and social conditions have meant that the occupational distinctions no longer exist; the cultural distinctions may remain and may continue to separate the different groups of Roma.

Hungary provides a good example of this situation. For example, the more traditional *Vlach* Roma has few interactions with the *Romungros* (Magyar-speaking Hungarian Roma) Roma (Stewart, 1997). Another illustration that further demonstrates complex subdivisions shows that the Musician group of Romungros have had little in common for more than a century, with the rural masses of Romungros and their traditional occupations of mud brick-making and agricultural laboring. The occupational differences have led the Musician and mud brick- making Romungros to develop essentially different ethnic patterns and made marriages between the two groups very rare. These differences have persisted, even though economic changes have led each group in different subsistence patterns (Torzsok and Kallai, 2000).

Despite the complex categorization of different Roma groups, one common characteristic these many groups may share is the relationship they perceive between themselves, the "Roma", and the outside world, the "gadze" (Roma word for a non-Roma person).  Roma do define themselves as different from gadze, a characteristic that may explain how they have maintained a separate identity across centuries (Ringold, 2000).

Taken together, these three dimensions demonstrate the complex diversity among Roma groups that exist across the entire region and within each country and are important for understanding how the different groups may relate differently to education. Some Roma may be reluctant to participate in education for fear of losing their cultural identity, while others would participate fully. For educational programming, this diversity reinforces the need to target particular programmatic strategies to address the different needs of different groups of Roma or to adapt different programs to different conditions.

## Living Conditions of the Roma

### Housing/Residence Patterns

It is difficult to generalize about where most Roma live in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, just as it is nearly impossible to generalize about one homogeneous

Roma ethnic group. Where the populations live is dependent on the history of the country in which they live. As a result, it will vary from country to country.

However, there is one common condition, which is related to the general level of poverty found in every country of the region. Regardless of where the Roma live, whether rural or urban, the conditions in which they live generally will be inferior to that of the majority population.

The economic transition has most certainly had an effect on Roma housing. The amount of land and housing available to Roma has been diminished by restitution and privatization laws and by state fiscal constraints.

Housing policies of past regimes have often led to geographic isolation and segregation, both in rural and urban settings. Due to these isolated living circumstances, many Roma do not have access to many social services, including education. In these circumstances, children simply have no means of getting to school. Not only is the lack of access a result of geographical isolation, it is also a result of families living "illegally." Families may "squat" in houses and thus not have the proper identification and papers needed to enroll their children in school. In Hungary, it is estimated that 60,000, or approximately 13% of the Roma population live in settlement housing isolated from the majority population (Puporka and Zádori, 1999).

The living conditions in thousands of Roma communities in the region are below poverty level. Often there is neither running water nor electricity. Heat is produced in makeshift wood stoves, where plastic bottles substitute the wood and random articles that can be burned. Residents often live in single room shacks put together with random scraps of plywood, tarpaper, cloth, or whatever can be found. The ground is black from the soot of burning outdoor fires; random junk lies around everywhere. In urban areas, conditions include problems associated with extreme overcrowding. Often conditions in urban ghettos have side effects such as drug addiction and an increased crime rate (Ladányi, 1993).

Not only do poor living conditions impact on the learning success of children, but the actual needs of children living in rural and urban areas may also differ. This must be taken into consideration when developing appropriate educational programming.

For example in Hungary, most Roma continue to live in rural communities. In the 1993 Hungarian census, 60.5% of Roma in Hungary lived in rural communities and only 10% of Roma lived in Budapest, compared to 20% of the overall Hungarian population. However, more Roma had been moving from rural to urban communities during the previous two decades since data shows that the proportion of Roma living in rural communities in 1971 was 78.4% (Torzsok and Kallai, 2000).

The rural, small village and under-developed environment may impact on learning since the ratio of those without much education is high. The schools that Roma children attend have fewer supplies than the average schools in Hungary. In the elementary schools where approximately 40% of the student body is Roma (or where the percentage of Roma students is above 22%), the ratio of merged classes and unqualified teachers is significantly higher than the average, while the number of classes taught by teachers specifically qualified is significantly lower (Kertesi and Kézdi, 1996).

However, even if the effects of living in underdeveloped areas and attending below average schools are filtered out, Roma children still perform worse at school than majority children (Kertesi and Kézdi, 1996).

The living situation of Roma in Hungary is not typical of Roma in other countries. For example, most of the Roma in Macedonia dwell in urban ghettos and not in rural settings (Aloui et al, 1999). Thus, assessing the geographical distribution of the population must take place on a country-by-country basis.

## Employment and Poverty Status

While living conditions have deteriorated for many in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe during the transition years, the Roma have consistently suffered more acutely than other people during this time, and have been excluded from opportunities from which others have benefited. The overall level of impoverishment of the Roma community, however, is not only due to the economic and societal transitions occurring in the countries in transition, but is equally based on a history of discrimination and exclusion from society.

"Poverty rates", the World Bank writes, "from recent World Bank poverty studies are striking. Roma are both poorer than other population groups and more likely to fall into poverty" (Ringold, 2000). According to a household survey undertaken in Bulgaria in 1997, over 84% of Roma were living below the poverty line (World Bank, 1999a). Other striking data from Hungary shows that one-third of that country's long-term poor were Roma, although the Roma comprise only about five% of the population (Ringold, 2000).

In Romania, a rapid process of impoverishment set in on the country after 1989. This was due to the dysfunctions in the welfare system and the failure of the welfare state to provide for its citizens. Children, especially Roma children, suffered the most during this transitory period.

Since families with many children are at a higher risk of unemployment and low wages, they were, by far, the most disadvantaged. According to leading sociologists, such families generally became even poorer. Romanian Gypsies tend to have high birth rates, and especially during the period up to 1989, the proportion of Gypsy families with six or more children rose sharply. From an economic point of view children represented the segment of the population that probably suffered the most because of the transition. Except for adults without income (the unemployed and housewives), children were the social category with the highest proportion in poverty (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1996).

The poverty rate for Roma in Romania was significantly higher than for the other population groups, reaching 79% in 1997, in comparison with the national poverty rate of 31% (Ringold, 2000). Due to their economic status, most Roma families require government subsidies and social assistance. Unfortunately, many Roma do not receive this assistance. According to a representative of a Macedonian NGO, 90% of the Roma in Macedonia need governmental assistance, but only 50% actually receive such assistance.

Though only three of the seven countries included in this research project are highlighted here, there is evidence that the levels of poverty in the other countries are equally high. Some Roma communities have a few wealthier members who are

considered community leaders and have access to economic resources generally unavailable to most other members of these communities. There are some Roma who live in "mixed" neighborhoods rather than in Roma neighborhoods, villages, or settlements. However, their numbers are uniformly small throughout the region.

Poverty, of course, is a direct result of high unemployment. When high labor cuts began after the political changes in Central and Eastern Europe, Roma were among the first to be laid off. Due to low skills levels because of their limited education and discrimination in the labor market, Roma have been excluded from the workforce and their level of unemployment has remained very high. Some communities have an unemployment rate as high at 100% (Ringold, 2000). Many Roma have become so discouraged – due to persistent racism – that they are not even looking for work. As a result, they are not included in most of the unemployment statistics (National Report on Human Development, 1998). This discouragement to looking for work is often misconstrued as laziness or lack of interest in employment. On the other hand, survey data does indicate that Roma actively seek employment. For example, in 1997, in Bulgaria 46% of Roma reported that they were looking for a job in comparison with 19 % of the total unemployed population (Ringold, 2000). Generally, those few Roma with regular employment and higher incomes reside in mixed neighborhoods in the major cities, rather than in the Roma ghettos.

Roma have historically had connections to traditional occupations, some of which have already been mentioned (Ursari, Kalderari, etc.). However, with changing economies and societies, the traditional occupations are largely obsolete. With limited access to education, Roma have few chances to upgrade their skills. This further contributes to their endemic unemployment. As a result in Romania, 45% of the Roma population over 16 was unemployed in 1992 (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993). In the Czech Republic, government estimates for 1999 suggest that 70% of the Roma were unemployed, in contrast with less than 10% of the total population (OSCE, 2000).

If Roma cannot find employment in the formal sector, then they seek alternatives in the informal sector. Many Roma will work abroad, work in seasonal agriculture, or work in recycling goods. Others may find self-employment opportunities.

As described above, poverty is correlated with large family size, with high unemployment, and, most significantly for this report, with low education levels. Roma children living in conditions of great poverty will suffer greater disadvantages than other children in terms of their schooling. If this cycle is not broken, poverty will remain self-perpetuating among the Roma.

## Health

Another obstacle that impedes Roma children from entering school is the lack of access to health services. This is related both to poverty and to a lack of official identification. As an excuse against integrating Roma students into regular classes, school directors in the region often claim that Roma children lack cleanliness and may carry possible diseases. They justify not allowing Roma children into school to avoid putting other children at risk. Such claims are often supported by a country's Ministry of Health.

In order for Roma children especially those coming from very poor communities to be integrated into classes, they must be checked-up and proven healthy by local health authorities. A very common problem for many Roma, however, is that in order to be

registered in a local health clinic run by the state, one needs a permanent address or at least, a legal one. For many Roma this is not possible. When local health clinics are approached to receive children, they can refuse service if the children or parents do not have proper documentation. Furthermore, there has been documented evidence that Roma have also been refused simply because of discrimination.

If Roma children lack the proper papers stating that they are in sound health, many school directors will use this as legitimate ground to impede these students entrance to that school. Thus, lack of access to health care has a direct affect on lack of access to education. The roots of both of access issues lie in a public policy regarding identification, which requires a certain financial level, one that excludes many Roma.

In a large city such as Bucharest, lack of access to health care can have drastic effects not only on Roma children's lack of access to schooling, but also on their lives. Bucharest has several neighborhoods that are considered "Gypsy neighborhoods," one of which is called the *Ferentari* section. A characteristic of this neighborhood, common in other cities of Romania and the countries included in this study, is presence of block buildings in shambles, lacking running water or electricity, and having many people living together in quarters much too small to support their numbers. As a consequence of these conditions, disease easily spreads, infecting everyone in its surroundings. Tuberculosis is often rampant. Children lie weak and coughing in conditions of filth.

Children, particularly, are victims to the menace of lack of health care and disease. Too often, the national governments in the region fail to fulfill their responsibility in providing for their child citizens' health. At the same time, these governments establish policies that impede these students' access to education, thus denying them their human rights and an opportunity to a decent and dignified future.

## Birth Rate/Age Distribution of Population

Despite the severe poverty that they face, Roma populations are likely to continue to grow in the coming years because of their relatively high birth rates. As a result, the size of the Roma population is growing much faster than the non-Roma population and their populations are relatively younger than other ethnic groups.

Data from two surveys conducted in Hungary illustrate how young the Roma populations are. In 1993, 39% of the Roma population was under 14 years old, while only 19% of the total population fell into this age group (Puporka and Zadori, 1999). According to the same study, 19% of the total population was over 60, while only 5% of Roma fell into this category.

Age distribution of Roma is similar in other countries, where such data exists. In Yugoslavia for example, 41% of the Roma population is under the age of 14 and 62% is under the age of 25 (Mitrovic and Zajic, 1998). The situation is even more extreme in Slovakia, where some researchers have claimed that more than half of the Roma population is under the age of 15. In Romania, a 1992 survey showed that the fertility of Roma women over 15 years old was 4.35 children compared to 1.79 for Romanian women. If the trend continues, programs designed to improve the future education of Roma become particularly important to the future of the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe.

# Education of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe

*In education, enrolment levels of Roma never reached those of non-Roma children in any of the countries covered in this report (Ringold, 2000).*

Much has been written about Roma, regarding violence, human rights abuses, and public discrimination in general. One area, however, which has only just begun to emerge in the relevant literature, but that warrants more attention and deeper discussion, is inequity in education for the Roma. For the purposes of this report, this discussion focuses on those countries involved in this research project. However, inequality exists for Roma in education in the countries not covered in this report. Research and writing on this may also warrant further attention.

This section will discuss the data that was available in existing reports, papers, journal articles, and feedback from the local research teams. It must be noted, nevertheless, that much of the information is simply missing. This is a result of faulty national systems of data collection and lack of support for research in general.

At the time of this report's preparation, each of the countries included in this research planned to seek access to the European Union within the next few years. The treatment of the Roma minority in each of these countries, the provision of equal opportunity and access to a quality education is an important subject, to which states must pay attention. It is a right guaranteed in international treaties and is vital for these countries' acceptance into the Union (see Save the Children UK's forthcoming report, 'Denied a Future? The Right to Education of Roma, Gypsy and Traveler Children').

Historically, Roma living in Central and Eastern Europe have much lower levels of educational attainment than the general population and even other minority groups. Some members of the majority population claim that this situation is caused by the Roma themselves. It is stated, that Roma do not adequately socialise their children and are not willing to let the majority population adequately socialise their children for them. As evidence, they assert that Roma parents either do not take their children to kindergarten early enough or they do not enrol them in kindergarten at all. From this perspective, Roma parents are often under-educated themselves and are less able to raise their children according to socialisation patterns that would properly fit the norms of majority society.

This kind of reasoning does not take into account the concept that school is a service provider. Like other children, Roma children have a right to education and educational systems should assist them in claiming that right. An educational system fails if it does not realise the educational potential of its students. In the case of Roma children, this is exactly what happens.

The failure of educational systems to provide equally for Roma children is the result of some common issues of schooling in the Central and Eastern European context, as well as the result of historical policies that worked against Roma. Statistics point to the fact that the education systems of countries discussed in this research have failed and will continue to fail to educate thousands of Roma children, unless action is taken.

From a development perspective, education is necessary to ensure employment, healthy lifestyles, participation in civil society and to ensure a country's economic security and growth. From a human rights perspective, the provision of a quality education is also a matter of civil rights.

We can envision the education system of each country as a pipeline moving children from preschool and kindergarten to elementary school then secondary school. This pipeline finally culminates in university education. For Roma children and youth, the "education pipeline" in every country in Central and Eastern Europe is very small and extremely leaky. Compared to other ethnic groups in each country, fewer Roma children enroll in preschool or kindergarten and continue to elementary school and a higher proportion of Roma children drop out of school at each level.

Among other things, the writers of this report hope that what is written will shed light on the reality of inequity in schooling for Roma children. At the same time, we hope that it will contribute to common efforts to overcome this failure and work towards ensuring the educational success and happiness of Roma children everywhere.

## Outcomes of Faulty Education Systems: Illiteracy & Low Educational Attainment

As a result of the above described situation, Roma living in Central and Eastern Europe have much *higher* levels of *illiteracy* and much *lower* levels of *educational attainment* than any other group – even than other minority ethnic groups. [9]

In **Bulgaria**, the Roma illiteracy rate is estimated to be between 8 -16% (CEGA, 1999 and Tomova, 1995) in contrast to 1.9% (Unesco IBE) for the total population. Other estimates claim that only 46.2% of the Roma completed elementary and primary schooling (grades 1 to 8) (NSI, 1994) compared to 97% of the ethnic Bulgarians and 82% of the Turkish minority.

In the **Czech Republic,** there is an estimated overall illiteracy rate between 12-15%, of which the Roma constitute the majority [10]. Other estimates put school failure rates at fourteen times higher than the majority population and dropout rates thirty times higher. Only 2.5 % of Roma enter secondary school (Gjuricová, 1992). The issue of special schools presents a particular problem in the Czech Republic. The 1989-1990 school year was the last year that ethnicity was included in school statistics which included both the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In that year, 46.4% of Roma children were in remedial special schools compared with only 3.2% non-Roma kids (ERRC, 1999).

In **Hungary,** a survey conducted in 1971 revealed that 73-74% of young Roma were practically illiterate with only 28.9% of those aged 28-32 having completed up to the eighth grade (Kemény, 1976). Since that time, there is some evidence to suggest that more Roma are completing the compulsory years of schooling. By the time of a 1994 survey, the proportion for those having completed the eighth grade had increased to 57% (Kemény, 1996**).** According to other sources, 7% of all school-aged pupils are Roma. Among those who have to repeat a year, 59,01% are Roma (Girán and Kardos, 1997).

In **Macedonia,** surveys were conducted in the Shuto Orizari neighborhood in Skopje. It was estimated that 34.31% of the young adults (over 18 years) were illiterate and had failed to complete their primary education, while 18.20% of adults were illiterate. The same survey estimated that between 34.31% and 41.10% of the Roma had less than an 8th grade education (Popovska, 2000). On the national level, out of the total Roma population, only 37.7% have completed a 3 or 4-year secondary school, while 52.67% have no education or uncompleted primary or secondary education (MOE Macedonia, 2000).

In **Romania**, there is an estimated national literacy rate of 96-98% (MOE Romania, 1998). For the Roma, however, this statistic is much lower with an estimated 44% of Roma men and 59 % of Roma women being illiterate (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993a). According to the same sociologists, 27% of the Roma population has never attended school, or if they have, than only for a few years at the most (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1996). Of Roma children ages 7-14, 41 % were not attending school in contrast to 7% of the whole population (Ringold, 2000).

In **Slovakia** some have estimated complete illiteracy among adults in the eastern part of the country. Moreover, the drop-out rate is so high among the estimated 2.5% of Roma that do go to school, that in August 1992, there were no Roma between 15-18 who attended secondary school (Gjuricová, 1992). Other estimates show that only 50% of the Roma completed eighth grade compared to 90% of the non-Roma population in the country.

## Enrollment, Attendance, and School Completion

### Preschool Enrollment

All seven countries included in our research project offer kindergarten or preschool to children beginning at ages 1, 2, or 3 and continuing until compulsory schooling starts at ages 6 or 7 [11]. Although these kindergarten/preschool classes are not part of the compulsory education system in any of the countries, most  provide some governmental financial support for these classes.

The fact remains that Roma parents generally do not enroll their children in kindergarten/preschool classes for various reasons. Money may be an important issue, since some payment for food and services provided is necessary in most countries, even with government assistance. Most Roma simply cannot afford even small fees. Logistically, it is often difficult for Roma mothers to take their children to kindergarten if they live in isolated areas or if the mother is the main caretaker at home and has other children to look after.

In order to illustrate the difference in attendance between Roma and non-Roma pupils in preschool, a sample of countries included in this research are highlighted. Data was not available for all countries studied.

In **Bulgaria**, about 60% of all children, but only 12% of Roma children, are enrolled in kindergarten (Tomova, 1995). In **Slovakia**, a serious decrease in pre-school attendance is visible between 1990 and 1997, most probably connected to economic issues. In 1990, 80% of Roma children aged 3-6 attended preschool. In 1991 this number dropped to 20% and in1997 less than 20% of Roma children were attending preschool (Slovak

Ministry of Labor, 1997; in World Bank, 2000). In **Yugoslavia**, only 10% of Roma children attend kindergarten compared to 22% of the overall preschool-aged population (Mitrovic and Zajic, 1998).

In **Macedonia** in general, children's participation in different forms of pre-schooling has been decreasing over the last years. In the Education for All 2000 report, prepared by the Macedonian Ministry of Education, it is noted that, "due to [the] worsening of social- economic conditions after 1991, [the] number of scoped children in preschool organization decreased" (MOE Macedonia-2, 1999). The "main reason . . . is the fact that the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, competent for financing of these institutions does not participate in expenses for children whose parents are social cases" (MOE Macedonia 2, 1999).  In the Popovska Shuto Orizari survey, out of 1,013 children from 4 to 7 years old, only 12.15% attend some form of pre-schooling, 6.88% attend state institutions, while the other 5.27% attend pre-school (preparatory) classes organized by the 'Nadez' (Hope) Center for Social Initiatives (Popovska, 2000). As noted above, there is no effective social policy to provide children from low-income families with support to cover kindergarten fees, thus contributing to the low percentage of Roma children attending kindergarten. As a result, many Roma children do not start primary school on an equal basis with their non-Roma counterparts; especially those confronted with initial language barriers.

## Compulsory Schooling

In all seven countries, compulsory schooling begins at age 6 or 7 and continues for 8 to 10 years.[12] This age period usually covers grades 1-8.  Enrollment by Roma in the first year of compulsory schools (first grade) is relatively high – although not universal. However, the proportion of Roma children enrolled gradually decreases during the years of compulsory schooling.

In **Bulgaria** enrollment rates for Roma in primary education, 47.7% (Tomova, 1995), and the percentage of those who have completed primary education, 46.2% (NSI), are very close. This is compared to an overall population enrollment rate of 62% (Unicef, 1998). The overall dropout rate is 3.87% (Unesco IBE), but for the Roma it is significantly higher with an estimated 85% of all Roma pupils dropping out completely before grade 11. According to Tomova (1995), the average dropout age is between 13-14 years of age, which marks the age at which children transfer between primary and secondary education.

In the **Czech Republic**, only about 22% of Roma pupils have completed basic education. According to the 1991 census (including both the Czech Republic and Slovakia), 1% of 76.4% Roma men went on to middle school and only .09% out of 80.5% of Roma women went to middle school (Conway, 1996). In 1970, only about 15% of Roma reached the 9th grade. Others dropped out before that grade (Srb and Job, 1974; in Čaněk, 1999). During the 1989-1990 school year (the last year that ethnicity was included in statistics), data from both the Czech Republic and Slovakia indicated that 28,872 (2.2%) of 1,289,766 pupils in classes 1-9 of primary school were Roma. This number is extremely low when compared to a minority that constitutes perhaps 9% of the total population. Of those Roma children in regular primary schools, only an estimated 2.5% entered secondary school (Gjuricová, 1992).

In **Hungary**, regarding the whole population of school-aged pupils, 81-82% graduate from elementary school at the age of 14. By the time they are 15, 90% of them have graduated. Among Roma only, however, 31.3% of graduates are at the age of 14 and even by the time they are 15, only 43.6% of them have graduated (Kemény, 1996). The ration of eighth graders to first graders was 88% for the overall population, but only 44% among the Roma.

In **Macedonia**, 90% of Roma children are enrolled in first grade, but only 50% are enrolled in fifth grade and only 40% in eighth grade (ERRC, 1999). According to another source, 95% of the respective age group of the total population is included in primary school, though the largest part of the children that are not attending elementary school are of Roma nationality (MOE Macedonia, 2000). The Ministry of Education also stated that in the 1999/2000 school year, there were a total of 8,279 (3.34%) Roma children in primary school out of a total number of 247,898 pupils (Popovska-2, 2000). This number is lower than the estimated number of Roma pupils who should be enrolled in school, which is 9,378. Therefore, approximately1,099 Roma children (18%) are out of the schooling system (Tanaka, 2000).

In one survey done in the Shuto Orizari neighborhood of Skopje, out of 2,632 children of primary school ages 7 to 14, about 20% were not in school. This figure is actually an improvement over past years, due especially to NGO-related efforts to create conditions for increased school attendance and sustainable learning (Popovska, 2000)[13]. According to the Ministry of Education, 7.96% of the enrolled Roma students dropped out of school in the 1998/1999 school year (Popovska-2, 2000). As children are generally not held back from the 1st to the 4th grade, it may be assumed that the majority of these dropouts occur in the upper primary grades, from the 5th to 8th grade levels.

Statistics from **Romania** suggest that just over half of all Roma children (51%) attended school regularly and that 57% had basic education 1-8 (Ringold, 2000). Other data shows that 29.9 % of Roma children between the ages of 7 and 9 had never attended school and 17.2% of children between the ages of 10-16 had never attended school (Save the Children, 1998).

Statistics from **Romania** also suggest that different groups of Roma students exhibit different patterns of school attendance. A much higher proportion of Roma children whose father is employed (72%) attend school regularly. Roma children who live in mixed communities are twice as likely to attend school regularly than those who live in Roma neighborhoods, villages, or settlements (60% compared to 33%). Children, whose mothers had completed more than eight years of schooling, were more likely to attend school regularly (73%), than children of mothers who had no schooling (21%). These statistics suggest that considerable variation may exist among the Roma and that these socioeconomic characteristics need to be taken into account, when examining the impact of education programs on education enrollment, attendance, and attainment indicators for Roma students (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993).

In **Slovakia**, 22% of Roma children are required to repeat the first grade.

In **Yugoslavia**, the elementary school dropout rate among Roma is 78% (the highest of any ethnic group in the country).

## Special Schools and Special Classes

For their compulsory school years, Roma children are much more likely to be enrolled in "special schools" designed for mentally handicapped children, or to be segregated into special classes within normal schools. This pattern is consistent across the region, though evidence shows that percentages may be higher in Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria. In Macedonia, Romania and Yugoslavia though there may be a high number of Roma in special schools, the evidence of systemic tracking is not as evident, and in these countries, the issue is rather one of lack of access to schooling in general.

In **Bulgaria**, Roma students make up 33% of the enrollment in special schools (but only 8 to 10% of the overall school population (Tanaka, 2000). In the **Czech Republic**, 46.4% of Roma children are in remedial special schools compared with only 3.2% non-Roma kids (ERRC, 1999).[14]

The issue of tracking Roma to special schools is also relevant in **Hungary**. In Hungary, although real statistics about the number of Roma children in special schools is non-existent, according to estimates, about half of all children in special schools are Roma, while only 7% of all children in education are Roma. Other data suggests that 41% of the student body in special schools are Roma (Radó, 1997).

In another study, the percentage of Roma students in the special classes (in normal schools) was 67,92%. Interestingly, there seemed to be a strong correlation between the level of integration in society and placement in special classes. In those towns where Roma were more or less integrated, the percentage of Roma students in special classes was 58.06%, while in towns where Roma had a non-integrated position (they lived in a separate part of town, there were conflicts between Roma and the majority population etc.) the same number was 73.91%. Also, in the integrated towns, there were almost half as many schools having special classes than in the non-integrated towns (Girán and Kardos, 1997). One study stated, "It is common knowledge that the amount and quality of knowledge handed over to students in homogenous Roma classes is close to that in special schools. (...) Segregation in these cases is done on the basis of ethnicity; it has nothing to do with pedagogy. (...) Segregation, with all of its consequences, is one of the reasons behind Roma children's unsuccessfulness at school" (Girán and Kardos, 1997).

Children are generally placed in the special schools as a result of standardized tests that are administered at the beginning of their compulsory schooling. These tests are designed to assess the "intellectual level" of students before they begin school. Researchers have found that Roma children generally perform poorly on these tests because these tests fail to account for the different social and cultural experiences of Roma children and because most Roma are not literate in the majority language when they begin school.

Once students are placed in special schools, they are unlikely to be moved back into the regular school. The quality of education offered to children in special schools generally does not equal that offered in regular schools. A comparison of the curriculum in remedial schools and regular schools in the Czech Republic revealed that the remedial school curriculum was described in 95 pages, but the regular school curriculum required more than three times as many pages (336). Generally, special or remedial

schools do not prepare students to pass the secondary school entrance exam – closing off the opportunity for further education.

Even those Roma children, who are not placed in special schools for their compulsory schooling, often find themselves placed in segregated school settings. In Bulgaria for example, 70% of Roma students are enrolled in schools with student populations that are primarily or exclusively Roma. In Hungary, most Roma students attend schools with high concentrations of Roma students, while most non-Roma students attend schools without any Roma children enrolled.

## Secondary Schools and University

Secondary schools and universities are not part of the compulsory education system in all seven countries. Enrollment is generally contingent on passing an entrance examination. Very few Roma children receive a compulsory education of sufficient quality to allow them to pass the secondary school entrance examination. As a result, relatively few Roma students are enrolled in either secondary schools or universities. If we return to our "pipeline" metaphor, at this stage in the journey, the line has become more restricted and much more leaky. In fact, most of the water has already escaped this far along the pipe, and the gap in secondary school completion between Roma and non-Roma becomes significant.

In **Bulgaria**, 74% of the general population, but only 6-8.5% of the Roma completed secondary school.[15]

In the **Czech Republic**, statistical evidence from 1970 shows that the proportion of Roma in the post-war generation (16–30 years of age) with at least some secondary education was only 1.7% (Povinná, 1972; in Čaněk, 1999). Also according to Čaněk, statistical evidence from 1970 shows that the proportion of Roma between 25-29 who had completed secondary education was below 1%.

In **Hungary**, nearly half of all children finishing the eighth grade continue onto secondary schools, but for Roma children the rate is only 3%. The gap widens further during the years at secondary school. By the time the fourth and final grade of secondary school is reached, the dropout rate among non-Roma children is less than 14%; for Roma children it is close to 40% (Kertesi, 1995).

In **Macedonia**, the Popovska Shuto Orizari study gives some indication to the number of Roma students continuing their education. At the secondary school level only 10% - 20% of Roma students continue to study. In another survey, out of 1,143 Roma youth aged 15 -18, about 35% attended secondary school (Popovska, 2000). In the 1998/1999 school year, the Ministry of Education registered 478 Roma in secondary education. In the town of Veles it was noted that there were 10 Roma students in secondary school that year, which was seen as an improvement over previous years, and an indication of increased awareness of the importance of formal education amongst the estimated 2000 Roma in the town (Tanaka, 2000).

In **Romania**, 7% of Roma men and 3% of Roma women completed secondary school compared to 73% of men and 61% of women in the general population. Unlike compulsory schooling, there is no evidence that the proportion of Roma completing secondary school has increased over the last two decades.

Very few Roma successfully complete **higher education**. Statistics from Bulgaria and Hungary indicate that only 1% of Roma adults have completed a course of study in the university. This compares to 20% of the overall adult population in Bulgaria.

In **Bulgaria**, less than 2% of all university students are Roma, with some estimates as low as 0.3%-1% (CEGA, 1999 and Tomova, 1995). In the **Czech Republic** and **Slovakia** according to the 1991 Census figures (Roma polled over 15 years old) 45 men (.4%) and 19 women (.2%) had some higher education (Conway, 1996). In **Hungary**, the rate of Roma higher education graduates is 1% or below. In **Romania** only 4.5% of Roma adults have attended higher education (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1996).

However, statistics from **Macedonia** indicate that the number of Roma students in college have increased dramatically over the last decade. According to government figures, no Roma were enrolled in higher education until the 1994-95 school year, during which five Roma attended university. In 1996-97 this went up to nine, and in the 1998-99 school year, there were 41 registered Roma students, or 0.3% of the total student body (ERRC, 1999). Although the proportion of Roma in university is still extremely low, it should be noted that there has been a steady increase in the number of Roma students since the introduction of revised affirmative action measures for national minorities in 1994, when there were 10 Roma students registered (MOE Macedonia, 1999).

## Barriers to Educational Attainment of Roma Students

The history of the educational systems in Central and Eastern Europe is linked to the history of the state's effort to create homogeneous citizens, who would obey the law and support the identity of the state, generally at the expense of individuality. The systematic reform of education has been occurring since the political changes in 1989, but to date is not a completed task. The barriers that Roma encounter vis-a -vis their respective education systems are huge, and many are a legacy from those past educational systems.

Our review of previous research and our interviews with school staff, students, and parents has identified a series of barriers to educational attainment by Roma students in the public schools of Central and Eastern Europe.

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### *Barriers*

*Incompatibility Between Traditional Teaching Practices and Roma Learning Styles*

*Quality of Teaching in Schools with Large Numbers of Roma*

*Low Teacher Expectations of Roma Students*

*Lack of Competency in the Majority Language by Roma Children*

*Lack of Academic Foundation When Roma Children Begin School*

*Prejudice Against Roma Children*

*Poverty Among Roma Families*

*Perspective and Attitudes of Roma Parents and Children Toward Public Schooling*

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The result of these barriers manifests outwardly in the following ways: Many Roma children do not attend school and receive no education, resulting in high illiteracy rates; many Roma children drop out of schooling at a young age, which also results in high illiteracy rates; Roma children, even if enrolled in school, often receive a low quality of education, which results in their being tracked frequently to less prestigious schools or vocational schools; Roma are disproportionately represented in so-called "special schools," or schools for the mentally handicapped.

## Nature of Traditional Teaching Practices

**Methodology and School Organization.** The picture of the national education systems in Central and Eastern Europe, as they relate to Roma children, is very complex. The governmental and social changes, which have occurred over the last decade, have created new opportunities for experimentation and allowed pockets of educational reform to emerge throughout the region. At the same time, most schools and educators in the region remain locked into traditional and rigid teaching practices, which remain inappropriate or irrelevant to the needs of Roma students or even the average non-Roma student.

Historically, schools in Central and Eastern Europe have been structured and operated in a rigid manner, emphasizing hierarchy and consistency. Educators traditionally have employed a pedagogy that is didactic in nature and places the teacher at the center of the teaching process.

Such approaches are very much in conflict with current theories of effective teaching and effective school organizations. Modern educational trends emphasize teaching practices that are interactive and student-centered. Teachers are encouraged to create cooperative, experiential learning environments for their students that reflect the current developmental needs of their students. School administrators are encouraged to create collaborative learning communities, which foster a commitment to teaching all students. These communities should also encourage and support both adults and children to take responsibility for their own learning.

Traditionally, Roma emphasize communal learning experiences, skill-building in practical settings ("learning by doing"), and one-to-one relationships between the teacher and student (apprenticeship model). The traditional Roma approach to learning is very much in conflict with the historic approach to public schooling in Central and Eastern Europe. Conversely, the Roma approach is quite consistent with contemporary trends in educational practices.

Political changes over the last decade have created new opportunities for educators to understand, explore, and adopt modern educational trends. These changes have created pockets of reform through the region. These pockets eventually can serve as the foundation for more widespread educational reform efforts throughout the area. Unfortunately, these pockets of reform are currently limited to only a few schools or even a few teachers in particular schools. Most schools and teachers continue to employ traditional teaching practices.

Moreover, teaching practices continue to assume that all students are from middle-class, mainstream, majority culture families. Learning activities presuppose knowledge and experiences gained in middle-class, majority-culture home environments. Communication and learning patterns reflect the styles and developmental patterns of the typical students. This rigidity and lack of accommodation in public school teaching practices place Roma students – and other students who are not considered "typical" – at an enormous academic disadvantage.

**Intercultural Education.** Although there is increasing emphasis throughout the region on intercultural education, this effort is only in its infancy. As a result, most teachers continue to possess or express little understanding of or respect for Roma language, culture, and traditions.

The increasing emphasis on human rights has also led to a growing emphasis on intercultural education in the public schools across the region. In fact, several of the Roma education programs that are examined in our research project incorporate an intercultural education component.

Current intercultural education efforts in the region are generally focused on building a greater awareness of the varying historical experiences, beliefs, traditions, and perspectives of the different ethnic groups in each country. However, this is only the beginning of a long-term process for building greater intercultural understanding – both within the educational system and within society as a whole. Ultimately, intercultural education requires honoring, not just acknowledging, the value and legitimacy of these differences. In schools for example, this means changing teaching practices to reflect and respond to the different learning styles embedded in the cultural differences of different ethnic groups. Unfortunately, there remain many educators throughout the region who still lack even a minimal level of knowledge of the conditions and traditions of minority group children in their countries.

**Incompatible Student Assessment Systems**. Much investigation into determining how Roma students are tracked to special schools and special classes has led back to the assessment tests that are given early on in a child's school life. The results of these assessment tests are very difficult to challenge, partly because they are conducted behind closed doors.

Many have argued that this testing is culturally determined, and completely incompatible with Roma culture. For example, consider one of the most basic questions on a test - 'how many brothers and sisters do you have?' - 'what are their names?' (Here only full, proper names are accepted). In a Hungarian family for example, typically there are two children and the boundaries of the family are clearly defined. Thus, a typical response might be to have one brother and one sister, and their names are Steven and Eva. Roma, on the other hand, very often live in a community where the boundaries of families are less rigid, and may claim the neighbor's child among his own brothers and sisters. A majority perspective may interpret this response as a clear sign of mental retardation.

Scholarly work also supports the notion that intelligence tests may largely be culturally determined, "While intelligence tests (...) are often used as if they measure innate ability, there is a broad consensus among scholars that such tests measure only acquired knowledge. A number of scholars argue that these tests reflect cultural

judgements about what knowledge children should have, and that different cultural groups may acquire different sets of knowledge. This means that these tests may not be effective measures of ability to acquire important intellectual skills" (Glennon, 1995).

Firsthand documentation has given evidence that tests are faulty, and that perfectly normal Roma children are sent to special schools and classrooms as a result of these flaws. Children going to a special school are very often perceived as disabled only within the school environment and even then, teachers often admit that their students are quite intelligent. During an investigation into tracking to special schools undertaken by the ERRC in 1997, one remedial teacher in Hungary said:

> "I do not believe that there are more mentally handicapped children born among Roma. Social expectations are different. I've been saying it for about 15 years that we should make an IQ test for Roma. It shouldn't be me who makes it. It should be made by Roma. They know so many things. Sometimes I just sit and listen and I'm very happy and really enjoy it because I learn a lot from them."[16]

At one level, the culturally- determined nature of the tests is widely accepted. This acceptance is shown in the way all the tests are separately standardised for different countries. While everyone seems to agree that the mental abilities of, for example, Austrian and Hungarian children cannot be measured by means of the same test, no one seems to question that those tests standardised on Hungarian children, measure the abilities of Roma children correctly.[17]

## Quality of Teaching in Schools with Large Numbers of Roma

Many schools with large Roma enrollments are forced to hire less- qualified teachers. From a purely professional point of view, teachers are daunted by the scale of educational and social needs facing Roma children. Enthusiasm and motivation is stifled by high truancy, lack of parental interest, poor working conditions and low salaries; teaching in such a school is seen as often futile, frustrating, and lacking in prestige. Teachers in "Roma neighborhood schools" are noted to experience higher levels of distress, and turnovers are high (Tomova, 1995).

Emphasis should be made here, however, that lack of preliminary preparation to work with minority children and lack of motivation of the teachers in the Roma schools is due, largely, to widely held negative prejudices. This, in turn, may largely contribute to the poor scholastic achievement of the Roma pupils, as well as to their low level of attendance of school.

This leaves the teaching positions in these schools only to the poorly qualified teachers. A study of a predominantly Roma schools in Hungary, found that four out of seven teachers were wholly lacking in teaching qualifications. Moreover, these teachers admitted to taking the position at this school solely because it was an easier route to acquiring a teacher certificate. Once they had secured such a certificate, they anticipated moving to another, more prestigious school.

Under-qualified teachers can be found in schools with a large percentage of Roma pupils and in special classes within those schools. As one Roma educator noted, "it is an unspoken rule that the least qualified teachers inevitably get posted to such schools" (Vassileva, ERRC, 1998).

Originally, special classes were created to promote Roma students' more successful adoption and integration to school. However, instead of achieving that goal, "these classes only preserved a need for special classes and typically became institutions of reduced quality education. Pedagogical performance was destroyed by segregation and by the fact that, in general, it was not the best-qualified teachers teaching in these classes. It became clear that, after permanent segregation, placing Roma students back to the other classes was nearly impossible" (Radó, 1997).

## Low Teacher Expectations of Roma Students

Prejudicial attitudes held by many teachers against Roma children, often result in extremely low expectations for the academic performance of these students. Such teachers typically express the belief that educating such children is doomed from the outset. They consider Roma children to be either less interested or less capable of learning and behave accordingly.

Research from many countries on the effect of low teacher expectations has produced several, consistent conclusions. When teachers have low expectations of particular students, these expectations affect the behavior of both students and teachers. These students are treated by teachers and their peers as failures, and they come to believe themselves to be failures. Such attitudes become self-fulfilling. The result: reduced expectations often lead to reduced achievement. At the time of the ERRC investigation in 1997, teachers in a special school told the *ERRC*:

> My students who come here from the normal school, very often tell me
> that there, they were just given some paper and pencil and they drew,
> sitting at the back of the class, and how bad it was for them that they never
> got a good grade, they were never praised. I think it's better for them
> here.[18]

In Bulgaria, problems of lower expectations toward Roma students contribute to the lower quality education and lack of preparation for continuing onto higher education. For example, a high school for Roma neighborhood pupils in Lom, Bulgaria only has 10 grades, rather than 11 or 12, as required for matriculation. Also, supplementary hours held after the regular school hours to provide for additional work on the day's lesson and preparation for the following days, are rumored to be dropped in the context of educational reforms. Yet, teachers and school directors have emphasized how important this support time is for many of the students.

## Lack of Competency in the Majority Language by Roma Children

Language also emerges as a major barrier to educational success for Roma students. For example in Bulgaria, research findings indicate that the percentage of all Roma who speak Roma language at home is about 50%. According to one study, as few as 14% of Roma speak Bulgarian at home. Of the remaining 36%, the majority probably speaks the Turkish language (Tomova, 1995).

Though Roma may speak the majority language of the country in which they live, those that do, often speak an ethnic dialect that is generally considered "substandard" by educators, and this also presents a barrier in the educational process.

Although there are an increasing number of schools in the region that teach Roma in their native language, they still serve only a small fraction of the Roma children. Moreover, many Roma parents resist placing their children in such schools because they want their children to learn the majority language of the country.

The regular public schools do not see themselves as being responsible for helping Roma children overcome this language gap. Instead most Roma children are placed in "special" or "remedial" schools to address these deficiencies. Unfortunately, the quality of schooling that Roma children receive in these schools is much poorer than that provided in the regular schools. Roma children enrolled in special or remedial schools are not prepared to re-enter the regular schools – and, in fact, few ever have the opportunity to do so.

Those Roma children who remain in regular schools often face repeated academic failure and retention due to their initial language difficulties. These failures lead to their discouragement and their eventual withdrawal from school.

Despite the above, an increased emphasis on human rights doctrines in the region has, nevertheless, created some opportunities for improving the educational experiences of Roma children. One pattern that has emerged throughout the region has involved an increased reliance on education in the native language for Roma and other minority populations. This pattern has emerged in several of the countries that are included in our research project. In Bulgaria, legal changes in 1994 and 1999 have increased the availability – at least in theory – of native language instruction. In Macedonia, constitutional provisions guarantee students an education in their native language and a recognition of their native culture.

Despite these policy changes, most countries lack the capacity to deliver on the promises embodied in these policies. There are relatively few teachers available to teach using the Roma language. Instructional materials for teaching in these languages are also rare. Efforts have been made to increase the number of teachers with competency in the Roma language.

In Romania for example, training for non-Roma teachers to teach using the Roma language began in 1997. There are now more than 60 teachers who can teach using the Roma language. As a result, the number of Romanian children studying in the Roma language has increased from 150 in 1992 to 1717 in 1998. Nevertheless, this represents only a very small fraction of the Roma children in Romania.

## Lack of Academic Foundation When Roma Children Begin School

Those Roma students who are enrolled in public schools face significant barriers to academic success. Most Roma children begin their compulsory schooling already behind their peers, academically and socially. Prior to entering school, they have little social interaction with non-Roma. Thus, they lack the experiences to conduct such interaction successfully in a public school setting. Traditional Roma educational experiences in the home do little to prepare Roma children for the academic requirements of the public school. Taken together, these factors leave Roma children wholly unprepared to begin public school.

As noted earlier, relatively few Roma are enrolled in kindergarten – although that number is growing in some countries – due to economic factors and cultural traditions.

Moreover, many kindergartens replicate the problems with language, socialization, and academic experiences that arise during compulsory schooling. These kindergartens also do not see themselves as the venues for helping Roma children close these gaps.

## Prejudice Against Roma Children.

For most Roma children, public schools remain hostile environments. Prejudicial attitudes about the Roma remain prevalent among non-Roma adults and children throughout the region. The attitudes may be manifested through open verbal and physical abuse of Roma children by their peers and even by their teachers. Roma students may be ridiculed for their language difficulties, different customs, poor clothing, poor hygiene, and even different skin color. Obviously, such an oppressive environment would make learning by Roma children an extremely difficult endeavor.

However, prejudice against Roma children emerges in educational environments in other ways, such as segregation. The segregation of Roma students in the educational system is very often the result of a "ghettoization" of Roma in settlements and neighborhoods of cities and towns. Schools in these settlements are often considered "Roma" schools and have poorer conditions and quality than other schools.  In other cases, Roma pupils are segregated to the schools for mentally handicapped, so- called "special schools." Or, within normal schools, Roma pupils are placed in "special classes," or Roma children are placed to the back of the room and forgotten. These examples do not refer to the separation of the children justified by Romany language mother tongue instruction

In other cases, prejudice causes non-Roma to flee schools with increasing Roma student enrollments.

A study in Hungary found that 17.2% of 2,722 classes investigated were Roma ethnically "pure". Moreover, one-third of the "pure" Roma classes were in schools where Roma comprised less than half of the overall student enrollment (Torzsok and Kallai, 2000).

In addition to the sociological and psychological effects of this segregation, it also has a very practical effect on the quality of education available to Roma children. Research has demonstrated that resources and facilities allocated to such schools and classrooms are often of significantly lower quality. Not surprisingly, the quality of the educational curriculum is poorer and the nature of the educational standards is lower.

In Bulgaria, the general appearance of the Roma neighborhood school is an old, run-down building, often with barbed wire on the windows, broken windows, paint pealing off the walls, and classrooms with little decoration and facilities. Some of the schools have their toilets located in a small cement structure away from the main building, which can also be used by other members of the community. An estimated 70% of the total Roma population have attended or do attend these "local" schools. The Roma neighborhood schools are general schools, rather than profile-oriented, and it is not uncommon that these schools offer a limited curricula, coupled with a focus on vocational training in the latter years. In reality, this offer inhibits further continuation of the students' education, owing to the lower level of education received  (Tanaka, 2000).

## Poverty Among Roma Families

According the Elena and Cătălin Zamfir, Gypsies in Romania "are being overtaken by poverty more rapidly than is the rest of the population" (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1996). This statement may be true for all of the countries under investigation in this research study.

The extreme poverty suffered by most Roma has contributed to relatively low student enrollment patterns – particularly for the non-compulsory years of schooling. Poverty has a direct affect on Roma children's access to school. Although the governments may partially subsidize kindergarten classes, most still require a small tuition fee. As they have few monetary resources available to them, for many Roma even a small tuition fee is too large (Balabanova, 1999). In Bulgaria, for example, the tuition cost amounts to between 30% and 50% of the family's government assistance payments (Tanaka, 2000). A similar pattern exists with secondary and higher education. Here, too, tuition costs associated with enrollment serve as significant barriers.

In addition to tuition fees, there are other costs associated with schooling that increase the financial burden facing Roma families. These costs are associated with the purchase of schoolbooks and other educational materials, clothes, meals, and transportation. These "hidden" costs are associated with enrollment during the compulsory grades – even when education is ostensibly "free". Some of the countries do provide subsidies for some of these "hidden" costs, but these subsidies often are decreased in the higher grades. Moreover, the costs of schoolbooks and materials often increase in the higher grades.

In 1997 during the ERRC field mission to Romania, some data was collected regarding these hidden expenses. At that time, in order to be able to attend school and to function properly, a Romanian pupil needed the following materials per academic year: 25 notebooks (1500-4000 lei) [19], fountain pen (2000), pens (1500), colored crayons (22,000), books (10,000 which would be the very minimum)[20], book bag (38,000), sport clothes and shoes, plus any uniform which may be required in a school (250,000). This average has a total cost of between 45-50 USD. However, it must be kept in mind that the average Romanian monthly salary at that time was 350,000 Lei or approximately 41 USD per month. Schools supplies average more than one monthly salary for an average Romanian citizen. This amount would be astronomical for a Roma family living in poverty.

The majority of Roma do not have enough money to buy school supplies, not to mention proper clothing, especially in the cold winter months, to attend school. The conditions some children endure are extreme, and many become innovative in order to overcome these barriers. During the same ERRC field mission in 1997, one woman described why some Roma children are late to school:

> The school pupils come one hour later to school because they have to wait for their brothers to get back home in order to exchange their shoes from one to the other.[21]

For some children, getting to school is often impossible because they cannot afford the bus fare, or their parents do not have a car to bring them to school. For others, access may be a matter of having to walk to school, and in the process, getting dirty and not being properly outfitted for class. Fieldwork interviews done in Romania for the ERRC in 1997 documented such a situation:

There is a little village outside of Satu Mare called *Tăşnad* and in this village I know that the little children have to step through the mud to get to school in the wintertime. And once they are in school, the teacher doesn't allow them to stay if they are not properly dressed, washed, and if they have mud all over their shoes. So the child has to go home.[22]

Lack of information also is an obstacle to Roma communities living in extreme poverty. Roma community members who live on the margins of cities, in small villages, or even integrated into the city, are still separated from regular society. Often , parents do not know how to or where to go to enroll their children in classes. During an ERRC field mission to Romania in 1997, one concerned mother spoke about her daughter, whom she wanted to go to school:

"School is important for children to learn. I went to school but only to the third grade. Lili used to go to school when we lived in another village. But then we had to move here because we learned that we could make a living working on the dump. We had no opportunities to work in our old village. When we got here, there was no school for her to go to, so Lili stopped attending school."[23]

Another mother from the same community in Romania also spoke about the difficulties in sending children to school, especially when you do not know to whom you can turn for advice and help. For many Roma, they perceive the majority population as never having helped them in any way, but only having persecuted and harmed them. This give grounds for a deep lack of trust. In matters of children, this lack of trust may even be augmented. When this same mother moved to the *Pata Rât* community to find work, she found herself also not knowing where to send her child to school:

"I wanted to send my kids to school before but I didn't know where to send them. I had no idea what to do and I didn't know whom I could talk to. I heard about a school, a special school for children with slow mental abilities because my sister has a child there. If they went to a school like that they would have stayed there and slept there. But I didn't want to send my children because I didn't want to be separated from my children. So they didn't go to school."[24]

The situation is even graver when it appears as if the only option available, is to send her child to a special school for those with slow mental abilities, notwithstanding the fact that her child is a normal, mentally healthy ten-year-old.

Not only are the physical conditions that Roma children endure severe and impede access, but extreme poverty can also be psychologically and emotionally harmful, as well. Children coming from extremely poor conditions in Romania are rejected and teased by the majority children in the schools. In 1997 when the ERRC spoke to some teachers about the majority children's treatment of Roma children, they said, "The other children would not accept the Roma kids. They would tease them, beat them, and completely ostracize them."[25] Another Roma man confirmed this saying:

"The Gypsy children don't stay in school because they have no means. They are poor; they have no clothes, no shoes. When they return to school

they aren't the same as the other children who look at them and call them
a Gypsy."[26]

Finally, financial considerations in the family force Roma children to seek employment, as soon as possible. In order to make their contribution to the family's income, some Roma children leave school to find a job or attend irregularly, while they work. The prospects of immediate income are too important to Roma children and their parents to ignore in favor of the speculative benefits of further public schooling.

## Perspective and Attitudes of Roma Parents and Children Toward Public Schooling

Many educators report that Roma parents do not value schooling and education. In fact, it would be more accurate to conclude that many Roma parents do not value public schools and the education they offer their children. As a result, they may not enroll their children in the public schools and may not encourage their children to attend regularly. Some may even actively discourage their children from attending.

The attitudes of Roma parents toward the public schools reflect a number of influences. However, it does not generally reflect a lack of respect for learning. Traditionally, Roma culture has placed a great emphasis on learning. However, learning is seen as occurring within the family. In fact, this approach to learning may discourage some Roma parents from enrolling their children in kindergarten – to allow the children more time to learn at home within the family.

For some Roma parents, their attitude toward public schools is grounded in the traditional Roma distrust of all public institutions. For others, their attitude is a more practical reaction to the continued prejudice and racism directed at Roma children by their non-Roma classmates, teachers, and school administrators. As a result, public schools are seen as "anti-Roma" institutions, which ignore or suppress Roma traditions and cultures and abuse Roma children.

During fieldwork in Hungary for the ERRC in 1997, a young Roma teacher (who works in an alternative school for children declared 'problematic') reported that Roma often feel that to fulfil the school's expectations would require superhuman powers, all the more so since they are never acknowledged for anything that they have actually done well. Teachers only report about things that are missing or have gone wrong. Sooner or later Roma turn away from school, in spite of the fact that Roma children look forward to going to school just as much as other children.

The perspectives of the majority school and Roma parents on responsibility is simply different, "While majority schools are of the opinion that parents are supposed to send their children well prepared to school, Roma are more prone to think that it is the school that is supposed to prepare children according to its own needs" (Forray, 1997). Roma parents are perhaps more concerned with the safety of their children than with school equipment. Two Roma mothers said:

"If there's one tiny little thing that's missing from their school supplies,
very often they are simply sent home from school. The teachers do not
even care if the child got home safe from school or what happened to him.
They do not even see about them from the door. These are little children!

My children go back to school if they have what was missing at home. If they don't, they just stay home."[27]

Some Roma parents also see little of practical value for their children in a public education. Public schools are not seen as providing the skills, background, or experiences needed by Roma children to succeed economically and socially. Thus, public schools are not institutions that meet the learning needs of Roma children.

Roma children's attitudes towards school are also often negative. This attitude reflects a combination of factors, including the existence of prejudice which makes public school classrooms uncomfortable places, the cultural differences (and absence of their own culture) which contribute to the "alienness" of the classrooms to Roma children, the attitudes of their parents toward public schooling, and the perception by many Roma children (particularly as they get older) that public schooling holds few benefits or advantages for them in terms of their future employment or life opportunities.

## **Health Issues**

A lack of access to minimal health care also serves as a barrier to school enrollment and educational achievement for many Roma children. Lack in basic hygiene and necessary immunization can be seen as a health problem in public schools and can justify the exclusion of Roma children from school. In Romania for example, school directors assert that Roma children cannot be integrated into school because they would cause schools to fail health inspections (McDonald, 1999).

Research has suggested that the health status of any particular group is closely correlated with its socioeconomic status in society. Throughout the region, the Roma are the poorest of the poor. This suggests that the effects of poverty and the poor living conditions of most Roma families are also likely to affect the health of Roma children. Anecdotal evidence from teachers across the region, suggests that as a result of their poor health, Roma children are more likely to suffer from illnesses that can keep them out of school or that can affect their performance in school. Taken together, inadequate health care and poor health can serve as additional barriers to the educational attainment of Roma children.

# Characteristics of Selected
# Roma Education Programs

This section of the report provides a detailed profile of the seven Roma education projects which have served as the focus of our research project. This information is drawn from multiple sources; including descriptive documents and reports prepared by the projects or their sponsoring agencies, articles or reports prepared by third parties, interviews with project managers and staff, interviews with leaders or staff from the sponsoring agency or other collaborating organizations, and interviews with project participants. This information was synthesized to create profiles, which reflected both internal and external perspectives on each project model.

Each profile begins with a brief description of the key elements of the project, its target audience, and its budget. Specific descriptive information on each project is presented separately and organized around five topics: Project Goals; Description of Model; Staffing and Facilities; Budget and Other Resources; and Project Implementation. Each profile also includes a map, which indicates the location of sites operated by the project (for the projects in Macedonia, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia), communities with schools which participate in the project (for the projects in Bulgaria and Romania), and the geographic distribution of individual project participants (for the projects in the Czech Republic and Hungary). The discussion of the "project implementation" presents both key accomplishments and significant challenges of the project – including challenges, which reflect problems inherent in the structure of the model and those which resulted from specific implementation decisions of project leadership or staff.

This section closes with a summary of the characteristics of the seven projects. This summary includes two charts. The first indicates which of the barriers to Roma educational attainment (discussed in the previous section) are addressed by each project. The second lists the Roma student results anticipated both in the short-term and the longer-term for each project. These charts and the accompanying discussion in the summary, emphasize the distinctions between two types of Roma education projects: those that provide direct services to Roma students and those which provide direct services to school and school staff and only indirect assistance to Roma students. This discussion also stresses the significance of these distinctions for our research findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

# Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria)

*The **Intercultural Education Project** was initiated in 1995, and represented the Bulgarian component of the Roma Rights and Education Project (funded by PHARE). It involved: (1) the development and distribution of instructional materials on Roma history, culture, and traditions, (2) national training activities for school directors and teachers, to encourage and support the use of these instructional materials, to promote intercultural education in the classroom, (3) consultative meetings in the schools to support continued use of the instructional materials in the classroom, and (4) school-based outreach activities. It targeted interested school directors and teachers in both elementary and secondary public schools in Bulgaria. Project training and support activities generally ended in 1998. From 1995 to 1998, the project budget totaled 57,800 USD of cash expenditure. At its peak, the project was implemented by about 200 teachers in 35 schools in 23 towns across the country. Currently, project materials are actively used in 20 schools.*

**Project Goals.** The Intercultural Education Project sought to increase the use by teachers in Bulgarian elementary and secondary schools of accurate, culturally sensitive information on the history, culture, and traditions of the Roma people. This project also sought to increase the knowledge, sensitivity, appreciation, and understanding of non-Roma children and teachers towards Roma history and traditions.

The project was grounded on three assumptions. By increasing their knowledge of and exposure to accurate depictions of Roma culture and history, the project's designers believed that non-Roma educators and students in elementary and secondary schools would exhibit greater understanding and less prejudicial behavior towards Roma students. At the same time, the project's creators believed that the perspectives of Roma parents towards public schooling would be improved because Roma culture and history would have a legitimate and respected "place" in the school and its teaching activities. Finally, it was believed that these same factors would enhance the self-esteem and improve the attitudes of Roma children towards public schooling and increase their engagement in its formal educational activities.

Based on these three assumptions, the project sought to address three of the significant barriers to improved educational attainment by Roma children (as described in the previous section of this report):

- Prejudice against Roma children by non-Roma teachers and students

- Perspectives of Roma parents toward public schooling

- Attitudes of Roma students toward public schooling

By addressing these barriers, the project anticipated a series of measurable longer-term benefits for Roma children participating in classrooms and schools. Participating Roma students should demonstrate improved self-esteem, motivation, and classroom behavior. In addition, they should develop greater competence in the Bulgarian

language, while strengthening their connections to their Roma cultural traditions and language. Finally, Roma students should have improved classroom attendance, higher marks, and a higher rate of elementary and secondary school completion.

**Description of Model.** The Intercultural Education Project was developed and implemented by the Interethnic Initiative for Human Rights (IEI) Foundation. It represented the Bulgarian component of the Roma Rights and Education Project, an 18-month international initiative funded by PHARE. The IEI Foundation is a Bulgarian NGO, which promotes and advocates for the rights of minorities at local, national, and international levels, supports intercultural exchanges, and increases awareness of minority rights among Bulgarian institutions (including the public schools).

The first major component of the Intercultural Education Project involved the development and distribution to elementary and secondary schools of instructional materials related to the history, culture, and traditions of the Roma people in Bulgaria. Materials were developed over a period of 18 months by three teams of experts specializing in Roma folklore, literature, history, and music.

As part of this project, the teams developed eleven textbooks for use with students, including textbooks on:

- Roma stories and fairytales (four textbooks), Roma in Bulgarian Literature (one textbook), and Roma music (one textbook) for students in grades 1 to 4

- Roma History and Culture (one textbook), the Roma World and its creators (one literature textbook) and Roma music (one textbook) for students in grades 5 to 8

- Roma World and its Creators (one literature textbook) and Roma History and Culture (one textbook) for students in grades 9 to 11

These textbooks described the history of Roma settlement in Bulgaria, their persecution in Western Europe from the Fourteenth to the Nineteenth Century, the adaptation of Roma to Bulgarian society and their traditional crafts, customs and values. Tales, legends, songs and proverbs from Roma folklore were provided to supplement existing lessons on Bulgarian literature. The Roma literature demonstrated both differences and similarities between the two cultures The textbooks included well-known literary works devoted to the Roma and as well as authentic Roma poetry.

To accompany the textbooks, these teams developed five written guides (one on history, one on music, and three on literature) for use by teachers. The teacher guides provided the methodological ideas of the authors for using the new textbooks in class. To support the use of music in the classroom, the teams developed three sets of Roma music audiocassettes for use in the classrooms. Associated teaching aids presented Roma music as specific, national, and universal.

The second major component of the project involved a series of activities designed to prepare and support teachers in the classroom use of these materials. In accordance with the project design, the materials were to be piloted in three types of schools: "Roma" schools (those with predominantly Roma student populations), "mixed" schools (those with large populations of Roma and non-Roma student populations), and "elite" schools (with limited minority populations). These activities included six national training seminars, a regional training seminar, and two national skill-exchange

conferences, conducted for public elementary and secondary school teachers, school directors, regional inspectors of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, and experts from the Ministry.

In selecting schools and school staff to participate in these activities, project staff considered three factors: focus on human and minorities rights in the school; isolation of Roma students in the school; and existence of previous programs carried out by NGO's. In particular, project staff sought to ensure that materials were implemented in real and diverse school environments, so that the effect of the school environment on the intercultural process could be better understood.

Although the six training seminars focused on specific themes and target audiences, all sessions sought to:

- Educate participants about the contents of the instructional materials developed through this project.

- Prepare participants to use these new materials in classrooms and schools.

- Inform the participants about the purpose and value of intercultural education.

- Assist participants to better understand the nature of ethnic prejudice, to more effectively combat such prejudice and to better tolerate "otherness".

- Provide basic knowledge on human and minority rights.

- Present demonstration lessons and possible outreach activities.

The two skill- exchange conferences allowed participating teachers to present and discuss effective practices, problems, and strategies for overcoming these problems. These meetings also allowed the teachers to suggest directions for further development of intercultural education efforts.

The national training seminars and skill-exchange conferences were all conducted in hired conference facilities located in, or near Sofia and Kurdzhali. The seminars and the first conference were conducted over a period of twelve months (from mid-1997 to mid-1998). The second conference was conducted one year later.

The third component of the project involved consultation with participating teachers and schools on logistical and operational matters. Consultation was conducted by phone and in the IEI Foundation office by project staff. In addition, site visits were conducted by project staff to schools demonstrating effective and successful practices. Generally, project staff conducted two site visits to each identified school with each site visit taking three to four hours each. Site visits continued until September/October 1999. The project also organized two outside monitoring visits to each participating school. Each visit was carried out by two independent consultants in the period between February 1998 and March 1999. Through these monitoring visits, the consultants observed and reported on the implementation of project activities in the participating schools.

The fourth component of the project supported the development of school-based outreach activities, designed to disseminate intercultural education concepts to a

broader social environment. These activities were developed and implemented by the participating staff in each school. Activities often grew out of existing school initiatives. These activities took a variety of forms. This included competitions conducted between schools on different topics (in Vidin and Silistra), creation of "Dialogue Clubs" (in Vidin and Silistra), establishment of the Traveling Theatre (in Kurdjali), development of plays based on Roma stories (in Asenovgrad and Kurdjali), intercultural trips, student camps, organized visits to families from other ethnic groups, and television/radio broadcasts. Other IEI projects were also used as a source of funds to support these activities.

**Staffing and Facilities.** The project was jointly directed by Kalina Bozeva and Ilona Tomova, staff members of IEI Foundation. Both participated in the original design of the project together with representatives of Roma NGOs and Roma teachers and intellectuals. As Project Co-Directors, they were responsible for obtaining project funding, gaining institutional approval for project implementation, recruiting and supervising project staff, overseeing all project activities, and communicating with governmental agencies, NGOs, and public schools.

The project's instructional materials were prepared by a research and writing team, which included scholars, teachers, artists, and musicians, both Roma and non-Roma, who worked together in a spirit of intercultural tolerance. This team collected source materials and prepared both textbooks and teacher guides on Roma music, literature, folklore, and history. Draft materials were circulated among teachers and parents (including some Roma parents) for comments on the nature of the intercultural message and the teaching approaches. Remarks by teachers and parents were taken into account in preparing the final texts.

This research and writing team included several thematic research sub-groups, responsible for the development of instructional materials focused on specific subjects. These included:

- Literature sub-group involving a Roma researcher-teacher, a school director, a Roma PhD researcher, two Bulgarian researchers, and five methodologists.

- History sub-group involving three researchers, two consultants (a Roma teacher and a Roma education specialist), and a methodologist.

- Music sub-group involving both Roma and non-Roma musicians and researchers, who prepared teaching aids and selected musical pieces for the three audio-cassettes.

- Art sub-group involving a Roma and a Bulgarian artist, who prepared the illustrations for textbooks and teaching guides.

All project activities were organized by project staff and conducted by project staff and consultants who received contracts based on their specific expertise. The national seminars were organized by the Project Co-Directors supported by IEI Foundation staff, including the office secretary, executive secretary, cashier, and accountant. This organizing team was responsible for designing of training modules and recruiting trainers for each seminar. Training seminars were conducted by members of the appropriate thematic research sub-groups. Other trainers were recruited for specific seminars on the basis of their knowledge and expertise in subjects related to that

seminar. Consultation and site visits were conducted by project staff. Monitoring visits were conducted by two independent consultants.

**<u>Budget and Other Resources.</u>** Project activities (including material development, training seminars, consultative visits, monitoring activities, and public relations activities) occurred in the period between 1996 and 1998. The budget for all project activities over this time included 57,800 USD in cash expenditure. Cash expenditure included development and printing of the instructional materials, the training seminars, the consultation visits, monitoring , and public relations activities. In-kind contributions included time devoted to the project by seven IEI Foundation staff (the office secretary, executive secretary, accountant, cashier, and three journalists working on the Foundation's ***Ethno-reporter*** publication) and office space for project staff. All cash and in-kind contributions came from private sources, primarily from outside Bulgaria.

**<u>Project Implementation Activities.</u>** Project implementation began in 1995. Initial focus of the project was on the development of the instructional materials. Preliminary drafts of all the materials were developed by the research and writing team. These texts were tested in various schools (in Rakitovo and Kystendil, for example). Draft materials were discussed with teachers and parents in these schools. The draft texts were also discussed with representatives of the Roma communities in the localities where the materials were tested, including Roma women's organizations and Roma intellectuals. Final approval of the materials was provided by the Ministry of Education in 1996.

Once the materials were formally approved for use in the schools, the focus of the project shifted to training teachers in the use of the materials. The national training seminars were conducted from mid September 1997 to mid October 1997:

- The first seminar involved forty-five teachers in grades 1 to 4, from thirty primary schools and focused on Roma stories, fairy tales, and legends.

- The second seminar involved forty-seven teachers in grades 1 to 4 from thirty-three primary schools and focused on Roma history, culture, and music.

- The third seminar involved forty-six history teachers in grades 5 to 11 from thirty schools and focused on Roma history and culture.

- The fourth seminar involved forty-five literature teachers in grades 5 to 11 from thirty-two schools and focused on Roma folklore and poetry, as well as Roma in Bulgarian and World Literature.

- The fifth seminar involved forty-five literature teachers from thirty-two schools.

- The final seminar involved thirty-seven teachers in grades 1 to 8 from twenty-two schools and focused on teaching materials involving Roma music.

The regional seminar was conducted in the region of Kurdjali and focused on problems associated with intercultural education. It was attended by educational experts, teachers and school directors, and representatives of NGOs in that region.

The skill-exchange conferences were conducted in Bankia during June 1998 and again in June 1999. In addition to sharing knowledge, experiences, and strategies related to

project implementation, these conferences also provided suggestions for further development of the project model. Specifically, some project participants suggested the creation of additional, instructional materials with broader, intercultural contents. Roma culture, history and traditions would be presented along with comparable information on other ethnic minority groups in Bulgaria. These discussions served as the foundation for a new IEI Foundation (*Developing Intercultural Experience).* This new project represented both an expansion and a further development of the program model developed through the Intercultural Education Project.

The project was ultimately implemented in thirty-six public schools in twenty-four communities in Bulgaria including five schools with grades 1 to 4, 15 schools with grades 1 to 8, fifteen schools with grades 1 to 11 and one vocational school with grades 9 to 12. As noted earlier, it was implemented in schools with both ethnically mixed and ethnically homogeneous student populations. Project staff report that the project was most effectively implemented in schools with ethnically mixed student populations. This was confirmed by the site visits conducted by the research team to nine participating schools.

In selecting participating schools, project staff relied upon both government information and direct observation of the schools. The final group of institutional participants included schools that had already taken part in some form of teaching training on intercultural cooperation and other schools which had not participated in such initiatives. Some participating teachers were selected on the basis both of personal observations by project staff and recommendations of trainers and facilitators from informed NGO's. Others were selected at random to ensure the participation of a greater cross-section of the overall teacher population.

The project generally was not implemented in the "elite" schools in Bulgaria which enrolled very few ethnic minority students. According to interviews with project staff and other national observers of the project, staff in "elite" schools exhibited little interest in the project reporting that its topic was generally not "relevant" to their school situation, due to the relative absence of minority students in their schools.

At its height, the project involved about 4000 students and 200 teachers in 35 schools. However, project staff reported that use of project materials declined over time. They reported that project materials currently are used in only 20 of those 35 schools.

A similar pattern was apparent in the nine schools observed by the research team. Among those nine schools, only three continued to make active and extensive use of the program activities and its materials. However, another three schools demonstrated more limited, continued involvement with the program. In those schools, use was often limited by a lack of the materials, needed to implement the program in the classrooms. The three remaining schools were no longer using program activities or materials in the classroom.

During the site visits, the research team also identified 31 teachers who had participated in project-related training activities. Of those teachers, 28 still remained in the classroom (one had become an administrator and two others had retired) and 15 continued to make active use of the program activities and materials in the classroom.

At the same time, there were some indications that use of the project materials may have spread to other teachers and even other schools. Participating teachers were

encouraged and supported in presenting their experiences and work to colleagues in their own and other schools. Evidence of significant program expansion was observed in three of the participating schools visited by the research team. More limited expansion was observed in two other participating schools. At a conference conducted in July 1999, seventeen teachers from nine non-participating schools expressed an interest in being involved in the network of participating teachers. As a result, the training program was subsequently submitted to five Teacher (Re) Training Institutes in Shuman, Burgas, Varna, Sofia, and Stara Zagora.

Nevertheless, there was a clear decline in project use among the original group of participating teachers and schools. Project staff reported that one factor contributing to this decline in use was the limited print-run of the project materials. Only 4000 copies of the material were printed. When these copies had been distributed, the materials were not reprinted. Since some teachers were unable to obtain additional materials upon request, they discontinued participation in the project.

The amount of training and support may also have been too limited to lead to long-term changes in behavior among some teachers. Many educators require more extensive training experiences and on-site support to successfully implement innovative teaching methods or materials. This is particularly true where a sensitive subject, such as culture and prejudicial attitudes may be involved. Unfortunately, the private resources available to support this project were quite limited. Although they were sufficient to develop instructional materials and a teacher-training program and to instigate the use of teachers in a number of pilot schools, these resources could not support a long-term, more intensive training program. A greater commitment of resources would be required for such an effort. The IEI Foundation has sought to gain government support for such an effort, but thus far has been unsuccessful.

The attitude of some parents, also may have contributed to a decline in project use over time. Project staff reported that parental response to the project was quite mixed.

- Roma parents were generally supportive of the project's activities. Support was reported to be the strongest among the most educated Roma parents.

- Some Bulgarian parents were reported as having voiced initial concerns regarding the project's activities. However, project staff reported that public relations efforts designed to inform these parents of the value and benefits of this project, succeeded in reducing their opposition and even in building some support for the program among Bulgarian parents.

- Strong opposition was voiced by other non-Roma minority parents. These parents expressed concerns that the project represented "favored treatment" for Roma over other ethnic minority groups. Project staff reported that their public relations efforts had little success in reducing the opposition of these parents to project activities.

- Particularly strong opposition to the project was exhibited by parents of Roma ancestry who had adopted Turkish cultural traditions and language. These parents considered themselves to be "Turks" rather than "Roma" despite their ancestry. They perceived the project to be a "threat" and responded with vocal opposition. This opposition led one school and several teachers to withdraw from

the project, almost immediately. Project staff had very little success in muting their opposition.

Over time, the continuing opposition to the project by parents of other ethnic minority groups may have convinced some teachers and schools to stop using project materials. This was particularly likely, if active support was no longer provided by the project because the training seminars and consultative visits had ended.

One of the most important factors that may have contributed to a gradual decline in the use of the project was the attitude of the national government. National government agencies have not provided strong support or assistance to the scheme. The Ministry of Education has provided official approval of the instructional materials. However, it has not taken any steps to promote the use of instructional materials or participation in the training activities. It has also failed to print additional copies of the instructional materials, despite requests from schools and teachers.

In 1999, the Bulgarian government did adopt a special "Program for the Equal Participation of Roma in Bulgarian Society". One section of that program, entitled "Preservation of Roma Ethnic and Cultural Identity", established a policy for schools to provide knowledge on Roma history and culture through mainstream education. Although the government has not yet taken any actions to implement the Program as a whole or the school requirement in particular, these policies can serve as a foundation for further development of intercultural education in the schools.

**Figure 1. Project Sites for Bulgaria.**

**\*sites on all maps written in red**

# Roma Teaching Assistants Project (Czech Republic)

*The **Roma Teaching Assistants Project** was initiated in 1996 by Nová Škola, a Czech NGO. It includes (1) recruitment, certification, and training of Roma adults to serve as Roma teaching assistants (RTAS) in Czech schools, (2) assisting in the placement of certified RTAs in Czech elementary schools with large numbers of Roma children, and (3) financial support to selected RTAs in the form of salary supplements. During the project's first two years of operation, all components were conducted and funded by Nová Škola. Since 1998, some elements of the project model have been funded by the Czech Ministry of Education and handled by another NGO. However, Nová Škola has continued to fund activities related to all three project constituents. During the 1998-1999 school year, Nová Škola devoted 69,529 USD to project activities and the Czech government contributed no less than 70,875 USD, for the salaries of at least 20 RTAs. According to the Czech Ministry of Education, 217 RTAs are currently working in Czech elementary schools throughout the country.*

**Project Goals.** The Roma Teaching Assistants Project sought to provide Roma adults with the knowledge and skills to serve as teaching assistants within the Czech elementary schools. At the same time, it sought to place these trained individuals in appropriate positions in those Czech schools with relatively high proportions of Roma students. Finally, this project sought to convince the Czech Ministry of Education to formally recognize the position of "Roma Teaching Assistant" (RTA), certify a course of training to prepare RTAs, and pay the salaries of the RTAs.

By placing RTAs in Czech public schools, the project aimed to create a human "bridge" between the public school and the Roma community. When this project was conceived, there were only a handful of Roma educators in the Czech public school system. Thus, RTAs were needed to serve as a culturally familiar "point of contact" for Roma children and parents in the Czech public schools. By making the public schools more welcoming and less "alien", RTAs sought to reduce the negative perceptions of Roma parents and children toward the public schools.

At the same time, the project endeavored to build the capacity of the RTAs to provide direct academic assistance to Roma children to enhance their opportunity to succeed in school. By using RTAs in this way, Czech elementary schools sought to assist Roma children in overcoming two significant barriers to their own educational attainment: their lack of competency in the Czech language and their lack of a sufficient academic foundation when they began school.

Finally, the placement of RTAs in Czech elementary schools was intended to create an educational environment which was more hospitable towards and supportive of Roma children. RTAs were expected to emerge as positive examples in the school community for both Roma and non-Roma alike. They were also expected to serve as consistent advocates on behalf of Roma children with non-Roma teachers and administrators. In these ways, the project expected that the presence of educated Roma adults in respected positions in the public schools would help counter both the prejudicial attitudes toward

Roma children and the low educational expectations of Roma children held by non-Roma educators and students.

Positive outcomes from the project for Roma students would include regular classroom attendance, greater proficiency in the Czech language, improved classroom behavior, better marks in class, and a higher rate of elementary school completion. While the project anticipated specific measurable benefits for Roma children, it also anticipated that these benefits would be long-term rather than short-term in nature.

**Description of Model.** The Roma Teaching Assistant Project was originally developed and conducted by Nová Škola, o.p.s. (The New School Foundation). Nová Škola is a non-profit Czech NGO, which promotes human rights and focuses on minority issues. It places particular emphasis on the development of educational opportunities for the Roma minority in the Czech Republic and in the surrounding countries, including Slovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

The first component of the project model, involved the recruitment and training of Roma adults to serve as RTAs. To be eligible to serve as an RTA, a Roma individual was required to be at least 18 years of age and have completed their primary education. Originally, the Ministry of Education sought to require completion of a secondary school education for prospective RTAs. However, this provision was later dropped because it was recognized that very few Roma adults had completed secondary school. As a result, there would have been an inadequate number of prospective candidates for the position.

In addition to these two requirements, the individual was required to complete a basic course of training for the position. Basic preparation and certification for serving as an RTA was obtained through participation in the "Course of Pedagogical Minimum". This was an 80-hour course which involved: general pedagogy (15 hours); social pedagogy (15 hours); developmental psychology (8 hours); social psychology (8 hours); communication techniques (4 hours); fieldwork in classrooms and practical examples of the work of RTAs (14 hours); foundations of Romistics (10 hours**);** safety regulations for work in school (2 hours); and discussion about the work of RTAs (4 hours). The course was accredited by the Czech Ministry of Education.

More recently, a second and more advanced course of training was developed and conducted by Nová Škola: "Continuing Education of Roma Teaching Assistants". This is a 90-hour course, which takes place twice a month. It is designed for individuals who have completed the basic course and seek to gain additional pedagogical knowledge and skills. It includes a series of lessons on educational theory, pedagogy, psychology, Czech language, Roma language, and Roma studies. It provides training and practical experience in the use of the personal computer. Finally, it includes a series of collaborative working group discussions focusing on the responsibilities and functions of RTAs, theories of conflict resolution among students and adults, and practical aspects of classroom teaching. The course is conducted by a team of six lecturers and two team supervisors. The team has created a series of instructional materials for use by participants in the course.

In 2001, Nová Škola began providing a 72-hour "Course of Further Education for RTAs". The course included three seminars. Each seminar lasts for three days. The classes included four groups of 25 participants each drawn from four regions in the

country: Northern Bohemia; Central and Western Bohemia; Northern Moravia; and Southern Moravia. The course was sponsored by the Phare Programme of the European Union.

The second component of the project model involved the placement of RTAs in elementary schools with significant Roma student populations.[28] Placement activities involved facilitating communication between schools expressing interest in working with RTAs and potential candidates for the position of RTA. Although Nova Škola helped to match schools with assistants, schools were required to apply for permission from the School Office to employ the RTA. These requests were made exclusively by the schools.

The final component of the project model involves financial support for RTAs. From September 1997 to December 1999 Nová Škola paid 13 complete salaries and 11 partial salaries of RTAs. The average salary paid was approximately 250 USD per month from which approximately 75 to 100 USD were deducted for social security, health care and taxes.

Since 1998, the salaries of RTAs have been funded by the Ministry of Education. However, the salaries paid by the Czech Ministry were relatively low: approximately one-third to one-half of the monthly salary of the average Czech. As a result from September 1999 to August 2000, the project supplemented the salaries of nine RTAs nationwide. The basic monthly salary of RTAs was about 100 USD to 150 USD. The supplement provided by the project was about 45 USD. From September 2000 to August 2001, the project supplemented the study costs of those enrolled in the program "Continuing Education of Roma Teaching Assistants".

**Staffing and Facilities.** Within Nová Škola, the Roma Teaching Assistant Project was overseen by a full-time director, Iveta Pape, who has served in this position since the summer of 2000. Her predecessor in this role was Helena Jiřincová, who had served in this role since the beginning of the project. In addition to overseeing the training activities, the program director provided placement assistance to RTAs.

During 1997 and 1998, the Course of Pedagogical Minimum was funded and conducted by Nová Škola. During that period of time, the course was conducted by a team of pedagogic experts, teachers and psychologists. The first course, held in two parts in April and October 1997, trained and accredited 18 RTAs. The second course, also held in two parts in April and October 1998, trained and accredited 35 Czech and 12 foreign RTAs.

Since 1998, this Course has been funded by the Czech Ministry of Education. In 1999 the contract for conducting this course was awarded by the Ministry to Humanitas Profes, a different Czech NGO. The Humanitas Profes course was conducted by a team of pedagogical specialists, teachers, and psychologists. The team also included Roma lecturers. This course was conducted in Chumotov, Northern Bohemia.

During the last two years, Nová Škola has conducted the advanced training course for RTAs ("Continuing Education of Roma Teaching Assistants"). This course is conducted by a team of six lecturers and two RTA team supervisors. This course is conducted in a classroom at the Evangelicka akademie in Prague.

**Budget and Other Resources.** During 1997 and 1998, Nová Škola funded all three components of the project budget. However, the training component included only the basic training course ("Course of Pedagogical Minimum"). Cash expenditure for the project during the 1997–98 school year totaled 55817 USD.

During the 1998–99 school year, cash expenditure by Nová Škola for this project included 69529 USD. About one-third of the budget funded staff salaries (including the Program Director and Nová Škola administrative staff). Another one-third supported personnel contracts (including lecturers for the course, translation services, accountant services, and salary supplements for six RTAs). The remaining third of the budget funded all other expenses (including equipment, materials, supplies, office and classroom rental, telephone, and travel). No funding was provided by the Czech Ministry of Education that year.

During the 1999-2000 school year, cash expenditure by Nová Škola for the project totaled 47743 USD. This included salary supplements of 6110 USD for nine RTAs and complete salaries for two RTAs. Almost half of the budget was accounted by personnel and overhead costs. Another 41% covered direct program costs. The remainder of the budget (13%) covered the salary supplements for the RTAs.

Beginning in the 1998--99 school year, elements of the project were also funded by the Czech Ministry of Education. According to ***Decree of Government of the Czech Republic*** no. 686 (dated 29 October 1997), the Czech Ministry was directed to provide funds for the salaries for at least 20 RTAs during that school year. This amount would have totaled no less than 70,875 USD.

During the 1999-2000 school year, the Ministry funded the basic training course for RTAs and provided basic salaries of varying amounts to all RTAs nationwide. The exact salary for each RTA was dependent upon the official education completed by the individual. According to the Economic Department of the Ministry of Education, cash expenditures salaries of newly placed RTAs totaled approximately 363,636 USD during that school year. The Ministry also estimated that approximately 217 RTAs were placed in Czech elementary schools. However, the exact number of RTAs supported by the Ministry could not be provided at this time.

**Project Implementation.** The Roma Teaching Assistant Project was formally started by Nová Škola during the 1996 - 97 school year. However, the first RTA in the Czech Republic was employed in Ostrava at the Přemysl Pitter School beginning in 1993. Key developers of this project included Helena Blabánová, Laura Laubeova, and Lada Vikova.

During 1997 and 1998, Nová Škola conducted the basic training course for RTAs. In 1997, a total of 18 RTAs were trained and certified through the basic course. During the following year, a total of 35 Czech and 12 foreign (Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Slovakian) RTAs were trained and certified through the basic course by Nová Škola.

Since 1999, the basic training course for RTAs has been conducted by Humanitas Profes, rather than Nová Škola, under a contract with the Czech Ministry of Education. A total of 45 RTAs were trained and certified through two 10-day courses conducted by Humaitas Profes during April and October 1999. An additional 63 RTAs were trained in courses conducted during 2000. Overall, the Ministry estimated that about 170 RTAs

were working in Czech schools at the end of the last school year and that 217 RTAs were placed this year.

Over the last two years, Nová Škola has offered its advanced training course for RTAs. 20 RTAs enrolled for this course last year and 15 successfully completed the course. This year, another twenty-five RTAs are participating in the advanced course.

In 1998, the Czech Ministry of Education formally approved the creation of RTA positions in Czech elementary schools, agreed to certify and fund the basic training course, and agreed to support the salaries of RTA positions. These policy changes provided significant support to the project and reflected significant achievements by Nová Škola in ensuring the long-term continuation of this project.

In reviewing the implementation of this project, our research identified several important issues that have significantly influenced the operation of the project in the school. Some of these issues highlight potential problems related to project implementation in specific schools. Other issues demonstrate that the reality of project implementation in the school differs somewhat from the model anticipated by the project's original designers.

This analysis of project implementation was informed primarily by site visits conducted by the research team to 12 Czech schools currently or formerly participating in this project and by interviews conducted with school directors, deputy directors, teachers, and RTAs in those schools. Over a three-month period (from December 2000 to February 2001), the research team conducted interviews with 7 school directors, 2 deputy directors, 9 teachers, and 18 RTAs. This information was complemented by interviews conducted by the research team with project staff, representatives of the Ministry of Education, and other organizational representatives with knowledge of the project.

A particularly significant set of issues raised by both RTAs and school administrators related to the salaries paid to the RTAs under the salary scale established by the Czech Ministry. As noted earlier, the monthly salary was only one-third to one-half that of the average Czech. As part of the project, Nová Škola sought to supplement the salaries by providing additional payments to some RTAs. However, Nová Škola had sufficient resources to assist only a relative small number of RTAs. Moreover, resources available to provide such assistance appeared to decline over the last year. Both school directors and RTAs reported that such a decline resulted in severe hardships for the RTAs who had formerly received such assistance.

The school directors were particularly vocal regarding the problems caused by the inadequate salaries. Five of the nine interviews cited the RTA salaries as a serious problem. School directors, teachers, and RTAs all cited specific examples of RTAs who were forced to leave their positions after only a short period of time due to inadequate income. One RTA noted that the amount received made it "difficult to support a family".

One apparent result of this situation was that a majority of the RTAs interviewed by the research team (11 of 18) were young and single. One recently hired RTA reported that she had learned about the job through her father, who had briefly served as an RTA. Despite enjoying the work, he couldn't afford to remain in the position. Even several of the younger RTAs saw the position in only transitory terms – while they sought more education and work experience to find a higher-paying job.

A second result of the salary issue was reflected in the level of experience reported by the RTAs interviewed by the research team. Overall, half of the RTAs (9 of 18) included in the interviews had been hired in the last two school years and 5 of them had been hired in the last year. This recruitment was not a reflection of the project's continuing growth – at least 5 of these individuals reported being hired to replace a previous RTA and three of them specifically cited low salaries as one reason for their predecessors' departure.

Both teachers and school administrators described the impact of turnover on this position. Such high turnover disrupted the relationships RTAs needed to develop with teachers, students, and parents. Frequent turnover in position also limited the level of knowledge and experience that RTAs were able to develop "on the job". This also placed a greater burden on school administrators and teachers to repeatedly provide orientation and informal training to new RTAs. Some directors and teachers reported that this situation served as a disincentive to the placement of RTAs in the school or the classroom.

A second set of issues related to the training of the RTAs. Although all RTAs were required to complete the basic training course ("Course of Pedagogical Minimum"), 2 of the 18 RTAs interviewed reported that they had received no training and specifically stated that they had not attended the basic training course. Moreover, those RTAs who had attended the basic training course raised some questions about its quality and value. Only one-third of the participating RTAs gave the course a positive assessment. Another third gave it a mixed assessment, while the other third gave it a negative assessment. Several RTAs noted that the course provided very little practical guidance on working in the schools, working with teachers, carrying out the role of RTAs, or dealing with problems faced by Roma children.

Several school directors, teachers, and RTAs emphasized the need for providing additional and regular training to RTAs, if they were to effectively carry out their responsibilities. Three of the RTAs interviewed reported participating in the advanced training courses offered by Nová Škola and all were positive in their assessment of that course. Those three or four other RTAs, also reported attending other general training seminars on teaching or on Roma-related issues. Again, all were very positive about those training experiences. However, the other 11 RTAs (61% of those interviewed) did not report participating in any additional training activities.

Closely related to the issue of training for RTAs, is the issue of training for the teachers working with the RTAs. None of the school directors or teachers interviewed by the research team, received or arranged for any training for the teachers working with the RTAs. In fact, they did not report any preparation of any type regarding the use of RTAs in the classroom. As a result, several RTAs and teachers reported considerable problems which resulted when RTAs first entered the classroom. Some teachers frankly admitted that they had no idea what role that RTAs were to play in their classroom. Even teachers, who entered a school where RTAs were already placed, reported having only limited guidance on their classroom use. Such a lack of training appears to have resulted in unnecessary confusion within the classroom and unnecessary tension between teachers and RTAs. More importantly, it resulted in a wasted resource at least for a portion of the school year. In most cases, these problems were not fatal to the project. School directors, teachers, and RTAs were able to develop substantive roles for

RTAs in the school. However in at least two of the school examined, these problems resulted in continuing limitations to the role of the RTA in the school and classroom.

A third set of issues related to the roles and responsibilities of the RTA position. According to instructions developed by the Czech Ministry of Education (No. 14170/98-22 from March 3, 1998), RTAs were expected to be involved in both classroom (pedagogic) activities and community (social) activities with the goal of "opening" the school to both Roma children and their parents. RTA responsibilities were expected to balance classroom assistance to teachers, direct work with children, helping on out-of-school and out-of-classroom activities, and cooperating with Roma parents and the community. In addition, RTAs were expected to devote time to improving their own knowledge and skills as educators. However, the specific working plan for each RTA was to be developed by the school director based on the RTAs individual capabilities and educational level.

In fact, interviews with the school directors, teachers, and RTAs demonstrated that the roles of the RTAs were highly variable across different schools and even within each participating school. While most RTAs (16 of 18 interviewed) were used in the classroom with students around learning, support, or disciplinary activities, their specific assignments were quite different:

- Three were assigned exclusively to preparatory classes (classes for students, usually Roma students, not yet ready to enter first grade)

- Five were assigned to lower grade (1 to 5) classes

- Four were assigned to both preparatory and lower grade classes

- Two were assigned to upper grade (6 to 12) classes

- One was assigned to both lower and upper grade classes

- One was assigned to preparatory, lower, and upper grade classes

In only one school were the RTAs allowed to work with the older students in the upper grades on educational issues. In most schools, directors, teachers, and even RTAs themselves, claimed that the RTAs lacked the training and knowledge to contribute to the pedagogy in these grades. Those RTAs who worked in the upper grades in these other schools generally focused on disciplinary issues or music and art activities.

The roles and responsibilities of the RTAs in the classroom were somewhat less varied. Most RTAs (13 of 18 from all 11 schools examined) worked with children individually in the classroom – either explaining the lesson, translating the lesson from the Czech to the Romany language, or providing tutoring around specific tasks or activities. Generally, RTAs were assigned to work with those students who were considered "weaker" or struggling in their lessons. This was specifically cited in 6 of the 11 schools. However, it was more likely to be cited by school directors and teachers, rather than RTAs. It appears from their comments that RTAs were either unaware of the general perception of the child as "struggling" or saw such distinctions as being unnecessary or even unproductive.

Five RTAs (in two of the schools) were actually allowed to conduct lessons in the classrooms, although only in the lower grades. Four other RTAs (in three other schools) reported that they actually served as substitute teachers (in the lower grades) when the classroom teacher was absent. Some concerns were expressed by some school directors regarding this application of the RTAs. They claimed that this use led to classroom problems. They argued that this reflected the poor economic situation of the Czech school system where RTAs were employed as a "supplemental" work force to carry out tasks for which they were not properly prepared.

The interaction between teachers and RTAs was quite varied. Six of the RTAs included in our interviews report working, almost exclusively, with a single teacher. Four others report spending most of their time with two teachers and classes. However, the other six report working with multiple teachers and multiple classes. Two of the four schools with multiple RTAs included in our interviews, had some RTAs working with multiple classes and others working with a single class. The third school had each RTA assigned to a specific class. The fourth school had each RTA assigned to multiple classes and teachers. Moreover, the use of multiple assignments generally did not seem to damage the relationship between teachers and RTAs. However, one teacher did note that she was more comfortable and productive when working with a single RTA rather than with multiple RTAs.

There was some ambiguity regarding the interaction of RTAs with parents and the community. School directors and teachers in 9 of the 11 participating schools included in the interviews reported that RTAs were actively involved in family visits – often to address truancy and disciplinary issues among Roma students. However only 4 of the 18 RTAs discussed this role. This suggests a somewhat divergent perspective between school staff and RTAs regarding their interaction with the community.

At the same time, a few (5 of 18) reported involvement in providing "social -work"-type assistance to Roma families in the community. Only two of the RTAs spent a substantial amount of time on this work, however. The other three saw this work as an adjunct to their classroom activities. This role was acknowledged and emphasized by the school directors and/or teachers in these schools.

Taken together, the results of our interviews suggest that the place of the RTA in the school is often complex and varied. Some RTAs function as generalists – providing assistance wherever they are needed – while other are specialists focusing their attention on one classroom, teacher, or set of students. Most focus their time on learning activities, but many also serve key roles in maintaining discipline and improved student behavior. Some balance their time between the classroom and the community and a couple focuses primarily on the community.

**Figure 2. Project Sites for the Czech Republic.**

**(Some sites are not included, as data was unavailable)**

# Roma Mentored Scholarship Project (Hungary)

> The **Roma Mentored Scholarship Project** included (1) monthly financial payments to low-income Roma secondary school students to support their education, (2) paid mentors who provide tutoring assistance to scholarship recipients, as well as assistance with personal and school-related problems, and (3) a ten-day summer camp for scholarship recipients and their mentors. It has operated using the current model since the 1997-98 school year. A total of 301 mentored scholarships were awarded to Roma secondary school students throughout Hungary during the 1999-2000 school year. This project was developed, operated, and funded entirely by the Soros Foundation Hungary. Its annual budget for the 1999-2000 school year was 226,514 USD. This project was expected to be phased out at the end of the 2000-01 school year.

**Project Goals.** The Roma Mentored Scholarship Project sought to provide financial assistance to Roma secondary school students, to encourage and enable them to remain in school. At the same time, the project sought to provide Roma students with direct assistance to address their academic learning needs, as well as their personal and school-related problems.

By providing financial assistance directly to Roma secondary school students, the project sought to address barriers to Roma educational attainment related to poverty. As in most Central and Eastern European countries, secondary school enrollment in Hungary is not part of the compulsory education system. Expenses for transportation, books, clothes, and other school-related items made it difficult for Roma students from low-income families to afford attending secondary school. The scholarship payments sought to make these expenses more affordable.

Even aside from the expenses associated with secondary school, many Roma students attending secondary school needed to make money to survive or to help their families survive. However to make enough money, they could be forced to spend time away from their studies. For students who already faced multiple challenges to school success, having less time to study could guarantee their ultimate failure in secondary school. Again, the availability of scholarship funds could help reduce these financial pressures and enable Roma students to devote more time to their studies.

As Roma parents and other adults often lacked schooling, they were not in a good position to assist their children to understand and successfully overcome the novel challenges associated with secondary schools. This was not because Roma parents lacked the interest or commitment to their children, but because they lacked the knowledge and experiences to draw upon. By enabling students to identify and work directly with a mentor, the project provided Roma secondary school students the direct assistance they needed to overcome academic challenges, school-related problems, and personal issues, which could affect and ultimately undermine their opportunity to succeed in school. This also improved their attitudes towards public school.

The project anticipated that immediate benefits would result for participating Roma students. These would include greater motivation by Roma students to learn, greater

attachment to public schooling, and improved self-confidence and self-esteem. It would also result in regular school attendance and better marks. Finally, it would result in higher enrollment of Roma students in Hungarian secondary schools, higher rates of secondary school completion by Roma students, and higher enrollment of Roma students in university.

**Description of Model.** The Roma Mentored Scholarship Project was one of several projects conducted by the Soros Foundation Hungary (SFH), which provided assistance to Roma children and their families. SFH was an autonomous non-profit organization dedicated to promoting an open society in Hungary, supporting democratic and liberal values, and promoting equality of opportunity. SFH was part of a network of national foundations founded by George Soros, located primarily in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The first component of the project involved scholarship payments to financially disadvantaged Roma students. Any Roma high school student with a mark point average above 3.5 was eligible to apply. Students were able to apply more than once, and potentially could receive a scholarship for all four years of secondary school.

Interested Roma students were required to submit a written application in order to be selected as a mentored scholarship recipient. In addition to background and family income information, the application asked the student to identify a potential mentor, identify objectives for the student's work with the mentor, and develop a plan for working with the mentor. The student and mentor were required to apply together. Students could choose to apply with a different mentor each year. Applications were to be submitted to SFH by July 15, so that they could be considered for the academic year beginning in September.

Scholarship payments of 5000 HUF (about 18 USD at the current exchange rate) were made to students on a monthly basis for the entire school year. Payments began in September and continued through until the end of June. Continued receipt of the monthly payments was conditioned on regular school attendance by students, adequate school marks, and submission of written mid-term reports by the student and the mentor.

The second component of the project involved direct assistance being provided to Roma students who were recipients of the mentored scholarships. This assistance was provided by a mentor selected by the student prior to submitting the scholarship application. The mentor was a teacher whom the student trusted and with whom the student wanted to work during the year. The mentor was required to be a teacher and could mentor up to five students at one time. The mentor did not necessarily need to be from the same school, or be the student's actual teacher. The mentor was required to submit a written application along with the student's scholarship application. Like the student's application, the mentor's application asked about objectives for the mentoring experience and plans for providing the mentorship assistance. It also asked the mentor to list all proposed mentoring relationships.

Generally, mentors assisted students with three things: academic studies, school-related problems, and personal problems. Thus, the adult served in what is traditionally considered a "tutoring" function, as well as a "mentoring" relationship with the student. The project did not impose any requirements regarding how often mentors and

students met, where they met, or the purposes for their meeting. Rather, mentors and students were expected to meet in accordance with the plans submitted in the application. Mentors and students were required to submit mid-term written reports on their experiences to the project. Mentors, like students, received a monthly payment. The mentor payment amounted to 4000 HUF (about 14 USD) each month. Continued receipt of the payments by both the student and the mentor was dependent upon regular school attendance by the student, adequate school marks, and completion of the written reports by both the student and the mentor.

The third component of the project, involved voluntary summer camps for Roma students who received the mentored scholarships. These students were invited to attend the summer camp. However, attendance was not mandatory. The camps were conducted over a ten-day period after the school year during which the students had actually received their scholarship payments. During the camp, students participated in activities organized around several different themes. In 1997, for example, the themes included environmental protection, literature/ film, human rights, and communication.

During the first three days of the 1997 camp, the adult mentors were also invited to participate. In addition to spending time with their student(s), the mentors also participated in training activities to help them better understand how to adapt their pedagogical practices to address students' academic needs and how to provide appropriate support to students, in relation to personal or school-related problems.

The project also conducted several activities for the mentors themselves. The Soros Foundation organized two conferences, one in 1996, when the program was launched, and one in 1998. Each conference allowed mentors to share their experiences. In 1998, mentors were particularly asked to present the methodologies used with students. Another activity involved an essay-writing competition for mentors. In this competition, mentors were asked to write about the methodologies they used with their students. Mentors received a money award and the project published the best essays. Two first prize awards amounting to 87,500 HUF (approximately 300 USD) were given, two second- prize awards were given for the amount of 50,000 HUF (approximately 172 USD) and four third- prize awards for the amount of 25,000 HUF (approximately 86 USD) were presented. In addition to the prize-winning essays, seven other essays also were published.

**Staffing and Facilities.** This project was directed by the SFH Project Manager for Roma educational programs (Katalin Héjj). In addition to directing this project, this Project Manager also directs seven other educational programs. Within the Roma Mentored Scholarship Project, the Project Manager is responsible for disseminating information on the project nationwide, coordinating the selection of the mentored scholarship recipients, organizing the summer camp, ensuring timely distribution of the monthly payments to students and mentors, and reviewing written reports submitted by the students and their mentors.

A team of three to five individuals, called the Educational Expert Committee, work with the Project Manager to select students as recipients of mentored scholarships. These are all local educational experts selected by the Board of the SFH.

The project only conducts one set of centralized activities each year: the summer camps. The camps have been conducted at different sites each year. In 1997, the camps were

conducted in Balatonalmádi and Pilisszántó. In 1998, the camps were conducted in Balatonlelle and Seregélyes. In 1999, the camps were conducted in Balatongyörök. These sites all had access to both sports facilities and appropriate technology (such as computers and VCRs). The camps were staffed by the Project Manager, Katalin Héjj, and a group of teachers and Roma activists who served as group leaders.

**Budget and Other Resources.** The annual budget for this project includes several items: monthly scholarship payments to students and their mentors; cost of the summer camp; cost of conferences; salary of the Project Manager for Roma educational programs; monetary awards given to mentors for the essay contest; and related administrative costs. During the last three years, the total budget for this project (including the summer camps) was 261,041 USD in 1997-98, 224,898 USD in 1998-99, and 226,514 USD in 1999-2000. This included about 82% for monthly scholarship payments and about 15% for the summer camps. All project-related costs were provided by SFH.

**Project Implementation.** The scholarship program for low-income Roma students was begun by SFH fifteen years ago. However, conversation with scholarship recipients, suggested that Roma secondary school students continued to face significant problems unrelated to their financial needs. As a result, SFH added the mentoring component to the project during the 1996-97 school year. During the summer of 1997, SFH instituted the third project component: the summer camps. At that point, all elements of the project model were fully operational.

During the 1997-98 school year (the first year that all elements of the project were fully operational), 471 Roma secondary school students received mentored scholarships under the project. During the next school year (1998-99), 472 Roma students received scholarships. This represented 57% of the total applicants. During the last school year (1999-2000), the number of mentored scholarship recipients declined to 301. However, the proportion of successful applicants increased slightly: to 60%.

The decline in total scholarship awarded to Roma secondary school students was not accidental. Rather, it was part of an ongoing effort by SFH to phase out this scholarship project and engage the Hungarian government in funding Roma secondary school scholarships instead. While SFH has succeeded in increasing the number of scholarships awarded by the Hungarian government to Roma secondary school students, it has not succeeded in getting the government to support the mentorship component of the project. Thus, the absolute number of mentored scholarships awarded to Roma secondary school students in Hungary has declined as a result of the SFH policy. As part of its phase-out plan for this project, SFH anticipated that the last scholarships would be awarded during the current (2000-01) school year.

**Figure 3: Roma Pupil Scholarship Recipients**

**Number and percentage of total recipients per Region 1996-1998**

# Program for Educational Support of Roma Children and Youth from Shuto Orizari Community (Macedonia)

> *The **Program for Educational Support** was a center-based initiative which provided (1) an array of twelve (12) age-appropriate educational and other services to Roma students of pre-, elementary, and secondary school age and (2) training and support to Roma parents. Services were provided to 385 Roma children and their families in two centers located in Shuto Orizari, a predominantly Roma neighborhood in Skopje. It was started as a three-year pilot project in October 1998 by Nadez (Hope), a Macedonian NGO restructured for this purpose. Total budget for the project over this three-year period, was 611,000 USD. However, the total expenditures were somewhat less than this amount.*

**Project Goals.** The Program for Educational Support sought to provide targeted age-appropriate education, health care, and other support services to individual Roma students in elementary and secondary school, as well as those of preschool-age. This project also aimed to provide targeted educational assistance and to arrange for humanitarian assistance to Roma parents to enable them to actively support and advance their children's schooling opportunities. This project specifically targeted its assistance on the Roma residents of Shuto Orizari, a municipality of Skopje with mainly Roma residents.

The project provided services, that were specifically designed to help Roma children overcome some of the barriers which they were likely to face in the public schools. For example, the project provided assistance to preschool-age students to develop greater competency in the Macedonian language. This was intended to enable Roma students to function more effectively in public elementary school classrooms. Similarly, the project provided academic and homework assistance to Roma students throughout elementary school. This was designed to enable them to overcome academic deficiencies and help them avoid falling behind their classmates. The project also conducted activities that emphasized good health and personal hygiene, with Roma students and their parents. This aimed to address health issues, that could serve as barriers to the enrollment of Roma students in school and to their regular attendance.

In addition to addressing these three barriers to greater educational attainment by Roma students, the project also sought to change the attitude of Roma students toward public schooling in several ways. Initially, the project exposed young Roma children to the structure and expectations of public school classrooms. This helped make the entry into public school less of an alienating experience for Roma children. Once they entered school, the project afforded Roma students a safe and supportive after school learning environment that provided them with assistance to succeed in school. Finally, the project supplied both elementary and secondary school students with enrichment opportunities (like computer use, music, dance, and debate) designed to make learning more enjoyable. By providing initial preparation and ongoing support to Roma children, the project hoped to make schooling more attractive, engaging, and appropriate for these students.

Through its parent activities, the project also attempted to improve the attitudes of Roma parents towards public schooling. Some activities were designed to help Roma

parents understand the value and importance of public schooling for their children's futures. Others built the capacity of Roma parents to communicate effectively with school directors and teachers.

Finally, the project provided direct financial assistance to a small number of Roma secondary school students to defray the expenses associated with attending secondary school. This was an explicit attempt to overcome the financial barriers that prevented many low-income Roma students from attending secondary school in Macedonia.

The project anticipated that measurable educational benefits would result for Roma students, both in the short-term and the long-term. Roma students should exhibit greater self-confidence and a higher motivation to learn. There should be increased enrollment in and completion of elementary and secondary schools by Roma students. In addition, Roma students ought to have regular school attendance, higher marks, and improved school behavior. Finally, Roma students should develop greater competence in the Macedonian language, while maintaining connections to their Roma cultural traditions and language. Moreover, these results could be expected to increase over time because the benefits of each separate service would be compounded. Thus Roma students who participated in both preschool and elementary school activities should demonstrate greater gains over time, than Roma children who only participated in elementary school activities.

**Description of Model.** The Program for Educational Support began originally in 1997 under the leadership of a group of faculty professors and social workers operating under a Macedonian NGO, Nadez (Hope). This project and its sponsoring organization were restructured and re-initiated as a pilot project in 1998 with funding from OSI-New York (under the New Initiatives Fund).

All services provided by the project to Roma students and their parents were conducted at two community-based centers in Shuto Orizari (the original center and a new center established in September 2000). Project staff made an active effort to recruit participants. Social workers went into the community to identify preschool-aged children and school-age children who were not enrolled in school. Project staff also worked with children who were attending the center to find other children (including the siblings of participating children) in order to encourage them to attend as well. Finally, project staff worked with teachers in the two local elementary schools to identify other Roma children who could benefit from the center's program. Once children were located, project staff met with parents to explain the program services available and to ask that students be allowed to participate in the programs.

The original Nadez center offered one program for Roma children of preschool age (5 or 6). That program focused on developing the competency of these children in the Macedonian language. In addition, the program emphasized personal hygiene for students.

This program was conducted for two hours each day throughout the school year. Children were expected to attend regularly. Children were organized into four classes, with about 25 children in each group. An additional session was conducted during the summer. Students for this session were recruited beginning in mid-May. The program was conducted from June 15 to September 1. These classes were also conducted for two hours each day.

This program involved one of the pedagogues, one of the social workers, and a volunteer assistant. This program was not certified as an approved preschool course by the Macedonian government. However, the project was seeking to obtain such approval from the appropriate government agency.

The original Nadez center offered three programs specifically for Roma children in elementary school (grades 1 to 8). All were conducted after students completed the regular school day and came to the center from their elementary school.

- The first was a homework program. It provided an appropriate location for students to complete their homework. If needed, it could also provide students assistance with their lessons, including assistance in writing and reading in Macedonian language, mathematics, drawing, and oral presentation. The program was available to interested students six days each week, both before and after school, throughout the school year. The program operated using a "drop-in" concept. Thus, students were neither required to enroll for the program, nor to stay for a specified amount of time. Rather, they attended as often as they needed and for as long as they needed assistance. However, project staff did keep records of those students who were regular attendees. This included monitoring their school marks, discipline, and attendance. This program was overseen and conducted by one of the pedagogues.

- The second was a program for basic knowledge. It helped Roma students build basic competency in the Macedonia language. It also built these students' understanding in mathematics and science. It primarily targeted Roma students in the upper grades of elementary school who did not have the opportunity to participate in center activities since preschool or first grade. Classes were conducted five days each week, for two hours each day throughout the school year. Each class of 35 students was required to enroll for this program and to attend regularly. Some students who were struggling with their studies were referred from the homework program. This program was overseen and conducted by one of the pedagogues.

- The third was an English Language program. It provided lessons to develop student competency in the English language. This program was conducted for two days each week, for one hour each day throughout the school year. Students were required to enroll for this program and to attend regularly. This program was conducted by a Peace Corps volunteer. The project also awarded a small number of scholarships to allow children to learn the English language at a program conducted by the Soros International House.

The original Nadez center offered one program for Roma students in the upper grades of elementary school (grades 4 to 6). This program focused on Roma language, customs, and culture and allowed students to explore oral history, traditions, myths, and stories. The program was conducted in a three-hour session, once a month, throughout the school year. Students were not required to enroll in the program. Attendance was open to any interested student. This program was organized by one of the social workers who recruited speakers from the community.

The original Nadez center offered five enrichment and support programs for Roma students in elementary or secondary school and their parents.

- The first was a counseling program. It provided Roma students and their parents presentations on a series of topics identified as important by project staff, including drugs, hygiene, and AIDS. The program was conducted in two-hour sessions, once a month, throughout the year. Enrollment was not required and attendance generally reflected the topic presented for discussion each month. This program was coordinated by one of the social workers and also involved one of the pedagogues.

- The second was an enrichment program for computer skills. It provided Roma students a series of courses to learn about the use of different computer programs and the Internet. The program was conducted two to four times a week, for 90 minutes each day. Each course was conducted over a ten-week period. Students were required to enroll for this program and to attend regularly. Students were taught in four groups of 8 students each. This program was conducted by an electronics engineer with computer expertise.

- The third was a program on dance and music. It provided Roma students an opportunity to learn about dancing and playing musical instruments. The program was conducted twice a week, for two hours each day, throughout the school year. Students were not required to enroll for this program, but there were a group of 35 to 40 students who attended regularly. This program was coordinated by one of the social workers and included a person from the local neighborhood.

- The fourth was a debate program. It only involved Roma students in secondary school and the two highest grades of elementary school (grades 5 and 6). As part of this program, students learned how to formulate and organize arguments, discuss issues, and conduct formal debates. The program was conducted for three hours each Saturday throughout the school year. Students were not required to enroll for this program, but there were 10 to 15 students who attended regularly. This program was conducted by one of the pedagogues.

- The fifth program was a Teen Club. Roma students aged 12 to 18, participated in discussion, movie screenings, and homework. The program was conducted for two hours each Friday, throughout the school year. Students were not required to enroll for this program. However, there were about 40 girls who attended regularly. This program was coordinated by one of the social workers and also involved one of the pedagogues.

In addition to these five programs, the original Nadez center offered Roma students in elementary and secondary school a sixth service: access to a library. Students could visit the library at any time to check out books or periodicals, to use education CDs on the computers, and to access the Internet. Through the library, students also had access to textbooks, compulsory literature for school, and encyclopedias. Use of the library was coordinated by one of the social workers.

The original Nadez center offered Roma students enrolled in high school, two additional services: mentoring assistance and a scholarship program.

- The mentoring service was targeted on Roma students who had succeeded in elementary school and were struggling in secondary school, but still had the

opportunity to succeed (i.e. had not failed too many courses after the first semester of the first year of secondary school). Selection was based on a public announcement which occurred in January. Mentors were generally secondary school teachers, who were acquainted with the requirements facing the Roma student. Each mentor was required to design and carry out a plan of work to assist the Roma student. In addition to mentoring assistance, students also received scholarships to cover school-related expenses. The mentoring program was directed by one of the pedagogues.

- Roma students in their fourth year of high school could also apply for scholarships from the Centers. Applicants for the scholarships were recruited through a written advertisement. Recipients were selected through interview process conducted by the project director and the four pedagogues. Interviews were also conducted with parents of the applicants. Scholarships varied in amount from 300 USD to 600USD depending on the exact school fee. This amount was paid directly to the school each year. In addition, the scholarship paid for all subject exams, but only once. Parents were required to pay for subsequent exams, if the student was unsuccessful the first time. To maintain the scholarships, the recipients were required to pass all the exams and successfully complete school. This program was overseen by a special coordinator who was employed by the project.

Finally, the original Nadez center offered three programs for Roma parents and families.

- The first program involved meetings with Roma parents. Sessions included discussion among parents on the problems and needs. In addition to talking with project staff, parents shared advice and personal experiences. Usually about twelve parents participated in each session. These were usually parents whose children were having problems at school. Sessions were conducted each Friday for two hours. Sessions were coordinated and conducted by both social workers.

- The second was a support program for Roma parents. This program included visits to the schools to assist in the enrollment of students or to advocate on behalf of the student and parents. It also includes home visits. While the center did not directly provide humanitarian assistance to families, it did supply information to other organizations to arrange for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to selected families. This program was coordinated and conducted by one of the social workers.

- The third program was the Family Center. The Family Center was sponsored by the International Children Development Program of UNICEF. This was a separate project operating out of the Nadez center, in coordination with the other services offered through this project. It focused on Roma females (including mothers and young girls). It sought to raise parents' understanding of the needs of their children. Workshops were conducted each day for four hours. This project had a separate manager. It employed two facilitators (one from the project staff and an external staff person) and an assistant.

The second and newer Nadez center offered some, but not all, of these programs to the participating Roma children and their parents during its first year of operation (the

2000-2001 school year). All of these programs were explicitly modeled on the activities developed and implemented by the original Nadez center. These programs were implemented in a manner consistent with those in the original center. Programs offered at the second Nadez center included:

- Homework program and program for basic knowledge, serving Roma students in elementary school

- Counseling program for Roma students in elementary or secondary school and their parents

- Regular meetings and a support program for parents of participating Roma children

In addition, Project staff reported that they would begin to operate the preschool program during the summer of 2001 for Roma preschool age children who plan to begin first grade in the fall of 2001.

**Staffing and Facilities.** The project was led by a Project Director (Zaklina Durmish) who has been with the project since its creation. The Project Director was responsible for overseeing and managing the project, recruiting and supervising staff, raising funds, and working with national and local government officials, local educators, and other program representatives.

In addition to the Project Director, the project employed four direct service staff at its original center: two social workers and two pedagogues. Each direct service staff member was responsible for coordinating four or five of the specific programs conducted at the original Nadez center. Some programs only involved one staff member (serving as its coordinator), while others involved additional direct service staff. This was dependent upon the nature and scope of the program. The project used four paid volunteers, two honorary assistants, and two neighborhood collaborators (for music and sports) in the original Nadez center. The project also employed an administrator, who focused primarily on budget, administration, and maintenance of the project records.

The second Nadez center employed two direct service staff. One was a pedagogue and focused on educational activities and meetings with school staff. The other focused on social service activities for individual students and parents, as well as maintaining regular communication with the families in the community. In addition, the second Nadez center used two volunteers (one a social worker and the other a law student). Each volunteer assisted with several programs.

This was a center-based project. All programs were conducted at one of the two centers (Nadez and Nadez I) established by the project in the Shuto Orizari municipality. However, the second center (Nadez I) was only recently established in September 2000. In addition to office space for the project staff, each center included a preschool classroom to conduct the preschool program, two classrooms for conducting most programs for elementary and secondary school students, a library, and a computer room. The preschool classroom held up to 76 children. The two classrooms held a total of 150 students. The library in the Nadez center included approximately 1700 items. A

new library was established in the Nadez I center. The computer room's four Pentium computers were available, all using the Windows operating system.

**Budget and Other Resources.** The budget of the project for its first three years of operation (October 1998 through June 2001) totaled approximately 611000 USD, with annual budgets of just over 200000 USD. Actual project expenditures for planned activities were lower than anticipated. As a result, the project anticipates using the remaining funds to expand services by creating two smaller program sites in the community.

Most of the budget was devoted to two categories of expenditure: funding for the center's direct service programs for Roma children and parents (35%) and salaries of staff and contractual expenses (28%). About 10% of the budget was devoted to renovation of the two sites with much of that amount being used for the renovation of the first Nadez center during 1998. The remainder of budget has been used for the purchase of equipment, school and office supplies, monthly site costs (rent, electricity, and utilities), and other miscellaneous expenses. The budget of the project has been entirely funded through private contributions to Nadez.

In addition to the case expenses, the project received in-kind contributions of toys, school materials, and food. In addition, the project had access to a volunteer English teacher provided by the Peace Corps.

**Project Implementation.** The Program for Educational Support began at the end of 1998 as a three-year pilot project. It built on efforts in Shuto Orizari that had occurred since 1994 and grew out of an earlier project sponsored by Caritas Essen in 1997. The second center was opened in September 2000.

In all its programs, the project currently serves approximately 80 Roma preschool students at its original center, 150 Roma elementary school students at its original center, 65 Roma elementary school students at its second center, and 110 Roma secondary school students at its original center. The project also provides assistance and support to approximately 200 Roma families at its original center and about 60 Roma families at its second center. Table III-1 lists the number and category of participant in each current program offered by the both Nadez centers.

**Table III-1. Activities Offered by Program for Educational Support.**

| Activity | Target Population | Participants |
|---|---|---|
| Preschool Program | Preschool | 80 |
| Homework Program | Elementary School | 215 |
| Program for Basic Knowledge | Elementary School | 215 |
| English Language Program | Elementary School | 48 |
| Roma Culture & Customs Program | Elementary School (grades 4- 6) | 17 |
| Counseling Program | Elementary & Secondary School | 40 |
| Computer Course | Elementary & Secondary School | 32 |
| Debate Program | Elementary (grades 5-6) & Secondary School | 15 |
| Dance and Music Program | Elementary & Secondary School | 40 |
| Teen Club | Elementary & Secondary School (age 12-18) | 40 |
| Library | Elementary & Secondary School | All students |
| Mentoring Program | Secondary School | 22 |
| Scholarship Program | Secondary School | 11 |
| Parent Meetings | Parents | 60 |
| Family Support Program | Families | 260 |
| Family Center | Mothers & children | 60 |

Project staff report growing demand for the programs conducted at the Nadez centers within the Shuto Orizari community. For example, staff reported that the second Nadez center (established only in September 2000) regularly served 65 elementary school students – an amount 30% higher than its expected service level. Four factors appeared to be driving this growing demand at both sites.

- Project staff acknowledged that Roma parents and children from the community were initially skeptical and reluctant to participate in programs conducted at the center when its was originally established. However, over the ensuing months, project staff succeeded in gaining the confidence and trust of many previously skeptical Roma families. Staff reported that children came to the center even before school. Some actually came to project staff for assistance with personal, family, or school problems. Several participating children in grades 5 to 8 echoed this observation in a March 2001 group interview with the research team, noting that the center was their "second home" and that "many students" stayed in the center "until closing time".

- As project staff became more familiar with the community, they became more effective in finding and recruiting Roma children and families to participate in center programs.

- As project staff became more familiar with the needs of Roma children and families in the community, they created additional programs (particularly enrichment and support programs) in response to these needs.

- As participating children got older, the demand for elementary and secondary school program continued to expand. For example, the homework program began in 1998-99 with many more students in the early elementary grades (1-3) than in the upper elementary grades (4-6) – 72% of the total. That proportion declined to 64% in 1999-2000 and to 58% in 2000-2001. This reflected a continuing increase in the number of upper elementary grade students participating in the program.

The creation of the second center (Nadez I) was an effort by the project to respond to this growing demand from services in the community.

From its inception, the project has sought to collaborate with national and local government institutions and local educators. Representatives of the Macedonia Ministry of Education were involved in the development of the project and continue to work with it. In addition, the local mayor and elementary school director (both Roma) have been involved in the project development and continue to serve on its board of directors. The project has also established and maintained working relationships with other NGO's in the area to collaborate on programs serving Roma. For example, the project has worked with Darhia on Roma language camps, with BTR TV on summer camps for Roma children and with the American Refugee Committee on health education seminars.

Project staff has also sought to develop a close working relationship with the two elementary schools serving the Shuto Orizari community. In the elementary school which worked with the newer Nadez center, both project and school staff reported

establishing a very good working relationship. Staff from the second Nadez center met with teachers and psychologists from the elementary school on a regular basis (generally every two weeks) to discuss the needs of Roma students and assess student progress. The meetings were characterized by both project and schools staff, as valuable in helping each group better serve Roma children through their respective institutions.

In the elementary school working with the original Nadez center, both project staff and school staff acknowledged that some tensions existed. The school director (who had been involved with the project since its inception) expressed two principle concerns regarding the project. As a result of these concerns, he reduced the contact between his staff and project staff. Reportedly, he also encouraged some students to discontinue their participation in programs operated by the center. However, this did not reportedly affect student attendance at the center. Moreover, many teachers in the school remained supportive of and cooperative with the program. So too did many Roma parents whose children attended the school.

The school director expressed the belief that programs conducted by the center intruded into and possibly conflicted with the educational responsibilities of the school. In part, this concern reflected his doubts about the qualifications of project staff to conduct educational activities with Roma students. While some programs offered by the centers are conducted by social workers, the educational programs were conducted by pedagogues who appeared to be fully qualified and experienced for these roles.

His second anxiety apparently stemmed from his perception that the project was not sufficiently responsive to the local leadership and not sufficiently cooperative with the school. He especially expressed concerns that project leadership would impose work that he and other leaders in the municipality could not accept. However, he was disturbed that he would have no recourse because of the independence of the project. In response, he suggested the creation of a new "coordination body" that is "more responsive to the community".

The school director did not cite any examples of activities conducted by the center which were not acceptable. Nor did he indicate that such activities were being planned. In fact, this appears to be more an issue of control rather than a question of appropriate decision-making. The school director is a long-time educational leader in the community. The leadership and staff of the Nadez centers are relative outsiders, who are independent of his control and relatively immune to his influence. Their work on education issues could certainly be seen as a threat to his authority.

Despite their perceived independence, project leaders and staff do need to maintain a good working relationship with the local education and political leaders if they are to successfully operate in this community. They certainly appear to recognize this. They have worked through their own board and local Roma parents, to demonstrate their desire to collaborate both with the community and with the school. These individuals have also encouraged the school director to continue to work with the project. While these efforts have "softened" the concern and oppositional actions which have been taken by the school director, they have not ended them. Additional strategies need to be pursued to resolve this conflict.

**Figure 4. Participating Site in Macedonia.**

# Equal Opportunities for Roma Children Through School and School-Related Activities (Romania)

*The **Equal Opportunities Project** included (1) national training sessions for Romanian elementary and secondary school administrators and teachers, (2) local training sessions, (3) school visits, (4) instructional materials to assist teachers in changing their educational programs, teaching practices, and curriculum content, (5) informational materials about the project, and (6) school-based implementation activities. These training, support, and school-based activities were focused on seven subjects: school management and community partnerships, cooperative learning, remedial teaching and language development, intercultural education, Roma culture and tradition, oral history, and parental involvement. The project was jointly designed and implemented in 1998 by Centrul Educatia (Center Education) 2000+ (a Romanian organization) and SLO/Educaplan (a Dutch organization) and was financially supported by the MATRA Programme of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The project has been implemented in a total of 28 schools nationwide. The average annual budget for the project over the last three years was 65,680 USD.*

**Project Goals.** The Equal Opportunities Project sought to provide training and support to administrators and teachers in Romanian elementary and secondary schools, so that they could change teaching practices, curriculum content, and school organization and operation. These changes were intended to (1) improve the educational opportunities for Roma students in Romanian elementary and secondary schools, (2) increase the involvement of parents and the community in the development and operation of the school, and (3) assist Roma students in building a deeper understanding of their own cultural identity. These changes were also designed to promote Romanian elementary and secondary schools as the center of the community, both respecting and reflecting the diverse ethnic, cultural, social, and economic characteristics of their student populations. In addition to these school-specific change goals, the project aimed to promote systemic change by linking these schools into a nationwide network committed to demonstrating, promoting, and supporting similar school change efforts in elementary and secondary schools throughout the Romania.

Of all the Roma education projects examined by this research, the Equal Opportunities Project exhibited the most ambitious and far-reaching goals. Through its work with selected Romanian schools, this project sought, over the long term, to make major, fundamental changes in the nature and operation of the Romanian education system. Although the project was characterized as one intended to improve education for Roma students, the changes it sought to accomplish would eventually benefit all students in the Romanian elementary and secondary schools, not just Roma students. Many of the changes in pedagogy, school organization, and school operation promoted by the project were implicitly recognized in the project's writings and in educational research literature as good educational practices for all students – not simply for minority ethnic groups or Roma students.

The topics of the project's training and support activities attempted to change teacher and school practices, to directly or indirectly address several of the barriers to improved Roma educational attainment.

- Training activities focused on intercultural education issues in an effort to reduce the level of prejudice against Roma children and their parents among non-Roma teachers and students. As one workshop participant stated "I was surprised to find out that almost nobody is free of prejudices and stereotypes. . . However we can try to restrain and control them." These activities also sought to improve the low expectations of Roma students among teachers.

- These activities also focused on cooperative learning, oral history techniques, and remedial teaching strategies, in an effort to improve the quality of teaching in schools with large numbers of Roma students. At the same time, these activities were an attempt to encourage teachers to adopt pedagogical techniques which were more compatible with the learning styles of Roma children.

- The project also incorporated training activities which emphasized greater community collaboration and parental involvement strategies. Both efforts sought to improve the perspective of Roma parents towards public schools.

By changing the pedagogical practices of teachers, the project sought to address the lack of competency of Roma students in the Romanian language. In fact, language development issues were a particular focus of the remedial training activities conducted by the project. The pedagogical changes, in general, and the remedial training activities in particular were also designed to address deficiencies in the academic foundation of Roma students (especially concerning reading, writing, and mathematics).

The school changes advocated by the project were designed to create more supportive and welcoming educational environments for Roma students. Efforts to reduce prejudice against Roma children, to change teaching practices, and to involve Roma parents were all intended to contribute to this changed environment. So too were efforts to incorporate Roma culture and tradition into the curriculum. As one project trainer noted, "The lack of support and motivation influences the children's attitude toward school and learning." (Beldea, 2000) By increasing support and motivation for Roma children in the schools, the project aimed to improve the attitudes of Roma children towards public schools.

Given the nature of the project goals, the project designers recognized that the change it advocated would not occur overnight. Rather, as one designer stated in his interview with a member of the research team: "The whole process may take a long time." As this quotation indicates, the designers also recognized that change was a process – involving a series of transformations. They organized the process into three stages involving –

- Awareness: To take actions that enable the community to learn about and discuss the current social position of minority groups and the problems related to minority education.

- Acknowledgement: To take actions that enable minority group members to become full participants in the school community while maintaining and strengthening their own distinctive cultural identity.

- Achievement: To take actions that result in measurable improvement in access to a good education for Roma children and in their level of educational achievement and attainment.

Over the long term, individual educators (both administrators and teachers) were expected to pass through the three stages of the change process – at their own speed and in their own way. At the same time, entire school communities – led by those individual educators who had themselves engaged in the change effort – would collectively pass through the same three stages. Finally, the national education system, as a whole, also would pass through these stages – guided and supported by the network of schools who had already engaged in the change process.

Ultimately, this change process should result in significant benefits for Roma students. These ought to include higher rates of elementary and secondary school enrollment and completion, higher levels of school attendance, improved marks, and better classroom behavior. In addition, Roma students should develop greater competence in the Romanian language while demonstrating a greater understanding and appreciation of their own culture and tradition. Finally, Roma students should exhibit greater self-confidence, self-esteem, and engagement in schooling.

The activities conducted to date under this project were expected to enable individual educators and schools to move into the first stage ("awareness") of the change process. However, it must be emphasized that the project did not expect to make observable changes in the educational outcomes of Roma students during the three-year time period when these activities were conducted. Rather, these activities would set the stage for future changes which would eventually result in measurable improvement in the educational outcomes of Roma children.

**Description of Project Model.** The Equal Opportunities Project was a joint effort of Centrul Educatia (Center Education) 2000+ and SLO/Educaplan (National Institute for Curriculum Development in the Netherlands). The project was financially supported by the Social Transformation Programme for Central and Eastern Europe (MATRA Programme) of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Centrual Educatia 2000+ was a Romanian NGO committed to promoting educational reform within the Romanian school system. It was part of the Soros Foundation network.

SLO/Educaplan was a Dutch organization, which developed educational products and services for private and public organizations and businesses in Netherlands and around the globe. This organization was the original applicant for a MATRA knowledge transfer grant to support this project. As a result, SLO/Educaplan was responsible to the MATRA Programme for this grant and carried out this project in cooperation with Centrul Educatia 2000+.

The first component of the project model involved national training sessions for school administrators and teachers from the Romanian elementary and secondary schools participating in the project. Training sessions were conducted on six topics:

- Cooperative Learning – These sessions presented and demonstrated cooperative learning pedagogical strategies for use by classroom teachers. Sessions targeted elementary and secondary schoolteachers.

- Oral History – These sessions demonstrated pedagogical strategies, which used oral history techniques as teaching tools in the classroom, particularly with minority ethnic groups. These sessions involved elementary school and social science teachers.

- Intercultural Education – These sessions emphasized the value of intercultural education as a cross-cutting theme that could be integrated across all academic subjects, as an optional curriculum, and as an extracurricular activity. Sessions involved elementary school and social science teachers.

- Remedial Education – These sessions presented strategies for mentoring children with reading and writing deficiencies. Sessions involved elementary school teachers.

- School Management & Community Partnerships – These sessions focused on project design and implementation, change process, organizational cultures, motivation, negotiation and conflict resolution, and team-building. Sessions involved school administrators and regional inspectors.

- Parental Involvement and Parent Education – These sessions presented approaches for improving communication and cooperation between teachers and minority group parents, particularly Roma parents. These sessions also suggested activities which could meet the educational needs of Roma parents. Sessions involved teachers, Roma parents, and Romanian parents. In addition, training sessions conducted on the other five topics also raised awareness about the importance of parental involvement and suggested strategies for effectively involving parents.

The project conducted two training sessions – an introductory and follow-up session – on each topic during the first year of the project (1998-99). A second round of training sessions were conducted on four of the topics, (intercultural education, oral history, school management, and cooperative learning) during the second year of the project (1999-2000). In addition, a training session was conducted during this time to "train the trainers". This session involved the more highly committed teachers from some of the participating schools and teacher trainers from the CCD's(Centers for Teacher Training). This session introduced participants to basic training principles, strategies, and approaches. It sought to build the capacity of teachers and other participants, to serve as effective trainers of project concepts with colleagues in their own schools and in other schools. Planning for the second round of national training sessions grew out of the additional training needs expressed to project staff during their site visits.

These national trainings sessions was conducted in Caracal, Mamaia, Poiana Brasov, Predeal, Sinaia, and Suceava. These were central locations which could accommodate large numbers of people comfortably.  Usually, national training sessions lasted for four days. In addition to the project participants, Project co-directors, Educatia 2000+ support staff, and relevant trainers also attended.

The second component of the project involved local training sessions as a follow-up to the national training activities. As already mentioned, these sessions were planned by project staff according to the needs expressed by teachers and school administrators, during site visits to schools and communities. These local training sessions sought to strengthen the capacity of school teams to plan and implement school-based activities, built upon the topics discussed at the national training sessions. The local sessions also sought to increase cooperation between the members of the school teams and other school staff who did not attend the national training activities.

Some sessions covered multiple topics, including school management, intercultural education, oral history, cooperative learning, and parent involvement. Other sessions focused on only one of those topics. Most training sessions involved a combination of teachers and administrators, although parents did attend some sessions.

The local sessions generally were conducted in the school buildings themselves or in the offices of the CCD or the country inspectorates. Local sessions were generally organized and conducted jointly by project consultants and members of the school teams who had participated in the national training activities.

The third component of this model involved monitoring visits to the participating schools. Project staff visited each school for informational and assessment purposes. These visits were used to identify the specific accomplishments and needs of each school with regard to each of the six project topics. The project staff member responsible for work on each topic conducted the review and assessment on that topic.

During the site visits, project staff conducted interviews with the school management teams, interviewed other teachers and parents, organized classroom visits to observe lessons, and attended special project-related events administered by the school. Project staff also reviewed and collected records, on staff and parent participation in project-related activities conducted by the school. Generally, day-long site visits to each school were conducted once or twice each semester (term). A few site visits were somewhat shorter (4 to 5 hours in length) because the remote location of these schools made travel and communication difficult.

Written reports were prepared by each staff person for each visit. The reports included the planning and implementation process employed by the school, a description of the project-related activities conducted by the school, problems that had arisen, and suggestions for addressing those problems. The results of these visits were used to help school teams develop their plans and improve their activities. These results also served to inform the content of the second year national training sessions and the local training activities.

Project staff stated that the monitoring visits were more effective during the first project year. Several factors created problems for project staff during the second project year. The increased number of schools involved in the project placed a greater demand on the time of project staff. In addition, several project staff were called upon to be involved in another national project. Both factors combined to allow staff less flexibility to travel and less time to conduct and record their site visits.

The fourth component included instructional materials created by the project. These instructional materials were designed to advance and support the school-based implementation of the concepts from the training.

Instructional materials included written guides, which were used during the national training sessions. These guides included lessons, examples of school or classroom activities, and case studies. Guides were developed to accompany all of the training topics: school management, cooperative learning, oral history, remedial teaching, intercultural education, and parental involvement. An additional guide was also created on Roma history, culture, and tradition.

The project also sponsored the creation of instructional materials for use by teachers in remedial teaching and language development with Roma students. This included a book for beginner readers written in the Roma language by Mihaela Zatreanu and illustrated by Ana Costef. It also included a series of eight small books on the first steps in reading and writing which incorporated references to Roma culture. These were written by three Roma teachers (Mirena Cionca, Elena Eigel, and Alomeea Romanescu) and a non-Roma author (Elena Beldea). Finally, it included a bilingual (Romani/Romanian) book entitled "Events In My Life", written by Isabela Banica. The book was written in the form of a diary and aimed at encouraging Roma children and youngsters to study Roma culture and language.

The fifth component of the project involved the development of a series of informational materials. These materials were designed to disseminate information about the project within the participating schools and across the country. Informational materials included written newsletters prepared in Romanian (six newsletters) and English (two newsletters), a resource book ("Steps Toward Success"), a short video, a poster, a leaflet, and a website. These materials presented information on successful project-related activities. In doing so, it advanced the organization of participating schools into a nationwide support network.

The final component of the project model involved school-based implementation activities designed and focused around the selected topics discussed during the national and local training sessions. The school teams who participated in the national training activities were expected to collaboratively identify issues of importance in the school, create plans to address these issues, and carry out those plans. Each school received small financial grants from the project to support the implementation of these plans. One purpose of the second round national training sessions was to assist the school teams in designing their implementation plans.

Within the framework of these school-based implementation efforts, some schools accessed other resources to support project-related activities. Several schools developed mentoring programs for Roma students using funds provided by an American foundation. Under these programs, teachers received stipends for conducted individual tutoring sessions with Roma students who had reading and writing difficulties. Based on their socioeconomic situation, some Roma students also received stipends for books, materials, and participated in extracurricular educational activities to museums or theatres.

The trained teacher teams in each participating school were seen as leading the change effort in their school. To do this, these teachers were expected to actively disseminate their training experiences and demonstrate their accomplishments to their fellow educators. In addition to conducting formal training sessions in their own schools and in neighboring schools, teachers were also expected to demonstrate lessons and teaching practices in their classrooms, informally communicate ideas, concepts,

information, and materials with their colleagues, and record their experiences and share these records with colleagues.

**Staffing and Facilities.** This project was jointly managed by two co-directors: one representing the Romanian NGO (Centrul Educatia 2000+) and the other representing the Dutch organization (SLO/Educaplan). Originally, the Romanian co-director was Simona Botea. She was later replaced by Catalina Ulrich. The Dutch co-director was Jenne van der Velde. The project co-directors were responsible for designing, overseeing, and assessing project activities, supervising project staff, and reporting to sponsoring agencies and other appropriate organizations.

Project activities were carried out by a team of Project Consultants. These staff members were responsible for designing and conducting the national and local training sessions, designing and creating the informational and instructional materials, and conducting the local site visits. Project Consultants along with the Romanian Co-Director traveled to the Netherlands for planning and training visits with staff from SLO/Educaplan at the beginning of the project in 1998.

**Budget and Other Resources.** The total budget for this project since it inception in 1998 has been 197,041 USD. This included annual budgets of 55,458 USD during 1998, 95,566 USD during 1999, and 46,017 USD during 2000. The average annual budget over the three-year period was 65,680.

**Project Implementation.** The Equal Opportunities Project began during 1998 with the selection of ten Romanian elementary and secondary schools as project participants. Some of these schools volunteered to participate. Others were identified based on the recommendations of the Education Board of OSFR (which included Roma representatives). Still others were identified and encouraged to participate by the regional inspectorates.

During the second year, the number of schools participating in the project was expanded by 18. These schools were selected from among 45 applicants. School selection was based on written applications. In selecting schools, project leaders sought to balance three factors: (1) percentage of Roma students in the school population; (2) geographic distribution across the country; and (3) commitment of the school staff. The need for a broad geographic distribution of sites was seen as important because the project sought to create a nationwide network of demonstration sites, to support further expansion of project activities in the future. The need for committed staff also was seen as important, because these teams of trained teachers were expected to serve as advocates for project activities and even trainers, both within their school and with other schools in their counties. As the project leaders sought to address all three factors, some participating schools had considerably lower proportions of Roma students than others.

The project aimed to recruit a sufficient number of teachers from each participating school to form a "critical mass" to drive the change efforts in the school. Their involvement focused on participation in the national training sessions. Overall, there were about 250 teachers, school principals, school inspectors, and CCD experts who participated in national training sessions.

Teachers were expected to attend national training sessions on at least one topic, although some attended more than one session. A total of 75 teachers attended the first

year national training sessions (conducted during August 1998) on oral history, intercultural education, and cooperative learning. In addition 21 school principals and school inspectors attended the sessions on school management that month. A later session on parent involvement (in October 1998) involved 45 teachers and parents, whilst one on remedial education (in November 1998) involved 42 teachers and Roma parents.

A total of 118 school principals, teachers, school inspectors, and CCD trainers attended the second year national training sessions on intercultural education, oral history, and cooperative learning conducted between April and November of 1999. In addition, national training sessions related to school management were conducted between January 1999 and February 2000 and involved 105 school principals, inspectors, directors, and program coordinators. Finally, there were 30 participants (including teachers, adult mentors, and student volunteer mentors) at a national training session on remedial education conducted during July 1999 and 36 participants (including teachers and CCD trainers) at a national train-the-trainers session on remedial education in August 1999.

The local training sessions were intended to supplement the national sessions. These were conducted from November 1998 through November 1999. More than 240 participants (including teachers, school inspectors, and CCD trainers) attended local training sessions on intercultural education, oral history, and cooperative learning. In addition, more than 75 teachers and parents also participated in local training sessions on parental involvement.

In several participating schools, efforts to create a critical mass of committed and active teachers were undermined by relatively high mobility among school staff members. Due to their location or the relatively low prestige associated with teaching Roma children, these schools had difficulty attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers. Moreover, as their teachers gained experience and skills, they would try to leave for more prestigious teaching assignments.

However, the project did have some success in beginning to change the perceptions of these schools. One headmaster reported: "Before being involved in this program, we were ashamed of working in a 'bad and poor school with Roma children' . . . This program was a real crossroads for our school, for its teachers. . . It has changed us as people and as teachers: we are now proud to be teachers at this school." (Beldea, 2000) Such attitudinal changes could contribute to a reduction in the high staff turnover rates.

Project staff reported that there was considerable variability in the nature and extent to which the project components were implemented in each participating school. In general, project staff reported that schools were most successful in their activities focusing on four of the topics: cooperative learning, oral history, intercultural education, and school management. Project staff reported that the other two topics (remedial education and parent involvement) offered greater challenges to the schools. This was because school staff had relatively little previous experience with either topic. Moreover, only limited expertise and few resources were available on either topic even at a national level. Despite these difficulties, project staff placed equal emphasis on all six topics.

The variability in school-based implementation also reflected a basic philosophy of the project. This philosophy emphasized voluntary engagement and self-determination. One of the project's Dutch designers emphasized that they were committed to "not telling projects what to do". Instead they wanted to model a "democratic process" for the schools, encouraging schools to make "their own decisions, even if they weren't the same decisions" that the project designers or project staff would make.

This philosophy had both positive and negative effects on the project's implementation, depending upon the nature and characteristics of each participating school. Some schools appeared to be well positioned to take advantage of the opportunities and resources offered by the project. These schools were generally characterized by stronger and more stable leadership (among both administrators and teachers). There was often a history of educational innovation – either among individual teachers or within the school community as a whole. These schools often had existing relationships with community institutions and parents upon which to build stronger partnerships. In these schools, the project succeeded in deepening and advancing an educational change agenda.

Other participating schools apparently lacked a solid foundation, upon which to build a genuine school change agenda. These schools generally had leadership that lacked commitment, knowledge, or effectiveness. Traditionally, there had been little interest in innovation –often stability was seen as a greater accomplishment. Existing relationships with parents and community institutions were weak or non-existent. In these schools, change efforts were more superficial in nature – where they occurred at all. Deeper changes were difficult to implement or sustain when they occurred.

**Figure 5. Project Sites in Romania.**

# Educational Centers Project (Slovak Republic)

> *The Educational Centers Project was a center-based initiative which provided (1) a preschool program for Roma children, (2) assistance for Roma children to successfully enroll and attend elementary school, and (3) assistance and support to Roma parents. The project operated three centers – one in Presov and two in villages outside of Presov (Zehna and Solivar) – to serve Roma children and families in those communities. The project provided assistance to 87 Roma children in preschool and 26 Roma elementary school students. The Educational Centers were operated by the Foundation for Romany Children. The project began in 1993. The annual budget for this project (including both cash expenditure and in-kind contributions) was approximately 41,200 USD.*

**Project Goals.** The Educational Centers Project sought to provide education, health care, and nutrition services to Roma preschool children. In addition, these Centers sought to assist their preschool participants to successfully enroll in and attend elementary school. These Centers also sought to provide Roma elementary school students with homework assistance and enrichment opportunities. Finally, the project provided assistance and support to Roma parents.

The preschool program offered by this project was specifically designed to address two significant barriers faced by Roma children when they began elementary school. First, this program sought to build the competency of Roma preschool children in the Slovak language. This reduced the language deficiencies that Roma children generally faced when they began elementary school in the Slovak Republic. Second, this program exposed Roma preschool children to experiences and knowledge available to other Slovak children in public kindergarten and at home. This improved their academic preparation when they entered elementary school.

The project also sought to improve the traditionally low educational expectations that teachers had about Roma students. It sought to accomplish this, by having project staff meet regularly with elementary school teachers to help them better recognize and respond to the real strengths and needs of Roma children.

The project also aimed to reduce the degree to which elementary school classrooms were seen as "alien" by Roma children. It did this by introducing Roma preschool children to the environment and culture of elementary school classrooms through the preschool program. In addition, project staff conducted site visits designed to monitor and support Roma children as they entered and proceeded through elementary school. Finally, it provided homework assistance and enrichment activities designed to ensure that the experience of Roma students in elementary school was both more successful and more enjoyable. By making the elementary school more welcoming and less "alien", the project sought to improve the attitudes of Roma children towards public schools.

The project also endeavored to improve the attitudes of Roma families toward the public schools. Project staff sought to act as mediators between Roma families and public school staff to facilitate the creation of effective working relationships between the two. Project staff also conducted meetings with Roma families, designed to help them better understand the value and benefits associated with public schooling.

Finally, the project attempted to address the health issues that could serve as a barrier to Roma students' educational attainment. The preschool program focused on improving the approach of Roma students to personal hygiene. A similar emphasis was placed in meetings by project staff with Roma parents of preschool students.

The Centers anticipated measurable benefits for Roma students participating in their activities. In the short-term, positive outcomes were expected to include higher enrollment of Roma students in elementary schools and lower placement of Roma students in special schools. It was also expected that more Roma students would have good classroom behavior, regular school attendance, and high marks in school. Roma students also would have more self-confidence, improved self-esteem, and a greater interest in learning. Finally, Roma students would develop greater competence in the Slovakian language while maintaining their connection with Roma cultural traditions. Over the long term, more Roma students would be expected to complete elementary school and be prepared and motivated to continue to secondary school.

**Description of Model.** The Educational Centers were developed and operated by the Foundation for Romany Children, a separate NGO established in 1991 and funded by the Open Society Foundation (OSF) Bratislava. The Foundation was focused on improving the educational opportunities of Roma children in the Slovak Republic.

The first service offered to Roma children by the Educational Centers was the preschool program. This program targeted Roma children (age 4 to 6) who were eligible to attend public kindergartens in the Slovak Republic but generally failed to do so. At the beginning of each school year, project staff visited families of preschool-aged Roma children in the communities served by each Center, to encourage parents to enroll their children in the Center's preschool program. In addition, many Roma families found out about the preschool program through relatives or acquaintances. According to a survey, of 35 Roma parents of preschool children who attended the Centers, 60% of the parents learned about the program through relatives or acquaintances.

The preschool program offered participating children a three-hour class, each day during the week. The program instructors conducted diagnostic assessments of students at the beginning of the year. The results of this assessment were used to plan students' instructional program. Teachers employed developmentally-appropriate instruction with an individualized approach to teaching and learning. Instruction sought to develop pre-writing and pre-reading skills in students. Teachers maintained portfolios of student work to monitor student progress. The preschool classrooms were organized and conducted so as to introduce Roma students to the learning environments they would experience in elementary school. In addition to the daily classes, the Educational Centers also conducted periodic field trips and summer camps involving both the preschool children and their parents.

The Centers' preschool program had some similarities with the Step-by-Step kindergarten program model. The program shared with this model an emphasis on developmentally-appropriate, individualized education and parental involvement. However, the Centers' program also had several differences from the Step-by-Step model. First, it was only a half-day class, not a full day class. Second, it incorporated a focus on Roma culture and tradition in its instructional programs. Third, it focused on exposing Roma students to the same type of learning environments they would experience in elementary school. Although the Centers' preschool program was not

based on the Step-by-Step model, its preschool teachers were trained in the model's instructional methodology. Based on this training, they reported incorporating many elements of that methodology into their teaching practices.

The second component of this project sought to ensure that participants in the preschool program successfully enrolled in elementary school. Project staff reported that many Roma parents failed to enroll their children in elementary school in a timely manner. Due to this late enrollment, elementary schools claimed that space was not available for Roma children in existing first grade classes. As a result, Roma students were either enrolled in a few schools that traditionally had large Roma enrollments or were placed in separate classes in schools with "mixed" enrollments.

Staff from the Centers worked with parents of preschool participants, to ensure that Roma students were enrolled at the appropriate time. This increased the opportunity for these students to be placed in mixed classes. Staff also intervened with school staff, if school staff attempted to deny Roma students their legitimate opportunity to enroll in the school. Since Center staff had ongoing relationships with school staff, they were in an effective position to resolve such problems.

The third service component of the project involved site visits by project staff to the elementary schools to support Roma students who participated in the preschool program. The project's preschool teachers visited the elementary school classrooms of their former students at the beginning of their first grade year and again about two months later. These visits were designed to assess and support students' social development and adaptation to elementary school. In addition, staff met with elementary school teachers to discuss students' strengths and needs and suggest appropriate placement of students within the class. The preschool teachers would be available for visits later during the school year if requested by the first grade teacher to respond to any problems that emerged. These visits were designed to develop more collaborative problem-solving efforts between project staff and elementary school teachers. In order to enhance the value of the site visits, project staff also conducted informational seminars on the project for elementary school teachers.

The fourth component of the project involved homework assistance and enrichment activities for Roma students attending elementary school. These activities occurred after the regular school day in 45 to 60 minute sessions. In the Presov center, these sessions were offered twice a week. In the Solivar and Zehna centers, these sessions were only offered once a week. The Presov center provided services to Roma students in grades 1 to 7. The Zehna center was limited to Roma students in grades 1 to 3, while the Solivar center only served Roma students in first grade. Activities were led by an elementary school teacher assisted, by preschool teachers and other staff at each center. The enrichment or "club" activities involved music, the arts, and similar topics.

The final component of the project targeted Roma parents. Staff conducted training sessions, discussion meetings, and home visits with Roma parents focusing on several topics. Staff presented, discussed, and demonstrated strategies that parents could use to support their children's education. They also discussed the value and importance of school enrollment, regular attendance, and ultimate completion of public school. Finally, they provided support to parents in their ongoing interaction with their children's school and teachers.

**Staffing and Facilities.** The work of the Educational Centers as a whole was overseen by the Director of the Foundation of Romany Children (Klara Organovana). She had been involved with this project since its inception and was instrumental in its development. As Director, she was responsible for selecting and supervising project staff, negotiating for space to operate the centers, obtaining funding to support the operation of the centers, and working with appropriate governmental and organizational representatives.

The preschool program in each center was organized and conducted by a qualified kindergarten teacher. In addition to directing the class, these teachers also organized outreach into the community, worked with elementary school teachers, and conducted site visits to support their former students. These staff also organized and provided assistance and support to Roma parents. The Presov center had a Teacher-Coordinator and a Roma teaching assistant, in addition to the kindergarten teacher. The other two centers (Zehna and Solivar) only had the kindergarten teacher.

The homework assistance and enrichment activities offered to elementary school students were conducted by an elementary school teacher and the kindergarten teacher at the Presov site. In the Zehna and Solivar sites, the homework assistance program was conducted by the kindergarten teacher.

Project staff was carefully supervised. The Project Director reported that two kindergarten teachers were dismissed by the project, for failing to carry out their responsibilities in the center appropriately.

This project was a center-based initiative. All services were provided at the center, except for the site visits to the elementary schools and the home visits with Roma parents.

- The Presov center was the largest facility. This site was located in a central position in Presov and occupies rented space in a building shared with other institutions. It included two classrooms and is well-equipped with toys and learning materials.

- The Zehna center occupied an older house in the village. It included two rooms and was well-equipped with toys and learning materials.

- The Solivar center occupied an older building in a suburb of Presov. It included two rooms and was also well-equipped with toys and learning materials.

Project staff reported that the project had previously operated in three other sites (Jarovnice, Sabinov, and Velky Saris). In the case of the Velky Saris site, the number of Roma children attending was too small because the facilities were too far away from the Roma settlement. In the case of the Jarovnice and Sabinov sites, the owners of the space being used by the project, required the space for other activities. These sites were closed because local governments were unable to provide adequate and appropriate alternative space for operating the centers.

**Budget and Other Resources.** The annual budget for the project was approximately 41200 USD. This includes both cash expenditure (30200 USD) and in-kind contributions (11000 USD). The in-kind contributions included the salary of the Project

Director and facility costs associated with the Zehna and Solivar centers. The project's cash expenditure was entirely provided by private funding sources.

More than half of the total budget (58%) and the cash expenditure (56%) were allocated to staff and contractual costs. About one-quarter of the total budget (27%) and the cash expenditure (23%) were allocated to site costs.

**Project Implementation.** This project was begun in 1993 in the east Slovakia region. Initially, the project faced resistance from local authorities who were skeptical of the value of the project. However, this resistance was eventually overcome largely because of their communication with project staff and the successful experiences of the Roma children attending the centers.

Roma parents also initially expressed reluctance, regarding the program and exhibited some resistance toward sending their children to the preschool program. The recent survey of parents whose children attended the preschool program revealed that these attitudes have changed dramatically. Seventeen of thirty-two responding parents reported persuading other parents to send their child to the program. Thirty-one of thirty-two responding parents, expressed a preference for the Educational Centers rather than any other preschool experience for their children.

The centers only began to provide after-school assistance to elementary school students four years ago in the Solivar site and three years ago in the other two sites. This service grew out of meetings conducted by project staff with Roma children, who had previously attended the center and the parents of those children. Requests for ongoing assistance – particularly homework assistance – during elementary school emerged in these meetings. Project staff designed the after-school program in response to these requests.

During the 2000-01 school year, the project served a total of 87 Roma children in the preschool program in the three centers. This included 40 children in the Presov center, 26 in the Zehna center, and 21 in the Solivar center. Over the last four school years (since 1997-98), the project has served 158 Roma preschool students at the Presov center, 91 Roma preschool students at the Zehna center, and 92 Roma preschool students at the Solivar center. The project also involved 26 Roma elementary school students in its homework assistance. This included 16 students at the Presov center, 5 at the Zehna center, and 5 at the Solivar center. Finally, the project served 55 children through its enrichment activities, including 25 in Presov, 14 in Zehna, and 16 in Solivar.

**Figure 6. Project Sites in Slovakia.**

# Kindergarten As a Family Center in Roma Settlements (Yugoslavia/Serbia)

> *The **Kindergarten as a Family Center Project** was an implementation of the Step-by-Step kindergarten model. Following the Step-by-Step model, this project employed a center-based approach to deliver developmentally-appropriate educational services to Roma preschool students. Activities targeted both Roma students and their parents. Adaptations were designed to meet the particular needs, cultural values, and living conditions of Roma children and their parents. This project was run by the Center for Interactive Pedagogy (CIP), a non-profit NGO based in Belgrade, and partially funded by the Open Society Foundation (OSF) Yugoslavia. The project began to serve Roma students in 1997. During 2000-01, the project served 673 Roma preschool students in 27 preschool groups in 15 sites. The annual budget for the project was approximately 300,000 USD.*

**Project Goals.** The Kindergarten as a Family Center Project, following the Step-by-Step kindergarten model, designed to meet the educational needs of Roma preschool students. At the same time, this project sought to build partnerships with government-sponsored kindergartens and public elementary schools in support of a collaborative approach to improving educational opportunities for Roma children. Again reflecting the focus of the Step-by-Step model, this project also sought to develop the capacity of Roma parents to be active and knowledge contributors to their children's public school education.

The preschool program which this project offered Roma children, like those operated by other projects in Macedonia and Slovakia, was specifically designed to address problems faced by Roma children when they entered elementary school. The program focused on improving children's language competency in the majority language used in their local school (either Serbian or Hungarian). It focused on increasing the knowledge and educational experiences of Roma children, so that they could begin elementary school at less of an educational disadvantage compared to their non-Roma peers. It also emphasized personal hygiene and health issues so that Roma children could be more accepted by and comfortable with their non-Roma classmates. Finally, it provided students with clothing and learning materials to address financial needs that resulted from the persistent poverty existing in Roma families.

The project also sought to create a rich and engaging preschool learning environment for Roma children. It specifically used Roma culture and tradition as themes designed to personally engage Roma children in classroom educational activities. Following the Step-by-Step model, it employed an individualized approach that responded to the educational needs and interests of each Roma child. In these ways, the program sought to build a love of learning among Roma children and improve their attitudes toward public schools.

The project also sought to change the attitudes and perspectives of Roma parents towards the public schools. The project worked with Roma parents to help them recognize the value and importance of public schooling. At the same time, the project assisted Roma parents in developing the skills and experiences to effectively interact

with public school administrators and staff as active participants in their children's education. Finally, project staff sought to work with public school teachers to create a more welcoming environment in the public schools for Roma children and parents.

By forming collaborative relationships with public kindergartens and public elementary schools, the project also sought to indirectly address additional barriers to the improved educational attainment of Roma children. The project emphasized cross-cultural tolerance and acceptance of diversity, in an effort to reduce the prejudice that existed against Roma children and the parents among non-Roma teachers and students. They involved public school teachers from kindergartens and elementary schools in high-quality pedagogical training activities, in order to improve the quality of teaching available to Roma children in public kindergartens and elementary schools. Finally, project staff met with elementary school teachers to discuss the specific strengths and needs of individual Roma children who participated in the project's preschool program and were now in elementary school. Through these direct interactions, they sought to improve the low educational expectations that many non-Roma teachers have for their Roma students.

By accomplishing these goals, the project anticipated measurable results among participating Roma children. Short-term benefits were expected to involve an increased enrollment by Roma children in elementary school, improved attendance, higher marks, and better behavior in school. In the long-term, Roma children were expected to develop greater self-respect, independence, and self-confidence. They should demonstrate greater engagement in learning, creativity, problem-solving skills, and communication skills. They should develop greater competence in the Serbian language while maintaining strong connections to Roma cultural traditions and language. Ultimately, more Roma children should successfully complete elementary school and be prepared for secondary school.

**Description of Model.** This project was operated by the Center for Interactive Pedagogy (CIP), a Yugoslav non-profit NGO. CIP was originally established in 1998. Its mission was to develop, implement, promote, and support alternative and democratic forms of education in the national education system.

This project employed the international Step-by-Step kindergarten model as the basis for the services that it offered Roma children and their parents. The primary components of the project were the preschool classes it operates for Roma children. These classes were conducted in community-based sites. In some cases, the sites were operated by a local Roma NGO and were constructed or renovated specifically for the purposes of this project. In other cases, the sites were shared with a public kindergarten or elementary school.

Sites were organized, established, and coordinated after opening by a representative of a local Roma NGO or a local NGO involved in serving the Roma community ("Organizer") who served as the site director. This individual was also responsible for conducting outreach to Roma parents in the community to recruit the participation of their children in the program. This individual continued to cooperate with parents and the local authorities (both governmental and non-governmental) to ensure that the program operated as a valued part of the community.

Through the local NGO, the project also connected its preschool program with other services and activities targeted on Roma children, families, and adults. This included compensatory education and homework programs for elementary and secondary school students, programs targeted at Roma woman, counseling programs for families, and adult-education programs. These connections ensured that the preschool program was part of a larger effort to respond to the range of educational, economic, and social needs facing Roma families.

Each site included from one to three preschool classes. The classes served from 20 to 30 students. Most classes exclusively served Roma children although some enrolled mixed (Roma and non-Roma) populations. Roma children from ages 3 to 7 were eligible to attend the preschool classes. Attendance was free.

Each class (group) was conducted both by a kindergarten teacher and teacher assistants, including Roma teacher assistants. At least one staff member working with each group spoke the Roma language. Kindergarten teachers and the teacher assistants participated in regular training activities organized, designed, and conducted by the project. These training sessions focused on topics related to the general Step-by-Step instructional model, as well as specific adaptations associated with this project. In addition, some Roma teaching assistants had access to university courses designed to prepare them as certified kindergarten teachers.

Preschool classes were offered for three hours each day to Roma children. The instructional activities of the preschool classes were built on the pedagogical approach of the Step-by-Step model. This approach emphasized child-centered teaching practices, which encouraged the active participation of all children in the educational process. Teachers were expected to employ an individualized approach to teaching, which respected the particular needs, capabilities, and knowledge of each child. Learning activities were organized around the use of six instructional centers involving (1) use of construction materials, (2) art activities, (3) development of speech and language abilities, (4) logical-mathematic activities and use of manipulatives, (5) sensory development and research activities, and (6) role play and drama activities. In addition to employing instructional materials and activities developed by the Step-by-Step model, this project also emphasized Roma culture, tradition, history, and language. These learning experiences sought to encourage all aspects of students' development, promote their independence through active participation in activities and interaction with materials and the environment, encourage capacities of classification and organization of materials and objects in space, and promote children's creativity and expression.

Learning activities and the rules governing them were jointly developed by the teachers, teaching assistants, and the students. Parents of Roma students were also encouraged to provide input into the learning activities. Children were given choices of activities during the class and participated in both individual and group learning activities. Teachers used an array of evaluation tools (including observational checklists and portfolios) to gather background on students, assess their developmental progress, and document their activities and achievement.

In addition to the educational activities, the preschool program offered a series of additional services to participating children. Children received one meal while

attending the class. They had an opportunity to bathe and have their clothes washed. They received books and school supplies. They also had a regular health checkup.

The Step-by-Step kindergarten model anticipated that its general elements, activities, and strategies would be adapted in several ways to meet the specific needs of the target population and the particular conditions in the host country. In keeping with the model, the adaptations conducted for this project included:

- Use of representatives of Roma NGO's or local NGO's involved in serving the Roma community, to organize and coordinate the program sites and to conduct outreach into the community.

- Use of mixed-age classes (from age 3 to 7).

- Use of Roma teaching assistants, most who can speak the Roma language.

- Emphasis on learning the official language of the country, Serbian.

- Emphasis on Roma language, culture, history, and tradition.

- Availability of non-educational services (bathing, clothes washing, books and learning materials, meal, and health checkup).

Project leadership and staff reported that these adaptations were developed in response to the specific needs of Roma children or to address issues associated with the development and operation of this program in the target communities.

In addition to the preschool classes conducted for Roma children, the project also offered services to Roma parents. This was also an essential feature of the Step-by-Step model. Roma parents were invited to participate in meetings with project staff, lectures conducted by outside experts, and joint learning activities with their children. These meetings, lectures, and joint learning activities were designed to engage Roma parents more closely into the children's education and to enhance their capability to serve as active participants in that education.

Roma parents also were given the opportunity to participate in planning and implementation of their community site. These efforts were designed to provide Roma parents with practical experiences to build their skills in interacting with educational institutions and educational professions. Project staff used these experiences to explicitly prepare Roma parents, to establish effective working partnerships with public school staff once their children enter elementary school.

Roma parents also participated in programs designed to develop their own literacy skills and to enable them to exercise their rights to education, health care, and social welfare. In addition, special programs were conducted for Roma parents, focusing on a wide array of topics , including sewing, needlework, knitting, home economics, gardening, and goat breeding. Project staff reported that this was another adaptation of the general elements of the Step-by-Step model designed to respond to the particular needs of the Roma population.

In addition to the services directly provided to Roma children and parents, the project sought to improve the educational opportunities available to Roma children by

establishing working partnerships with public kindergartens and elementary schools. The project developed written forms that were used by the project's preschool teachers to exchange information with school psychologists and teachers on Roma students' educational experiences, accomplishments, and needs during preschool and their first three years of elementary school. Information was exchanged for all students who attended the projects' preschool program.

This information exchange was designed to assist the elementary school teachers develop a more appropriate educational experience for Roma students during grades 1 to 3. In addition, this information was used by the project's preschool teachers when they conducted visits to the elementary schools. These visits were also used by the teachers to supplement information on students' transition to and progress in elementary school.

Some preschool programs also shared operating sites with public kindergartens or elementary schools. These programs were able to foster greater regular communication between project staff and school staff. They also were able to involve kindergarten and elementary school staff in their own training activities. These joint activities could enable the project to indirectly promote changes in pedagogical practices and school organization which reflected the principles of the Step-by-Step model.

**Staffing and Facilities.** The project as a whole was overseen by the Project Director at the Center for Interactive Pedagogy (CIP), Tatjana Pavlovski. In addition, CIP had three Master Teacher Trainers who worked with the project. In addition to overseeing the development and operation of the project in general, CIP staff provided assistance and support for the establishment and operation of each preschool program site. In particular, they supported program site staff in planning and implementing the services and activities at the site. They also provided training and support to the project's kindergarten teachers and teaching assistants.

Each site was led by an "Organizer", who was a representative from a local Roma NGO or a local NGO involved in serving the Roma community. The Organizer was responsible for establishing and overseeing the operation of the preschool program site and for conducting ongoing outreach to the Roma families. Each site also had a head preschool teacher. This was a certified kindergarten teacher (having completed the two year college preparation course of study). The head teacher was responsible for designing and implementing the instructional program at the site. Each class (group) at the site had one preschool teacher (who was a certified kindergarten teacher) and two teaching assistants (one of whom was usually a Roma teaching assistant). This team was responsible for working directly with the students. In addition, each site had a cleaning person to maintain the site.

During the 2000-01 school year, the project operated a total of 27 preschool classes (groups) in 15 sites around Yugoslavia – 2 of the sites had three classes; 7 had two classes; and 5 had only one class. Seven of the sites with 14 classes were operated in space managed by the local Roma NGO. This was generally space built upon or renovated solely by the project. Five sites with 9 classes were operated in space shared with the government-sponsored kindergarten. The two remaining sites with one class each, were located in a local elementary school and in a refugee center.

All sites and classrooms operated by the project were designed and furnished to specifications established under the Step-by-Step model. These specifications covered the physical layout of the classroom (into the six learning centers), the furniture used in the classrooms, and the toys, instructional materials, and other supplies present in the classroom. The kindergarten teachers were responsible for ensuring that all specifications are met.

**Budget and Other Resources.** In 2000, total cash expenditure for this project was approximately 300,000 USD. This covered the cost of ten preschool program sites, plus costs for opening five new sites.  Staff salaries accounted for approximately 31.1% of the cash expenditure. The cost of daily meals for the students accounted for a large portion of the total expenditures, approximately 43.45%. Project staff estimate that meals cost the project about 1 USD per child, per day. Also included in the overall budget is the cost for opening five new sites (6.67%), training (4.33%), and ongoing costs which made up 14.45% of the budget.

In the six sites shared with government-sponsored kindergartens and an elementary school, the government provides two types of in-kind contribution: cost of the space and salary for preschool teachers. In return, the project involves school staff in its training activities.

**Project Implementation.** Implementation of the Step-by-Step model began in Yugoslavia in 1995. This project, which adapted the elements of the model for use with Roma children and families, started in 1997. Table III-2 lists all the project sites which offered preschool programs during the 2000-01 school year, their starting date, and the number of students served.

**Table III-2. Sites Operated by Kindergarten as Family Center Project.**

| City | Location | Classes | Total Students | Roma Students | Year Begun |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rtanj | Refugee camp | 1 | 30 | 15 | 1997 |
| Kragujevac | Local Roma assn | 2 | 55 | 55 | 1997 |
| Masurica | Public kindergarten | 2 | 53 | 24 | 1997 |
| Binovce | Public kindergarten | 2 | 42 | 30 | 1998 |
| Kruševac | Local Roma assn. | 3 | 60 | 60 | 1998 |
| Niš | Local Roma assn. | 3 | 60 | 56 | 1998 |
| Čantavir | Public kindergarten | 1 | 25 | 25 | 1998 |
| Beograd | Local Roma assn. | 1 | 30 | 30 | 1999 |
| Surdulica | Elementary school | 1 | 29 | 28 | 2000 |
| Belo Polje | Public kindergarten | 2 | 64 | 35 | 2000 |
| Niš | Local Roma assn. | 2 | 45 | 45 | 2000 |
| Beograd | Local Roma assn. | 1 | 30 | 30 | 2000 |
| Bački Monoštor | Public kindergarten | 2 | 50 | 50 | 2001 |
| Novi Bečej | Local Roma assn. | 2 | 50 | 50 | 2001 |
| Bogojevo | Local Roma assn. | 2 | 50 | 50 | 2000 |

Project staff reported that finding appropriate sites to conduct the preschool program was a major challenge. Many Roma neighborhoods lacked the proper infrastructure or access to utilities needed by the program. Building a new site in the neighborhood was expensive. Using a site outside the neighborhood created travel problems for Roma students and parents. They reported that the practical approach was to place the project in a regular school building (which housed either a government-sponsored kindergarten or elementary school). However, this could not be accomplished for a majority of the sites.

Project staff reported that many Roma parents initially exhibited distrust and suspicion toward the project because it was seen as being operated by "outsiders". By establishing the role of "Organizer" and using a local Roma NGO representative, the project helped to reduce this level of distrust and suspicion.

Project staff also reported that communication with Roma students and parents was initially difficult due to the language barriers. Roma adults and children generally

lacked competency in the Serbian language. By ensuring that each class (group) had at least one Roma language speaker, the project significantly reduced communication difficulties.

Project staff also reported that the poor living conditions of Roma families often served to prevent regular attendance by Roma children to the preschool program. As a result, project staff adapted the general elements of the Step-by-Step model to incorporate direct provision of assistance to Roma families.

Daily meals emerged as a important motivating factor for ensuring regular attendance by Roma children. Some Roma parents sent their children to the preschool program on a consistent basis because this was often the only decent meal that the children received each day.

The living conditions of the Roma also made it difficult for Roma children to practice good hygiene and maintain good health. The project responded by providing children with an opportunity to bathe at the center, to have their clothes washed, and to receive health checkups. These steps helped address significant health issues that often affected the attitude of non-Roma adults and children toward Roma children in elementary school.

The project sites also emerged as important sources of assistance to Roma families. They donated clothing and provided assistance for families to obtain textbooks and other required school materials. They also served to connect families to other organizations providing social services and other assistance. In fact, project staff reported that sites were particularly successful in communities where Roma families had access to complementary service programs, including counseling programs, programs for women, occupational programs, and compensatory education programs.

**Figure 7. Project Sites for Yugoslavia.**

## Summary

The Roma education projects examined by this research can be divided into two distinct groups. The first group provided direct educational and related services to Roma children and their parents. This group included Roma Mentored Scholarship Project in Hungary, Program for Educational Support in Macedonia, Educational Centers Project in Slovakia, and Kindergartens as Family Centers Project in Yugoslavia/Serbia. The second group focused its activities on creating institutional change in the schools to benefit Roma children and their parents. This group included Intercultural Education Project in Bulgaria, Roma Teaching Assistant Project in the Czech Republic, and Equal Opportunities Project in Romania.

As Table III-3 indicates, all projects generally aspired to the same set of outcomes for Roma children from their activities. These included higher rates of school enrollment and completion, regular school attendance, higher marks, improved attendance, greater competence in the majority language, connections with Roma cultural traditions, greater motivation to learn, and improved self-confidence. However, the two groups of programs employed distinctly different timeframes. The first, focusing their services on Roma students, generally anticipated measurable outcomes in the short-term (three to five years). The second, focusing their services on teachers and schools, generally anticipated outcomes emerging over a longer time period (five to eight years).

Both groups of projects sought to benefit Roma children and parents. However, the direct service projects anticipated that these benefits would result directly from the services they provide. The institutional change projects anticipated that benefits to Roma children and parents would indirectly result from changes made by their services, in the behavior of school administrators and teachers and the operation of schools.

The four direct service projects offered seven categories of assistance to Roma children and their parents, including:

- Kindergarten or preschool preparation activities (Macedonia, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia/Serbia).

- Homework assistance and tutoring to elementary school students (Macedonia and Slovakia).

- Enrichment activities to both elementary and secondary school students (Macedonia).

- Mentoring support to secondary school students (Hungary and Macedonia).

- Scholarship assistance to secondary school students (Hungary and Macedonia).

- Parent training, education, and support (Macedonia, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia/Serbia).

- Humanitarian assistance to families (Macedonia, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia/Serbia).

As this list indicates, only the project in Macedonia offered the entire spectrum of direct services. However, the nature of services offered by the Macedonia project were often more narrowly focused than similar services offered by the other projects. For example, the preschool programs offered by the projects in Slovakia and Yugoslavia/Serbia focused on a wider set of skills and employed a wider range of learning activities than did the program of the Macedonia project.

The three institutional change projects each employed distinctly, different approaches to creating institutional change on a school-wide level.

- The project in Bulgaria sought to change the climate of elementary and secondary schools, by integrating intercultural education into the curriculum and promoting greater cultural sensitivity and understanding among teachers and students.

- The project in the Czech Republic sought to recruit, train, and place Roma adults as Roma Teaching Assistants (RTAs) in Czech elementary schools. As the project did not control or influence the use of RTAs in the schools, it could not target Roma students for specific educational assistance or support. Instead, the project sought to change the environment of the school for Roma children and their parents through the inclusion of Roma adults in the educational staff of the school.

- The project in Romania was the most ambitious of the institutional change initiatives. Using a decentralized approach, it sought to develop changes in the way schools were organized and operated, in the way they interacted with parents and teachers, in their understanding and approach to cultural differences, and in their approach to teaching. These changes were designed not only to improve the learning environment for Roma students, but for all other Romanian students, as well.

By providing materials, training, and technical assistance to teachers and schools, the institutional change projects involved a much larger number of students than the direct service projects. Serving one teacher, allowed the institutional change projects to involve all 20 to 30 of that teacher's students. Serving one school, allowed those projects to involve the 300 to 500 students who attended the school. These projects sought to build the capacity of teachers or schools to more effectively serve their students. In this way, the number of students benefiting from the project could be much larger than the number of school staff who directly participated in the project activities.

The same process did not occur with direct service projects. The nature of the services offered by these projects required direct contact between project staff and participating students. As a result, the number of students benefiting from the project was equal to the number of participants. Given existing resource limitations, direct service projects generally served fewer students than institutional change projects.

This difference also had significant implications for potential expansion of each type of project. The direct service projects did expand the number of students served by increasing the number of sites and/or the number of project staff available to work with students. More sites and more staff meant an increased budget for the project – either in the form of increased cash expenditure for facility costs and salaries or increased

contributions of donated facilities or staff. As a result, expansion of direct service projects required an increased investment of resources into the project.

Institutional change projects could and did expand over time, without an increased investment of outside resources. Through their ongoing professional interaction with colleagues, participating teachers shared their experiences, knowledge, and materials with fellow-teachers in the same school and even with those in other schools. This meant that the population of participating teachers and their students could increase over time, even if the resources invested in the project were not increased.

Most of the projects examined in this research have only been operating for a relatively short period of time. Only two of the projects (in Bulgaria and Slovakia) began before 1997. These limited periods of operation have enormous significance for assessing the impact of these projects. Given their indirect approach, the institutional change projects expect to have significant measurable impact on participating students within a longer time frame (five to eight years) than direct service projects (three to five years). Thus, we should expect that the magnitude of changes resulting from each of the two groups of projects will be very different, given the relatively short time frame within which these have operated.

**Table III-3. Educational Achievement Barriers to be Addressed by Seven Roma Education Projects**

| | Inter-Cultural Educ. Project (Bulg.) | RTA Project (Czech Rep.) | Roma Mentored Scholar-ships (Hung.) | Prog. For Educ. Support (Mac.) | Educ. Opp. Project (Rom.) | Educ. Centers Project (Slov.) | KG as Family Center Project (Yugo.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Differences in Traditional Teaching Practices & Learning Styles of Roma Students | | | | | D | | |
| Quality of Teaching in Schools | | | | | D | | I |
| Low Expectations About Roma Students by Teachers | | I | | | D | I | I |
| Lack of Competence in Majority Language by Roma Children | I | I | | D | I | D | D |
| Prejudice Against Roma Children in School | D | I | | | D | | I |
| Deprivation Among Roma Families | | | D | D | | | D |
| Attitudes of Roma Parents and Children About Public Schools | I | I | D | D | I | D | D |
| Lack of Academic Knowledge and Experience by Roma Children | | I | D | D | I | D | D |
| Health Issues Among Roma Children | | | | D | | D | D |
| **D – Project activities seek to DIRECTLY address the barrier.** **I – Project activities seeks to INDIRECTLY address the barrier.** | | | | | | | |

**Table III-4. Anticipated Educational Outcomes of Seven Roma Education Programs**

| | Inter-Cultural | RTA Project | Roma Mentored | Prog. For | Educ. Opp. | Educ. Centers | KG as Family |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | Educ. Project (Bulg.) | (Czech Rep.) | Scholar-ships (Hung.) | Educ. Support (Mac.) | Project (Rom.) | Project (Slov.) | Center Project (Yugo.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Higher Enrollment in Preschool | | | | S | | S | S |
| Higher Enrollment in Elementary Schools | | | | S | L | S | S |
| Higher Completion of Elementary Schools | L | L | | L | L | L | L |
| Higher Enrollment in Secondary Schools | | | S | L | L | | |
| Higher Completion of Secondary Schools | L | | S | L | L | | |
| Higher Enrollment in University | | | L | | | | |
| Regular School Attendance | L | L | S | S | L | S | S |
| Improved School Marks | L | L | S | S | L | S | S |
| Improved Classroom Behavior | L | L | | S | L | S | S |
| Greater Competence in Majority Language | L | L | | S | L | S | S |
| Maintain Connection with Roma Cultural Traditions | L | | | S | L | S | S |
| Greater Motivation to Learn | L | | S | S | L | S | S |
| Greater Self-Confidence & Self-Esteem | L | | S | S | L | S | S |

# Research Findings

This section of the report presents the results of the research conducted on the seven Roma education projects selected for examination in this project. Results are organized as responses to the four research questions that served as the focus for this research project. For each research question, this report presents a series of overall findings based on information from all seven Roma education projects. These findings are indicated in boldfaced type. For each finding, relevant research information from specific projects is then presented to document, illustrate, or clarify that finding.

These research conclusions are grounded in information gathered using multiple approaches with multiple sources. Information collection approaches included:

- Interviews with project directors, project developers, representatives of relevant government agencies and NGO's, and appropriate national experts.

- Interviews or written questionnaires administered to project staff.

- Interviews or written questionnaires administered to participating or relevant school administrators, teachers, or other school staff.

- Visits and observations of project sites, schools, and classrooms.

- Interviews with participating children and their parents.

- Review of student data from school records.

- Review of written and other materials produced by or about each project.

The research information was systematically collected and analyzed by the research team. Qualitative data was generally recorded and/or transcribed and then summarized. Summary information was categorized and analyzed for relevance, significance, and consistency. Appropriate trends and patterns were identified based on this analysis. Numerical information was also recorded and compiled. It underwent basic statistical analysis, to identify possible trends or significant patterns.

As noted in the previous section of this report, most of these projects have only been in operation for a relatively short period of time – usually three years or less. This meant that complete student records generally were only available for two school years (1998-99 and 1999-2000). In order to obtain baseline data and/or to reveal trends over time, the researchers sought to collect student data over the last three school years. However, both the availability of the information maintained by individual schools and its quality varied considerably – and limited the ability of the researchers to collect consistent data from all sites, within the time available for this research project.

In developing each of these findings, the research team has relied, wherever possible on both statistical and qualitative information. The team has also sought to employ information drawn from multiple sources, to maximize the reliability and validity of these findings. However, the limited time depth of most projects and issues associated with the quality of the statistical information, do suggest that findings drawn primarily

from the statistical information should be considered tentative. Additional longitudinal data collection and analysis is required to further develop these findings.

## Findings Responding to Research Question #1: Impact of Projects on Educational Attainment of Roma Students

**Finding #1-A: Roma children who attended the preschool program offered by the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) were better prepared for elementary school than Roma children who had not participated in such a program.**

In September and October 2000, members of the project's research team administered a standardized test to 164 children who began first grade in September 2000. The children lived in the three communities (Presov, Solivar, and Zehna) where the Educational Centers operated. Four groups of children were recruited to take this test:

- Program Group included Roma children who had completed the preschool program offered by the Educational Centers Project.

- Comparison Group 1 included Roma children who had not attended any preschool or kindergarten program.

- Comparison Group 2 included non-Roma children who had not attended any preschool or kindergarten program prior to beginning first grade.

- Comparison Group 3 included non-Roma children who had kindergarten program prior to beginning first grade.

Each of the four groups had an equal number of children (41).

The researchers employed the Preschool Children's Knowledge Test. This is an oral test designed for children aged 4 to 7. The test takes 10 to 15 minutes to administer to each child. It is designed to assess both the level of knowledge that a child possesses and the child's ability to apply that knowledge in a social environment. The test includes 40 questions equally divided across ten domains, including: society, numbers, time, games/sport, tales, animals, plants, household, tools, and profession. In scoring the results, each question is equally weighted. Thus, student scores can range from 0 to 40. The results in Table IV-1 include both the numerical result (the actual number of items answered correctly) and a percentage result (the percentage of the 40 total items answered correctly).

**Table IV-1. Average Score of Selected Children in Slovakia on Standardized Test (Fall 2000).**

|  | Presov | Solivar | Zehna | All Sites |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Program Group** | 25.3 (63.3%) | 21.1 (52.8%) | 14.3 (35.5%) | 19.1 (47.7%) |
| **Comparison Group 1** | 14.3 (35.8%) | 13.0 (32.5%) | 8.9 (22.1%) | 11.1 (28.5%) |
| **Comparison Group 2** | 28.5 (71.2%) | 28.5 (71.3%) | 28.6 (71.4%) | 28.6 (71.3%) |
| **Comparison Group 3** | 33.2 (83.1%) | 30.1 (75.3%) | 31.5 (78.8%) | 31.7 (79.5%) |

In January and February 2001, the research team administered a standardized school readiness test to 108 children who had enrolled to begin first grade in September 2001. Thus, they were a year younger than the children who had participated in the first test administration. These children also lived in the three communities where the Educational Centers operated. These children only represented three of the four research groups: Program Group; Comparison Group 1 (Roma children with no kindergarten); and Comparison Group 3 (non-Roma children with kindergarten). Each of these three groups included 36 children.

The second test was the Orientation Test for Preparedness of School developed by Karol Kollarik. This test focused on assessing readiness for elementary school. It incorporates four subtests involving capturing details and differences, mathematical thinking, capabilities of categorization, and fine motor skills. Students are asked to carry out specific tasks and are assessed on how these tasks are carried out. Tasks are differentially weighed in scoring the test with a total score on the test of 72. Test results allow students to be divided into three broad categories:

- Those sufficiently prepared for school (score of 44 to 72)

- Those with deficiencies in their preparation (score of 33 to 43)

- Those insufficiently prepared for school (score of 0 to 32)

As this is used as a diagnostic test of school readiness, students falling into either of the two lower categories require additional assessment. However based on these results, it can be concluded that students in the two lower categories are more likely to have problems when they enter elementary school.

**Table IV-2. Average Score of Selected Children in Slovakia on Readiness Test (Winter 2001).**

|  | Presov | Solivar | Zehna | All Sites |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Program Group** | 48.7 | 51.3 | 49.5 | 49.3 |
| **Comparison Group 1** | 34.1 | 25.8 | 25.1 | 30.7 |
| **Comparison Group 3** | 63.9 | 60.5 | 51.7 | 60.8 |

**Chart IV-1. School Readiness of Selected Children in Slovakia on Readiness Test (Winter 2001).**
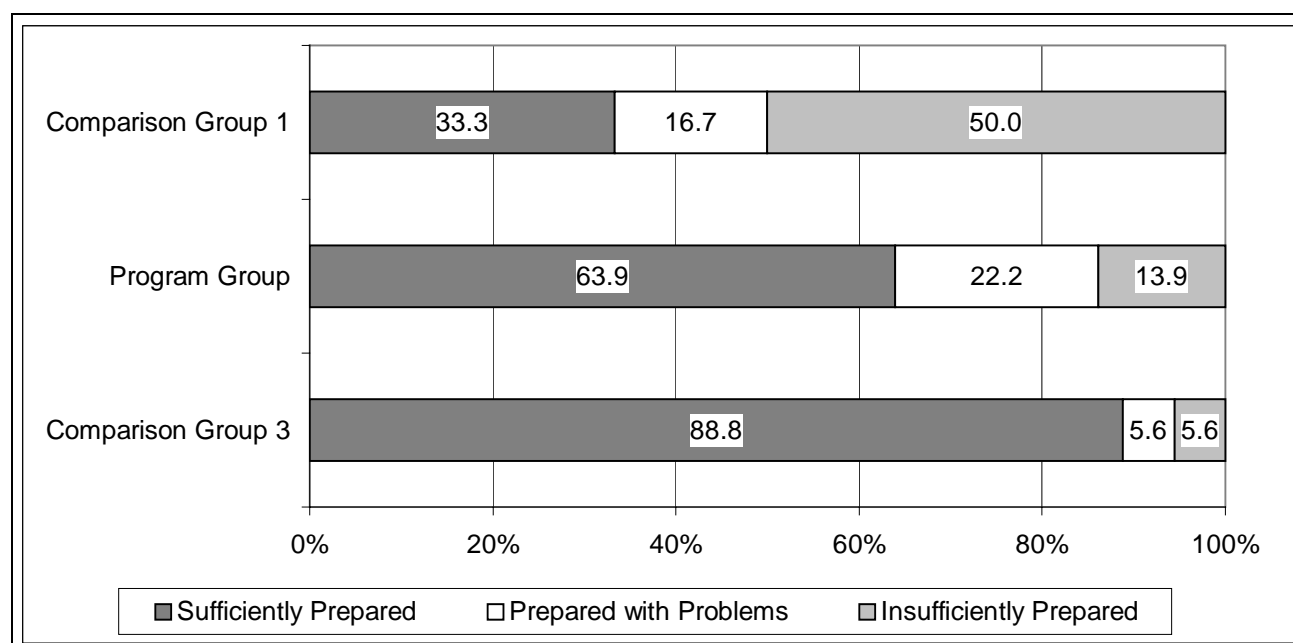


The results of both the standardized test and the school are consistent. On both tests, Roma children participating in the preschool program offered by the Educational Centers Project, scored significantly higher than a comparable group of Roma children who had not participated in Project activities. The second test specifically indicates that a much higher proportion of Roma Project participants are sufficiently prepared for school than a comparable group of Roma non-Project participants.

Interviews with Project staff also confirm these results. According to Project staff, primary school teachers consistently report that Roma Project participants are better prepared for entering school than Roma Project non-participants. In particular, these teachers report that Roma Project participants begin school with greater proficiency in the majority language (Slovakian), greater pre-reading and pre-writing skills, greater knowledge of math and science, better ability to concentrate, and better fine motor skills. Moreover, staff reports that fewer Roma Project participants have been placed in special schools as a result of this preparation.

At the same time, the results of the two tests reveal that a performance gap still exists between Roma and non-Roma children, despite the participation of Roma children in the Project's preschool program. This gap is persistent across all three sites. In part, these results reflect the fact that the preschool experience of non-Roma children still usually began earlier and was more intensive than the preschool experience of Roma children participating in the Project's preschool program. However, this gap existed even where non-Roma children did <u>not</u> attend preschool. This suggests that participation in a preschool program alone is not sufficient to equalize the educational opportunities between Roma and non-Roma children. Nevertheless, the results of these two tests provided compelling evidence that preschool participation can close this gap significantly.

**<u>Finding # 1-B:</u> Roma children who attended the <u>preschool program</u> offered by the <u>Educational Centers Project (Slovakia)</u> had higher marks, better attendance, and better behavior than Roma children who had not participated in such a program.**

The research team compared school records for a total of 180 students including 92 students in third grade during the 2000-01 school year and 88 students in second grade during that year. Again students were divided into four equal groups: Program Group (Roma Project participants); Comparison Group 1 (Roma Project non-participants); Comparison Group 2 (non-Roma students with no kindergarten); and Comparison Group 3 (non-Roma students with kindergarten). Here too there were equal numbers of students in each group – 22 in each group of second graders and 23 in each group of third graders.

The research team focused on the records of the current second grade students during their last complete school year – first grade (during the 1999-2000 school year). The team also focused on the records of current third grade students during their last two complete school years – second grade (1999-2000) and first grade (1998-1999).

The research team examined both student attendance and class marks. The average number of both excused and unexcused absences were computed for the Program Group and the three comparison groups, over first and second grade for the current third grade students and over first grade for the current second grade students. The average class mark was computed for the three major courses (Slovak, Mathematics, and Science & Society) and overall only for second grade because separate class marks were not given during first grade. First grade had only a single mark. Marks were computed using a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the best mark. Therefore in Table IV-4, a lower number represents a better mark.

Table IV-3 below reports the average number of classes or lessons missed by students in each group and how many were excused or unexcused.

**Table IV-3. Average** Number of Classes (or Lessons) Absent for Selected Students in Slovakia **(1998 – 2000).**

| | Program | Comparison | Comparison | Comparison |
|---|---|---|---|---|

|  | Group | Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade 1 (1999-2000) Excused Abs.** | 110.3 | 127.0 | 64.5 | 63.0 |
| **Grade 1 (1999-2000) Unexc. Abs.** | 1.7 | 22.0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Grade 1 (1998-1999) Excused Abs.** | 84.5 | 117.1 | 73.3 | 50.9 |
| **Grade 1 (1998-1999) Unexc. Abs.** | 0 | 16.5 | 0 | 0 |
| **Grade 2 (1999-2000) Excused Abs.** | 79.1 | 134.9 | 72.6 | 52.5 |
| **Grade 2 (1999-2000) Unexc. Abs.** | 1.3 | 7.4 | 0 | 0 |

**Table IV-4. Average Marks for Selected Second Grade Students in Slovakia (1999 – 2000).**

|  | Program Group | Comparison Group 1 | Comparison Group 2 | Comparison Group 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Slovak** | 2.95 | 3.57 | 1.67 | 1.48 |
| **Mathematics** | 2.67 | 3.24 | 1.43 | 1.43 |
| **Science & Society** | 1.90 | 2.57 | 1.14 | 1.24 |
| **Total** | 2.43 | 3.19 | 1.38 | 1.38 |
| **Note: Marks range from "1" (highest) to "5" (lowest).** | | | | |

The information presented in Tables IV-3 and IV-4 demonstrate that Roma Project participants consistently receive higher marks and have higher attendance in grades 1 and 2 than Roma students who did not participate in the Project. However, a gap continues to exist between Roma and non-Roma students – despite project participation. Roma students who participated in the preschool program still have lower average marks and higher average absences than non-Roma students.

The research team also examined school performance of students during first grade. This examination revealed that fewer students in the Program Group failed during first grade among both current second grade students and current third grade students, when compared to Roma students in comparison group 1. Among current third graders, 2 students in the Program Group failed first grade, but 9 students in Comparison Group 1 failed first grade once and 3 failed the grade twice. Among current second graders, 7 students in the Program Group failed first grade, but 7 students in Comparison Group 1 failed first grade once and 2 failed twice.

In addition to reviewing these student records, the research team also asked the teachers of the 164 first grade students who participated in the first standardized test (administered in September-October 2000) to assess the behavior and competency in the Slovak language of these students. The results of this inquiry are listed in Table IV-5. This table indicates the proportion of students in the Program Group and the three comparison groups who were considered to have satisfactory behavior and who were considered to be competent in the Slovak language.

**Table IV-5. Assessment of Behavior and Slovak Language Competency of Selected First Grade Students in Slovakia (2000-2001).**

|  | Program Group | Comparison Group 1 | Comparison Group 2 | Comparison Group 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Behavior Satisfactory** | 68.3% | 48.8% | 92.7% | 100% |
| **Competent in Slovak Language** | 73.2% | 43.9% | 100% | 100% |

Observations of elementary school classes by the research team, also found those Roma students who were project participants, were better prepared for class than Roma students who had not participated. Research team members conducted one to three days of observations in 18 elementary school classes in three schools in Presov. Observations were conducted of equal numbers of first, second, and third grade classes. There were a total of 388 students in these 16 classes, including 57 Roma students. Of the Roma students in these classes, 33 were Project participants and 24 were not.

Among the incidents recorded by the research team during their classroom observations were instances of missing homework or class materials by the students. Among Roma who were Project participants, there were 20 instances of missing homework (0.6 per student) and 35 instances of missing materials (1.1 per student). Among Roma who did not participate in the Project, there were 29 instances of missing home (1.2 per student) and 31 instances of missing materials (1.3 per student). Thus, it appears from these observations that Roma students who were project participants, were consistently better prepared for class than their counterparts who failed to participate. As a result, it is not surprising that project participants had higher marks than Roma students who failed to participate.

The educational success of Roma Project participants during the primary grades is further reinforced by the survey responses of 34 teachers in grades 1 to 4 from five

schools in Presov and Zehna. This survey was completed by teachers during January and February 2001. Of the 34 teachers, 23 reported that they had children from the Educational Centers enrolled in their class. Seventeen (17) of these 23 teachers reported that they could tell a difference between Roma students who participated in the Project and those who failed to participate. Teachers reported that Project participants were better prepared in Slovak language, better prepared in mathematics, and better behaved.

**<u>Finding 1-C:</u> Roma children who participated in the <u>preschool program</u> offered by the <u>Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia)</u> were better prepared to begin elementary school than Roma children who had not participated in such a program.**

This research team reviewed school records for a total of 88 Roma children who began elementary school during the 2000-2001 school year. This included 52 children from six communities who had participated in Project activities and 36 children from comparable communities who were not Project participants.

**Chart IV-2. Results on School Readiness Test for Selected Roma Children in Yugoslavia/Serbia. (Fall 2000)**
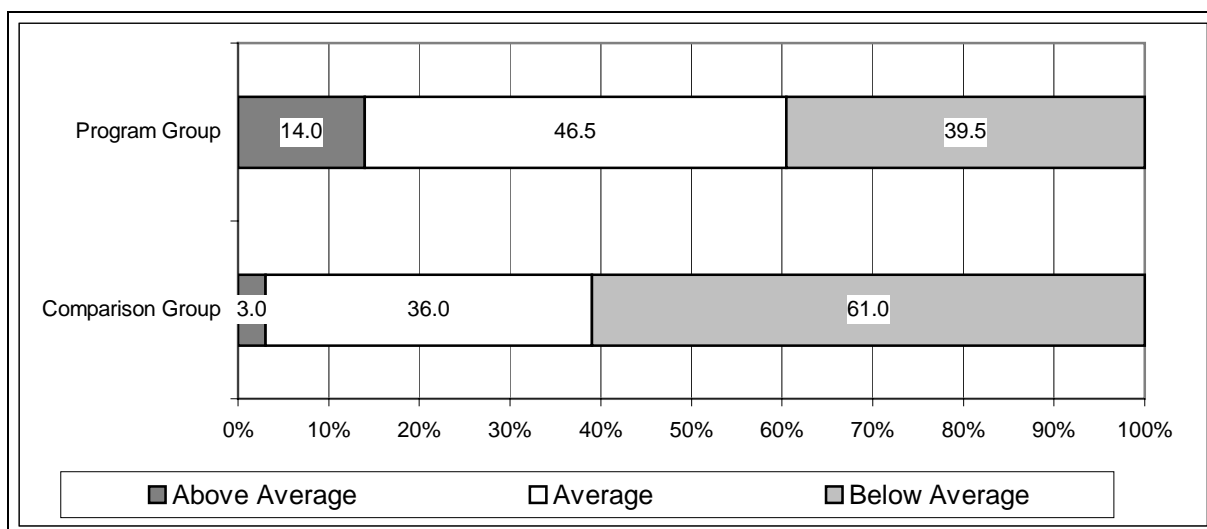


The results of the school readiness test indicate that Project participants were better prepared for elementary school than a comparable group of Roma students who did not attend the preschool programs offered by the Project.

School record also indicated that Roma children participating in the Project were more likely to be competent in the majority language (Serbian) than the comparable group of non-participants. According to these records, 81% of Project participants, but only 67% of non-participants were reported as "good" in the Serbian language.

The responses to a written survey of 16 school staff (1 school director, 9 teachers, and 6 psychologists or pedagogues) from 9 schools in 5 project sites, presented similar conclusions. Fifteen (15) of the 16 respondents (94%) reported that Roma children participating in Project activities were "adequately prepared" for elementary school. They further reported that observable differences existed between Roma children who had participated in the Project and those who had not participated. Specifically, Project

participants exhibited greater prior knowledge, demonstrated better interaction with their peer group, adapted to the school environment faster, communicated better with teachers, and exhibited greater competency in the Serbian language. These characteristics were all seen as reflecting better preparation for elementary school.

At the same time, 5 of 16 staff (31%) reported that Project participants could still require further preparation. They cited a need for additional work on skills, knowledge, and behavior. As with the research on the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia), these results suggest that the preschool program has reduced but not eliminated the preparation gap between Roma and non-Roma children.

**Finding #1-D: Roma students who participated in the <u>preschool program</u> offered by the <u>Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia)</u> were less likely to drop out during the first three years of elementary school than Roma students who had not participated in such a program.**

The research team reviewed the school records of 105 Roma children who were enrolled in grades 1 to 3 during the 1999-2000 school year. These children were drawn from six of the project sites. By the end of this school year, 16% of these children had dropped out of school.

The team also reviewed the records in a comparison school with a large Roma student population in the same community as one of the Project sites. According to these records, there were a total of 166 Roma students eligible to attend school in grades 1 to 3. However, only 94 were still enrolled in those grades – a dropout rate of 42%.

**Finding #1-E: Roma students who attended <u>preschool programs</u> offered in certain sites by the <u>Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia)</u> had higher marks and better attendance during the first three years of elementary school than Roma students who had not participated in such programs.**

As noted in the project description, the Kindergarten as Family Center Project offered preschool programs in two kinds of sites. In 6 out of 14 sites, the Project shares facilities with a local public kindergarten or elementary school. In the other 8 sites, the Project operates separate facilities.

In its analysis of school records, the research team identified 73 Roma students who attended 3 separate facilities and 32 Roma students who attended 3 shared facilities. In addition, the team identified 101 Roma students enrolled in grades 1 to 3 during the 1999-2000 school year who had not participated in the Project. These included 7 students who were enrolled in the same schools as Project participants and 94 students who were enrolled in a comparison school with no Project participants.

The research team computed average marks and attendance for each of the three groups of Roma students. Marks were computed on a scale ranging from 1 to 5 with "1" representing "unsatisfactory" and "5" representing "excellent". Thus, the higher the score, the better the student's performance. The team also computed the percentage of "regular attendees". Regular attendees were defined by the school as students who attended at least two-third of the school days.

**Table IV-6. Comparison of Attendance and Marks for Selected Roma Students in Yugoslavia/Serbia for Grades 1 to 3. (1997-2000)**

| | Participants in Shared Sites | Participants in Separate Sites | Students in Comparison School |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Average Mark** | 2.5 | 3.5 | 3.1 |
| **Regular Attendees** | 53% | 89% | 84% |
| **Note: Marks range from "5" (excellent) to "1" (unsatisfactory).** | | | |

The results of this analysis indicate that Roma children attending preschool programs in separate sites had significantly higher marks and better attendance than Roma children attending preschool programs in shared sites. At the same time, there appears to be no difference in the preparation gains of the two groups of Project participants. According to Project records, 90% of students from each type of site (separate and shared) successfully passed the readiness test and were enrolled in first grade during the 2000-2001 school year. This may suggest that initial gains made in both types of sites may not persist for children who attended the shared sites.

Interviews with project staff suggest that other factors may also have contributed to the differences seen in student results. The three shared sites are located in isolated and impoverished villages while the three separate sites are located in more urban areas, with access to greater resources. This could account for the differences. A similar pattern was apparent in Slovakia, where Roma children attending the village site had consistently lower scores than their counterparts in the urban sites. Other factors related both to the effectiveness of the local Roma association which was collaborating with the project to develop and operate the site, and to the quality of the teaching staff. Project staff reported that differences existed in both factors regarding the shared and the separate sites. Further investigation is needed to examine the relative effects on student performance of these various factors.

The students attending the separate sites had somewhat better marks than Roma students in the comparison school. This was not the case for students in the shared sites. These results seemed to indicate that Roma students in shared sites, actually performed worse educationally, than Roma students who did not participate in the Project.

However, there are two factors that have skewed the results for students in the comparison site. First, the research team discovered that some students at the comparison site had attended a preschool conducted by the school. The research team could not determine the number and identity of the students. So, this factor could not be included in the analysis. Second, the records examined for the comparison school were only for students who were still enrolled in school. Our analysis of school records (described earlier) also revealed that more than 40% of eligible Roma students had already dropped out of school. Their records were not included in this analysis.

It would be reasonable to assume that the Roma students who had dropped out of school were failing in their marks and were not attending school regularly. If we adjust

the marks and attendance rates to reflect these assumptions, we discover that the average mark for the comparison school students would be about 2.25, and the percentage that are regular attendees would be less than 50%.

These adjusted comparison results suggest that Roma children attending the separate sites continued to perform considerably better than their counterparts who did not participate in the Project – even though some of the students in the comparison group attended another preschool program. Roma students in the shared sites also performed somewhat better than the comparison group. At the same time, these results suggest that initial gains made by Roma children in the shared sites, may not persist after three years in elementary school to the same degree as for students in the separate sites.

A comparison of student records for Project participants in one separate site with records for Roma children who were non-participants confirmed these research results. This analysis focused on children who began first grade during the 1998-99 school year.

**Table IV-7. Comparison of Educational Attainment for Project Participants and Comparison Group in One Project Site in Yugoslavia/Serbia. (1998/99)**

|  | Project Participants | Comparison Group |
|---|---|---|
| **Passed Readiness Test** | 100% | 67% |
| **Regular Attendance** | 100% | 47% |
| **Competent in Serbian** | 97% | 33% |
| **Complete First Grade** | 100% | 40% |

Interviews with teachers and psychologists in several elementary schools attended by Project participants also confirmed these results. School staff consistently reported that Project participants had demonstrated better educational attainment and school completion rates than other Roma children. They specifically cited greater success on primary school readiness tests, higher marks, better attendance, improved proficiency in the Serbian language, and more successful completion of each grade level. As one school director noted: "The number of [Roma] children that failed is practically not worth mentioning because these children by their behavior, regular attendance, and [educational] achievements positively influence all the other Roma children."

**Finding #1-F: Roma students participating in the <u>homework assistance and tutoring program</u> offered by the <u>Program for Educational Support (Macedonia)</u> had improved or stable marks and regular attendance in elementary school. Their marks were also better than Roma students who had not received home assistance or tutoring.**

Data from throughout the region suggests that the educational performance of many Roma children declines as they proceed through school. As has been stated earlier, Roma children generally begin school at an educational disadvantage to their non-Roma peers. As the effects of educational and language barriers continue and grow, the educational disadvantage widens. The result is that both school attendance and class marks decline among many Roma. In many cases, these declines result in students

being retained rather than promoted to the next grade level. As these failures mount, most Roma students eventually disengage from school entirely and dropout.

Staff from the Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) has observed such a pattern among Roma children in the Shuto Orizari community in Macedonia. Conversations with local elementary school staff have confirmed these conclusions.

A review of the school records of students participating in the homework assistance program offered by the Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) indicates that such students do not exhibit such a pattern. The research team reviewed the records for 237 such Roma students over two complete school years (1998-99 and 1999-2000) and the partial records for a third school year (2000-01). The team compared the marks for students from one school year with those from the previous year, to determine whether their marks improved, remained unchanged, or declined over time.

**Table IV-8. Change in Class Mark for Participating Roma Students in Macedonia (1998-2001).**

|  | No. of Students | Mark Improved | Mark Unchanged | Mark Declined |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1998-1999** | **40** | **17%** | **83%** | **0%** |
| **1999-2000** | **91** | **22%** | **78%** | **0%** |
| **2000-2001** | **106** | **20%** | **69%** | **11%** |

Not only did the vast majority of participating Roma students maintain their marks from one school year to the next, but also about one in five actually saw their marks improve. Moreover, most of the students who recorded a decline in their marks during the current school year were students who had discontinued participation in the homework assistance program. This suggests that continued participation in program activities by Roma students, is necessary to sustain its benefits.

According to project staff, all students who received homework assistance also had regular school attendance during this period of time. This even included those students considered by their schoolteachers to have the greatest problems in school.

Project staff at the original program site reported that their greatest success occurred with younger students who had received homework assistance since they had begun elementary school. Staff identified 20 students who were enrolled in third grade whose class marks were consistently at the highest level (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale). At the same time, staff reported that some of these students now attended program activities less frequently or not at all. For most of the students who reduced their participation in program activities, their class marks declined from their previous high level.

Similar examples were provided from the program's second site (established in September 2000). Program staff cited one student whose marks were 3 or 4 when he received homework assistance through the project. His mark subsequently dropped to 1 (failing) when he stopped coming. After receiving encouragement from his teacher and from other Roma students, this child resumed his participation in the project's

homework assistance program. Staff reports that his marks have risen and that he is once more passing.

In a March 2001 group interview with the research team, one upper grade (5 to 8) student cited a similar experience. This student reported that "until the moment I came here I had general mark [of] 2 and for some subjects I have [general mark of] 1. But after I came here my grades are 4 or sometimes 3 but not less than that. I have improved."

By involving younger Roma students in program activities from the beginning of their schooling experience, Project staff note that they are able to address the learning deficiencies of younger Roma students earlier. For older Roma students, their learning deficiencies have become compounded and are much more difficult to successfully address. Nevertheless, the data suggests that continued services are needed by both groups if the gains resulting from program participation are to continue. In other words, it does not appear that program participation results in long-term sustainable educational benefits for Roma children. Rather, educational benefits rely upon continued program participation.

In addition to noting measurable improvement in the academic performance of participating Roma students, the research team also observed Roma students who participated in the program activities had better classroom marks than their counterparts who did not participate. The research team reviewed the school records for four classes of students (two in fourth grade and two in fifth grade) in one elementary school.

One fifth grade class included 11 students who had participated in program activities. These students had an average mark of 3.7 (on a five-point scale with 5 the highest score) and 45% of the students had a mark of 4 or 5. That class also included 19 students who had not participated in program activities. These students had an average mark of 1.5 and only 5% of these students had a mark of 4 or 5. The second fifth grade class included 45 students. None of these students had participated in program activities. The average mark of these students was 1.9 and only 20% of these students had a mark of 4 or 5.

A similar pattern was observed in the two fifth grade classes. One class included some students who had participated in program activities. The average class mark for this class (including both program participants and program non-participants) was 3.1. The second class did not include any students who had participated in the program. The average mark for the second class (including only program non-participants) was 2.8.

**Finding #1-G: Roma secondary school students receiving <u>scholarships, tutoring, and mentoring assistance</u> through the <u>Roma Mentored Scholarship Project (Hungary)</u> and the <u>Program for Educational Support (Macedonia)</u> were more likely to remain in school than Roma students who failed to receive this assistance.**

The financial assistance provided by these projects played a crucial role in increasing the motivation and financial ability of Roma students to remain in secondary school. The research team interviewed 51 Roma students including 31 students who were participating in the Roma Mentored Scholarship Project (Hungary) and 20 who were participating in a comparison project, which provided scholarships but no mentoring or

tutoring assistance. All students in both groups reported increased motivation and support for staying in school under each program.

These perceptions were confirmed in interviews by the research team with teacher-mentors participating in the Roma Mentored Scholarship Project, with parents of Roma students participating in the two projects, and with administrators (form-masters and headmasters) in schools attended by Roma students participating in the two projects. Twenty (20) out of 27 (75%) of the teacher-mentors and 12 of 16 (75%) of the school administrators reported such observations with regard to students participating in the Roma Mentored Scholarship Project. Six out of 10 (60%) of the school administrators and 7 of 10 (70%) of the parents reported similar observations with regard to the students participating in the comparison scholarship project.

In addition to the financial assistance, the Roma Mentored Scholarship Project provided participating Roma students access to a mentor, who offered tutoring. Many also offered social support and advice. As a result, all 31 of the participating students reported academic performance and social development gains due to their participation in the Project. Only 10 of 20 students participating in the comparison scholarship project reported such gains. Moreover, all 31 of the students participating in the Roma Mentored Scholarship Project reported that the availability of assistance or the specific educational assistance to be the most important aspect of the project – even more important than the financial assistance.

A review of student records by the research team in Hungary confirmed the responses of both students and mentors. The researchers examined the student records in ten Hungarian secondary schools enrolling students receiving either mentored scholarships or comparable non-mentored scholarships. Among the 4,567 students enrolled in the ten schools, there were 28 scholarship recipients – 12 receiving mentored scholarships and 16 receiving non-mentored scholarships. None of the Roma students in this small sample of scholarship recipients dropped out of school.

Moreover, the average mark among Roma students participating in both scholarship projects was higher than the average mark of <u>all students</u> (both Roma and non-Roma) in their respective high schools. The average mark of all students in the ten high schools was 3.6 (on a scale of 1 to 5 with "5" as the highest mark). The average mark for Roma students in the mentored scholarship project was 3.9, while the average mark for Roma students in the non-mentored scholarship project was 4.6. These results suggested that receipt of the scholarships helped motivate participating Roma students to exceed the average academic performance of their non-Roma, as well as their Roma, peers in secondary school.

Due to different eligibility criteria, the Roma students who received mentored scholarships were less successful in school at the time they received the scholarship than those Roma students who received the <u>non</u>-mentored scholarship. Students receiving the <u>non</u>-mentored scholarship were required to have a mark average of 4.0, while those receiving the mentored scholarship were required to have a mark average of only 3.5. This suggests that Roma students receiving the mentored scholarship were more likely to be struggling in school, than their peers who received the <u>non</u>-mentored scholarship.

This conclusion is reinforced by a review of family income data from students' scholarship applications. The average family income of students receiving the non-mentored scholarship was at least 12% higher than that for students who received the mentored scholarship.

This data suggests that the mentored scholarships succeeded in keeping those Roma students, who were most likely to struggle, performing above the minimal eligibility standard. While mentored scholarship recipients did not perform, on average, as well in the school marks as the recipients of the non-mentored scholarship, this is likely to have reflected pre-existing differences related to previous school performance and a lower family income.

Participation in the Roma Mentored Scholarship Project also opened other "doors" leading to educational support for Roma students. The Project is specifically seen, by its sponsoring foundation, as a "gateway" for Roma students to additional assistance. Activities are incorporated into the project to inform Roma students of these additional opportunities. As a result, one-third (10 of 31) of the Roma students participating in this project were aware of other projects designed to provide educational assistance to Roma students. At the same time, none of the Roma students participating in the comparison scholarship project were aware of such projects.

This research suggests that there are educational benefits associated with providing Roma students scholarship assistance. However, these benefits are increased when mentoring assistance and information about other educational support programs are also provided to participating Roma students.

The Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) incorporates a mentored scholarship program which involved 22 Roma students in  in the first year of high school.  A second program offered scholarships (without mentoring assistance) to Roma students in their fourth year of high school. In interviews, project staff provided anecdotal information documenting the value and benefit of this assistance.

According to project staff, a larger number of Roma students sought to complete secondary school due to the encouragement and support they received from the project during elementary school. However due to funding limitations, the project was able to provide financial assistance and other support to only a few of these students. Students who received this assistance (both financial and otherwise) remained in school. They also improved or maintained relatively high marks (4 or 5 on a five-point mark scale). However, most of those who did not receive financial assistance either failed to enroll in secondary school or dropped out during the school year.

**Finding #1-H: There was some evidence that fewer students in the primary grades (1 to 3) were failing promotion to the next grade in schools participating in the Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic).**

In interviews, both project staff and administrators of participating schools emphasized that quantifying the impact of RTAs was extremely difficult because of the nature of the work conducted by RTAs. As indicated in the project description earlier in this report, the roles carried out by RTAs varied considerably in different schools. As a result, the presence of RTAs contributed to a variety of initiatives and activities ongoing in each school. In some cases, RTAs made these activities possible. In other cases, they enhanced these activities significantly. In still others, they simply contributed to their

operation. As the Roma Teaching Assistant Project interacted with these other efforts in different ways in each school, the impact of the Project on Roma students could not be easily isolated.

Despite these inherent difficulties, the research team sought to identify possible associations between the presence of RTAs in school and student educational performance and attendance – given that there was a stated desire in all participating schools to improve the educational achievement of Roma students. Specifically, the research team reviewed student records in five schools (see Table IV-9), which employed RTAs under the Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic). Records were examined for three full school years (1997-98; 1998-99; and 1999-2000). In addition, records were examined for the first semester of the current school year (2000-01). Student records were examined for students in grades 1 to 4. Due to legal requirements in the Czech Republic, the research team was not able to identify specific Roma children in these classes. However, the placement of RTAs in these schools by the Czech Ministry of Education, confirmed that these schools had substantial Roma student enrollments.

**Table IV-9. Profile of Czech Schools Included in Student Record Analysis.**

|  | **Total Student Population** | **Percentage of Roma Students** | **Number of RTAs** | **Year RTAs First Employed** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **School #1** | 400 | 50% | 1 | 1998 |
| **School #2** | 364 | 40% | 1 | 1997 |
| **School #3** | 250 | 98% | 8 | Before 1997 |
| **School #4** | 277 | 50% | 1 | 1998 |
| **School #5** | 700 | 20% | 2 | 1998 |

For each grade level in each school year, the research team reviewed student marks and noted how many students in each grade had failing marks and had not been promoted to the next grade. The team conducted a cross-sectional comparison to identify changes in the failure rate among first grade students in each school over the last three full school years (1997 to 2000). These percentages are presented in Table IV-10. The team also conducted a longitudinal comparison to identify changes over time in the failure rates for students, in grades 3 and 4, during the 1999-2000 school year. These comparisons could only be made over two full school years (1998 to 2000). These percentages are presented in Table IV-10.

**Table IV-10. Failure Rates Among First Grade Students in Participating Schools in the Czech Republic. (1997 – 2000)**

|            | 1997-98 | 1998-99 | 1999-2000 |
|------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| School #1  | 14%     | 6%      | 0%        |
| School #2  | 5%      | 7%      | 3%        |
| School #3  | 4%      | 6%      | 0%        |
| School #4  | 9%      | 6%      | 7%        |

**Table IV-11. Failure Rates Among Longitudinal Group of Students in Participating Schools in the Czech Republic. (1998 – 2000)**

|            | 1998-99 | 1999-2000 |
|------------|---------|-----------|
| School #1  | 8%      | 0%        |
| School #2  | 6%      | 2%        |
| School #3  | 10%     | 2%        |
| School #4  | 3%      | 3%        |

These results suggest that the presence of RTAs could be most beneficial to those students who are having the most trouble in school. Comments by teachers, observations by the researchers, and past research indicate that most of those students are Roma.

Such results are consistent with the educational work carried out by most RTAs. Interviews with school directors, teachers, and RTAs in these four schools indicated that most RTAs spent a majority of their classroom time assisting those Roma students who had the greatest educational problems – in other words, those Roma students at the greatest risk of educational failure.

However, there was considerable variability among RTAs in these four schools regarding the amount of time spent in the classroom compared to the amount of time spent on other activities. In two of the schools, RTAs were also involved in providing "social work"-type assistance to Roma families and, in three of the schools, they were involved in outreach to parents around student attendance issues.

There was also a large variance concerning the nature of the work conducted in the classroom. Among the six RTAs interviewed in these four schools, three reported explaining lessons to Roma students, two reported providing assistance to students in carrying out their assignments, and three reported conducting lessons in association with the teacher. Two of the RTAs reported devoting significant time to maintaining discipline and order among students (particularly Roma students) in the classroom and the school. This information indicated that the assistance provided by RTAs to

individual students in these schools varied considerably from school to school and even between RTAs in the same school.

**Finding #1-I: There were no consistent changes in the educational attainment or school attendance of children in schools participating in the Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic).**

In addition to using student data to track changes in failure rates over time; the research team also examined attendance rates and class marks. Attendance was computed by determining the average number of absences (both excused and unexcused) per student for school. Absences are reported in Czech schools by number of classes missed. Marks were computed by determining the average mark for each class on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being the highest mark). Student data was collected and analyzed for two full school years (1998-99 and 1999-2000) and for the first term of the current school year (2000-01). Longitudinal comparisons were made tracking students who are currently in grades 3 and 4.

**Table IV-12. Average Marks of Students Currently in Grades 3 and 4 in Participating Schools in the Czech Republic. (1998 – 2001)**

|  | 1997-1998 | 1998-1999 | 2000-2001 (1st term) |
|---|---|---|---|
| School #1 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.7 |
| School #2 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.8 |
| School #3 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 1.7 |
| School #4 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.7 |
| School #5 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Note: Marks range from "1" (highest) to "5" (lowest). | | | |

**Table IV-13. Average Number of Absences of Students Currently in Grades 3 and 4 in Participating Schools in the Czech Republic. (1998-2001)**

|  | 1997-1998 | 1998-1999 | 2000-2001 (1st term) |
|---|---|---|---|
| School #1 | 144 | 193 | 93 |
| School #2 | 176 | 190 | 94 |
| School #3 | 150 | 156 | 72 |
| School #4 | 109 | 134 | 75 |
| School #5 | 37 | 38 | 53 |

Comparisons of annual average marks and absences per student revealed no consistent trends over time. Average marks changed only slightly during this time period. Average absences actually increased – keeping in mind that the most recent absence figures represent only half of the time period covered by the two previous figures.

The research team also compared marks and attendance for each student in each of these schools to determine what proportion improved, declined or remained relatively unchanged. In assessing absences, changes exceeding 17 absences were considered a "change". This figure was chosen because it represented approximately 10% of the average number of absences for students in all the schools examined. For the purposes of both absences and marks, only results for the two full school years were compared.

**Table IV-14. Change in Marks of Students in Grade 3 and 4 in Participating Schools in the Czech Republic. (1998-2000)**

|  | Improved | Unchanged | Declined |
|---|---|---|---|
| School #1 | 35% | 10% | 55% |
| School #2 | 20% | 25% | 55% |
| School #3 | 8% | 20% | 72% |
| School #4 | 21% | 26% | 53% |
| School #5 | 12% | 41% | 47% |

**Table IV-15. Change in Attendance of Students in Grades 3 and 4 in Participating Students in the Czech Republic. (1998-2000)**

|  | Improved | Unchanged | Declined |
|---|---|---|---|
| School #1 | 27% | 20% | 53% |
| School #2 | 31% | 33% | 36% |
| School #3 | 24% | 27% | 49% |
| School #4 | 33% | 13% | 54% |
| School #5 | 41% | 31% | 28% |

These tables indicate that a majority of Roma student continued to decline in both marks and attendance over time.

In School #2, the research team observed that the two current third and fourth grade classes appeared to contain significantly different proportions of Roma students. Based on observations and conversations in the neighborhood, the research team estimated that the "B" class in each grade had more than 75% Roma students, while the "A" class in each grade had less than 20% Roma students.

A similar pattern was observed in School #4. In that school, the student population of the "B" class also exceeded 75% Roma students, while that of the "A" class had less than 25% Roma students.

In each school, the RTAs focused more of their time and attention on the "B" classes because they had a larger proportion of Roma children. The research team compared the results for both marks and attendance to determine if the classes with larger proportions of Roma students would show greater gains than those with smaller proportions of Roma students. As Tables IV-16 and IV-17 show, such a pattern did not emerge.

**Table IV-16. Average Marks for Students in Grades 3 and 4 in Two Participating Schools in the Czech Republic. (1998-2001)**

|  | 1998-1999 | 1999-2000 | 2000-2001 (1st term) |
|---|---|---|---|
| School #2 "A" Class | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.5 |
| School #2 "B" Class | 1.5 | 1.7 | 1.9 |
| School #4" "A" Class | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.7 |
| School #4 "B" Class | 1.8 | 1.7 | 2.2 |
| **Note: Marks range from "1" (highest) to "5" (lowest).** | | | |

**Table IV-17. Number of Absences for Students in Grades 3 and 4 in Two Participating Schools in the Czech Republic. (1998-2001)**

|  | 1998-1999 | 1999-2000 | 2000-2001 (1st term) |
|---|---|---|---|
| School #2 "A" Class | 94 | 120 | 74 |
| School #2 "B" Class | 124 | 149 | 77 |
| School #4" "A" Class | 147 | 132 | 75 |
| School #4 "B" Class | 137 | 161 | 117 |

In their interviews, RTAs, teachers, and school administrators were asked about the impact of the presence of RTAs on student performance in the school.

- Only four of the 18 RTAs reported improvement in either student attendance or marks. However, two of these RTAs (both from school #3) did cite specific evidence for their conclusions. One RTA noted that the students she had worked with had all been failing (mark of "5") in the prior term. By the end of the year, all were passing with a mark of at least "3". The other RTA noted that 15 students had received failing behavior marks the previous year due to excessive absences. That number had been reduced to 4 students during the current year.

- Only two of the nine teachers interviewed reported improvement in either student attendance or marks. One of those teachers reported that student scores in writing had significantly increased during the current year and attributed those gains entirely to intensive work conducted on the subject by the RTAs.

- Four of the nine school administers interviewed reported improved student attendance due to the presence of the RTAs. One of those administrator also reported gains in student marks, but another specifically reported <u>no gains</u> in student marks due to the presence of the RTAs.

**Finding #1-J: The <u>Equal Opportunities Project (Romania) did not anticipate producing changes in the educational attainment of Roma students in participating schools during its three-year period of operation</u>.Nevertheless, there was anecdotal evidence  of improvement in educational outcomes of some Roma students.**

In interviews, the developers and staff of the Educational Opportunities Project emphasized that they expected to see no consistent, measurable changes in students' educational performance or behavior at this point in the Project's implementation. As indicated in the project description, the goals of Project activities carried out during its first two years of operation were to build knowledge and awareness among school staff. Changes in behavior would generally be limited to administrators and a few of the teachers in each of the participating schools. Moreover, these changes would generally be "evolutionary", rather than "revolutionary", in nature – designed to lay the foundation for more significant changes in the organization and operation of both schools and classrooms over the long-term.

In order to confirm this expectation, the research team reviewed student records in 9 participating schools (5 urban and 4 rural). This included 5 schools from the first selection cycle and 4 schools from the second selection cycle. These nine schools represented different geographical regions of Romania. Student records were reviewed over two or three full school years (1997-98, 1998-99, and 1999-2000). For some schools, records for the first term of the current school year (2000-01) were also reviewed.

In each participating school, the research team computed the average mark for Roma students. Marks were computed using a 10-point scale with 10 as the highest mark. In addition, the research team computed the average number of absences per student for Roma students. In some schools, both excused and unexcused absences were available. In other schools, only the number of unexcused absences was reported. Finally, the research team also computed an annual "failure rate" for each school. This rate included those Roma students who dropped out of school, those who failed to receive promotion

to the next grade level, and those who failed at least one course but nevertheless, were promoted to the next grade level.

**Table IV-18. Average Marks for Roma Students in Selected Participating Schools in Romania. (1997-2001)**

|  | 1997-1998 | 1998-1999 | 1999-2000 | 2000-2001 (1st term) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School #1 | 5.9 | 6.9 | 6.4 | NA |
| School #2 | 7.1 | 6.1 | 6.2 | NA |
| School #3 | 7.5 | 7.1 | 7.2 | NA |
| School #6 | NA | 6.6 | NA | 6.4 |
| School #9 | NA | 6.6 | 6.9 | 6.8 |
| Note: Marks range from "10" (highest) to "1" (lowest). | | | | |

**Table IV-19. Average Absences Per School Year for Roma Students in Selected Participating Schools in Romania. (1997-2001)**

|  | 1997-1998 | 1998-1999 | 1999-2000 | 2000-2001 (1st term only) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School #1 | 9.5 | 4.8 | 7.1 | NA |
| School #2 | 55.2 | 42.7 | 43.9 | NA |
| School #3 | 33.2 | 27.7 | 23.6 | NA |
| School #6 | NA | 43.0 | NA | 33.8 |
| School #7 | 5.5 | 1.5 | 6.3 | NA |
| School #8 | 48.3 | 44.7 | 71.1 | NA |
| School #9 | NA | 29.8 | 38.0 | 36.2 |

**Table IV-20. Failure Rate Among Roma Students in Selected Participating Schools in Romania. (1997-2000)**

|  | 1997-1998 | 1998-1999 | 1999-2000 |
|---|---|---|---|
| School #1 | 63.4% | 52.3% | 40.5% |
| School #2 | 20.4% | 35.8% | 37.0% |
| School #3 | 21.3% | 15.5% | 10.3% |
| School #7 | 45.1% | 23.7% | 30.5% |

As anticipated by the project designers and project staff, a comparison of these results revealed no consistent trends for average marks, attendance, or failure rates over this period of time.

The research team conducted interviews with administrators, teachers, and parents associated with the nine participating schools included in this research. Staff in six of the nine participating schools (#2, #3, #4, #5, #7, and #9) reported educational achievement gains among some Roma students which staff attributed to Project-related activities. However, none of the school staff characterized the gains as significant. In fact, teachers in two schools specifically labeled the gains as "minor" and "not spectacular". At the same time, school staff from three of the nine participating schools (#3, #5, and #7) reported that some Roma children had demonstrated greater motivation to come to school regularly as a result of activities associated with the Project. Again, school staff failed to characterize the improvement in student motivation as being significant.

**Finding #1-K: Some teachers reported positive changes in the educational attainment and school attendance of children in schools participating in the <u>Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria)</u>. Moreover, Roma children reported that school was more attractive due to the study of Roma culture and tradition.**

In March 2001, the research team administered a written survey to 33 teachers (including 16 who had participated in the project and 17 who had not) to gain information on their perspective regarding intercultural education in the schools. As Table IV-21 indicates, teachers who participated in the project reported that Roma students had slightly better classroom marks. In addition, a higher proportion of participating teachers reported that Roma students had regular school attendance and good behavior.

**Table IV-21. Teacher Survey Assessment of Impact of Intercultural Education Project in Bulgaria (2001)**

| | Participants | Non-Participants |
|---|---|---|
| **Average Classroom Marks of Roma Students (5 highest/1 lowest)** | 3.2 | 2.8 |
| **Average Proficiency in Bulgarian of Roma Students (5 highest/1 lowest)** | 2.4 | 2.4 |
| **Percent of Teachers Reporting that Roma Had Regular School Attendance** | 82% | 56% |
| **Percent of Teachers Reporting that Roma Had Good School Behavior** | 27% | 12% |

However, these survey results were at odds with observations by teachers participating in the Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria), as reported by project staff and in written articles. These sources reported that there were no systematic gains in either the educational performance or the school attendance of students (including Roma students), in any participating school. However, they did report that some Roma children improved their proficiency in the Bulgarian language. They attributed these gains to the use of the instructional materials developed by the Project. Taken together, this information suggests that the effects of the project on student attendance and learning may have been highly variable.

In order to gain a better understanding of the Project's impact on student attitudes and behavior, the research team also administered a written survey to students who had participated in the Project in March 2001. Surveys were distributed to both Roma and non-Roma students. A total of 230 students, who participated in the project (including 72 Roma, 71 non-Roma ethnic minorities, and 87 Bulgarians), completed the survey. In addition, a total of 210 students, who had not participated in the project (including 137 Bulgarians, 23 Roma, and 50 non-Roma ethnic minorities), also completed the survey as a comparison group.

This survey asked students whether the study of Roma culture and tradition made school more attractive.

- Among the 69 Roma students responding to this question, 72% reported that school was more attractive and only 1% reported that it was less attractive.

- A much smaller proportion (33%) of the 69 non-Roma ethnic minority students responding to this question, reported that school was more attractive because of the study of Roma culture and traditions. However, none of these students reported that it was less attractive.

- The pattern was considerably different among 85 Bulgarian students responding to this question. Only 25% reported that school was more attractive due to the study of Roma culture, while 29% reported that it was less attractive.

**Finding #1-L: Through <u>outreach activities in the Roma community</u>, the <u>Program for Educational Support (Macedonia)</u>, the <u>Educational Centers Project (Slovakia)</u>, the <u>Kindergarten as Family Center Projects (Yugoslavia/Serbia)</u>, and the <u>Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic)</u> ensured that more Roma children were enrolled in elementary school.**

As noted in the descriptions of all three of these direct service projects, these projects work in their respective communities to identify Roma children who are eligible for elementary school enrollment. For the projects in Slovakia and Yugoslavia/Serbia, these efforts are primarily focused on recruiting Roma children to attend the preschool programs that each project offers. All three of these projects specifically assist and encourage Roma families to enroll their children in elementary school in a timely manner. This assistance includes having project staff accompany Roma families to the schools to facilitate the enrollment process.

In interviews, staff from the Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) provided anecdotal information demonstrating the success of their efforts. Staff reports that they found some Roma parents hiding their children and not sending them to school. By conducting outreach into the community, staff succeeded in locating many such children, in contacting their parents, and in getting these children to enroll in elementary school. Many of these children subsequently received homework assistance and participated in other activities sponsored by the Project.

Interviews with staff from the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) have also produced anecdotal evidence of the success of these efforts. Interviews with parents, whose children participate in the Project, indicate that ongoing outreach efforts of Project staff have been quite successful. Of 35 parents interviewed by the research team, 14 (40%) report that they found out about the educational opportunities offered by the Project through communication with Project staff. Project staff reports that many of these parents would not have enrolled their children in elementary school in a timely manner or at all, without previous contact with the Project.

According to Project staff, many elementary schools located in the three project communities resisted enrolling Roma children. Since many Roma parents did not enroll their children in elementary school in a timely manner, this provided elementary school administrators the opportunity to claim that classes were full and to deny their children admittance. As a result, Roma students were enrolled in a small number of schools with large Roma enrollments.

Intervention by Project staff encouraged and enabled Roma parents to enroll their children in a more prompt manner. As a result, elementary school administrators were unable to claim that they could not accommodate Roma children in their classrooms. If they persisted in their efforts to deny enrollment to Roma children, Project staff intervened to facilitate the enrollment. Generally, their intervention resulted in successful enrollment of the Roma children. The effect of these efforts has been to reduce the isolation of Roma children to only a few schools.

The description of the institutional change project in the Czech Republic indicates that a primary role of the Roma Teaching Assistant is outreach to Roma parents and the Roma community. Although there was some question as to the degree to which most RTAs treated this as a primary responsibility, RTAs in three schools specifically reported identifying Roma children eligible for school who had not been enrolled. All three were successful in intervening either with parents or with appropriate governmental agencies to get these children enrolled in school. In addition, 8 of the RTAs (in 7 schools) were involved in working with the preparatory classes (targeting students, mainly Roma students, who were not yet ready for first grade). Most of these RTAs reported that part of their responsibility was the recruitment of Roma children for these classes.

**Finding #1-M: Through <u>outreach activities to Roma parents</u>, the <u>Program for Educational Support (Macedonia)</u>, the <u>Educational Centers Project (Slovakia)</u>, and the <u>Kindergarten as Family Center Projects (Yugoslavia/Serbia)</u> ensured that more Roma parents were supportive of their children continuing school, through completion of elementary school and even into secondary school.**

As noted in the descriptions of all three direct service projects, these Projects also seek to change the attitudes of Roma parents towards the need for completing elementary school. Traditionally, many Roma parents believe that children can end their public schooling after only a few years (often only four years). By working directly with Roma parents, these projects have sought to change these attitudes.

In interviews, elementary school staff has reported that some Roma parents have changed their attitudes toward public schools. Not only are these parents more willing to send their children to school, but more also want their children to complete elementary school. Some even want their children to attend secondary school. There has been a particularly significant attitude shift for parents of girls, who particularly thought their daughters should leave school and marry. Some are now willing to accept postponement of marriage until girls finish elementary school.

Project staff also report evidence of changes in attitude. They report being approached by a large number of Roma parents who were seeking financial and other assistance for their children to attend secondary school. Many of these parents justified their efforts because the Project had convinced them of the importance of continued schooling.

Interviews with parents of children participating in the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) also reveal changes in attitudes. Four (4) of 35 Roma parents who were interviewed by the research team reported that they had learned about the need for their child to attend school regularly, as a result of their participation in parent education activities, sponsored by the Project.

Responses by school staff in Yugoslavia/Serbia in a written questionnaire administered by the research team also provided evidence of successes by the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia). Six (6) of sixteen staff reported that Roma parents demonstrated a more supportive attitude towards their children remaining in school.

## Findings Responding to Research Question #2: Impact of Projects on Student and Teacher Attitudes

**Finding #2-A:** The <u>Equal Opportunities Project (Romania)</u> had success in some schools in increasing cross-cultural acceptance of Roma students by non-Roma teachers and students.

This project incorporated training activities for school administrators and staff designed to encourage non-Roma teachers to identify, understand, and confront prejudicial attitudes and treatment of Roma children. By understanding these attitudes and confronting these actions, these activities sought to change the behavior of school administrators and teachers towards Roma students.

The research team conducted observations and interviews in 3 schools, which had not participated in the Project, to understand the range of conditions currently existing in Romanian schools and to identify ongoing changes. Staff in all three comparison schools consistently demonstrated low expectations of Roma students. Prejudicial statements were directed against both Roma students and their parents. Roma students were openly isolated in "special" classes separate from non-Roma students in the school. Taken together, these factors appeared to perpetuate negative learning environments for Roma children.

As noted earlier, the research team also conducted observations and interviews in a sample of 9 schools, which had participated in the Project. These schools represented both geographic and demographic diversity. They also represented both the first and second cycle of participating schools.

Interviews with staff and observations at the nine participating schools suggested that Project-related activities may have contributed to changes in the attitudes and behaviors of administrators and teachers in 4 of the 9 schools (schools #1, #2, #5, and #7). However, it was not clear that project-related activities were responsible for these changes. Rather, there were suggestions from each of the four schools that administrators and staff already had an interest and commitment to building greater cross-cultural understanding and to addressing the specific educational needs of Roma students. Project-related activities appeared to have built upon, strengthened, and enhanced the ongoing efforts so that they have resulted in positive outcomes.

In each of these four schools, teachers spoke respectfully about Roma students and parents. They did not make sweeping characterizations of their attitudes, behavior, or motivations. Rather, Roma students and their parents were discussed as individuals with legitimate needs and problems. In two schools (#2 and #7), teachers specifically acknowledged their own prejudicial attitudes toward Roma and described their struggles to confront and overcome these attitudes in their teaching activities. Teachers in all four schools expressed a desire to better understand and respond to the individual needs of Roma children. In two of the schools (#1 and #5), they specifically sought to engage Roma parents as partners in seeking to address these issues. As a result of these changed attitudes, all four of the schools seemed to convey a more welcoming and supportive learning environment for Roma students.

Staff in two other schools (#3 and #4) demonstrated some changes in their attitudes towards Roma students. They expressed greater understanding of the socio-economic

problems facing Roma children and the contribution of these problems to their educational needs. They also expressed a greater commitment to beginning to address these problems in the schools. Nevertheless, many staff in these three schools continued to maintain and express prejudicial attitudes toward Roma children and their parents.

Another school (#8) demonstrated significant changes in their attitudes towards and acceptance of Roma students simply by accepting their enrollment in the school. Previously, few Roma students had been enrolled in this school. At the same time, staff in this school continued to embrace the concept of isolating Roma students in "special" classes and defended the concept as an educationally sound and appropriate strategy.

Short-term use of special classes for Roma children may be a practical necessity in this school because non-Roma parents strongly oppose the integration of Roma children into regular classrooms and regular classroom teachers lack the expertise and strategies to effectively integrate Roma children with Romanian children to create "mixed" classrooms. However, long-term acceptance of this approach is not acceptable under the program.

Staff in the remaining two schools (#6 and #9) exhibited attitudes, ideas, and behavior that reflected those observed in the three comparison schools. Roma parents were characterized by teachers in school #6 as "lazy" and totally "uninterested" in their children's education. Staff in both schools reported that Roma parents were impossible to involve in school activities. Staff in both schools reported low expectations towards Roma students. Staff in school #6 reported that they only focused on Project-related activities involving "basic" teaching methods because Roma children and parents were not interested in anything else. Staff in both schools characterized Roma children as only attending school to receive the social allowance. They were considered to have little interest in learning. Neither school acknowledged these discriminatory attitudes. Staff in school #6 even emphasized that they had no discriminatory beliefs or attitudes toward Roma children. Finally, both schools employed "special classes" for Roma students and expressed little interest in developing mixed classes.

**Finding #2-B: The <u>Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria)</u> expanded the cross-cultural knowledge of non-Roma teachers and students and increased their acceptance of Roma students and their culture.**

This project both conducted and disseminated activities, designed to increase cross-cultural understanding and acceptance of Roma students by non-Roma teachers and students. Its training activities sought to engage participating non-Roma teachers in an examination of their own attitudes and behavior towards Roma students and of the attitudes and behavior of the majority in society towards Roma children and adults. At the same time, the training activities sought to provide teachers with materials and strategies for engaging students in similar personal and social reflections.

In the written survey administered to students in March 2001 by the research team, students were asked about their knowledge of other cultures. As Table IV-22 indicates, a higher proportion of project participants reported familiarity with other cultures when compared with those students who had not participated in the project. Moreover, this pattern was consistent for Bulgarian students, Roma students, and other ethnic minorities.

**Table IV-22. Percentage of Students in Bulgaria Reporting Familiarity with Other Cultures (2001)**

|  | Bulgarian | Roma | Other Ethnic Minorities | All Students |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Participants** | 86% | 97% | 100% | 94% |
| **Non-Participants** | 68% | 61% | 76% | 72% |

Table IV-23 suggests that this pattern was even more pronounced when students were asked about their familiarity with Roma culture. Students participating in the project were more than twice as likely to report such familiarity as students who had not participated. Again, these differences were consistent for Bulgarian, Roma, and non-Roma ethnic minority students.

**Table IV-23. Percentage of Students in Bulgaria Reporting Familiarity with Roma Culture (2001)**

|  | Bulgarian | Roma | Other Ethnic Minorities | All Students |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Participants** | 83% | 88% | 99% | 89% |
| **Non-Participants** | 35% | 41% | 38% | 36% |

This apparent change in cross-cultural knowledge was also associated with different attitudes toward other cultures. Students were asked in the survey whether it was "necessary" to learn about different cultures. Among students participating in the project, 92% responded that such learning was necessary, compared to only 66% of students who had not participated in the project. Again, the pattern was consistent across all ethnic categories (Bulgarian, Roma, and non-Roma ethnic minorities).

It also appears that non-Roma students participating in the project had somewhat better attitudes toward Roma students than their peers who had not participated in the project. Among Bulgarian students, 86% of project participants reported positive attitudes toward Roma compared to 70% of project non-participants. Among students from non-Roma ethnic minorities, 97% of project participants reported positive attitudes toward Roma compared to 80% of project non-participants.

However, it was not clear that project-related activities accounted for differences in attitudes between project participants and project non-participants. Overall, 45% of project participants reported that their classroom lessons improved their attitude toward Roma. This compared with 41% of project non-participants who reported that their classroom experiences (which did NOT include project-related activities) had a similar effect. It appears that more project participants already possessed a positive attitude toward Roma. Among project participants, 47% reported that their classroom experiences did not change already positive attitudes. This compared with only 34%

among those students who had not participated in the project. Again this pattern was consistent among Bulgarian students, Roma students, and students from non-Roma ethnic minorities.

Project participation was also associated with greater cross-cultural friendships among non-Roma ethnic minority students. Among non-Roma ethnic minorities, 47% reported friendships with Roma students compared to only 14% among those who had not participated in the project. Such a pattern was not reported among Bulgarian students. Among Bulgarian project participants, 39% reported friendships with Roma students compared to 35% among those who had not participated in the project.

According to Project staff and written articles, participating teachers reported that non-Roma students in their classes demonstrated greater understanding, interest in, and tolerance toward their Roma peers. This was particularly apparent in ethnically mixed classes and schools. Teachers cited specific examples of behaviors and comments by non-Roma children demonstrating an increased cross-cultural understanding and tolerance.

In March 2001, the research team also conducted a written survey of 105 parents whose children participated in the Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria). Most parents reported that project participation had improved the attitudes of teachers toward Roma students (63%) and particularly of non-Roma students toward Roma children (89%).

Both these sources and the results of the written student and parent surveys were at odds with the results of the March 2001 written survey administered by the research team to participating and non-participating teachers. Teacher responses suggested little difference in either their attitudes or the attitudes of non-Roma students toward Roma students and Roma culture. Almost all responding teachers (86% of participating teachers and 93% of non-participating teachers) reported positive attitudes among students toward Roma culture. Similarly, all participating teachers and 88% of non-participating teachers reported positive treatment of Roma students by their non-Roma peers.

**Finding #2-C: There appear to be changes in the attitudes of some non-Roma teachers toward Roma students as a result of the <u>Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic)</u>. Most school staff and Roma Teaching Assistants claimed that few cross-cultural tensions or problems existed in their schools.**

All Roma Teaching Assistants reported functioning as intermediaries between, on one hand, Roma students and parents and on the other, non-Roma administrators and teachers. In this regard, they served to transmit and explain information and concerns on behalf of the school to Roma students and parents. At the same time, they often served as advocates for and advisors to Roma students and parents in their dealings with the school.

The presence of the RTAs appeared to improve the relationship and communication between school staff and Roma students and their parents. In March 2001, the research team conducted interviews with 5 parents or families whose children attended classes served by RTAs. Four of the five parents or families reported that the presence of the RTAs in school improved the atmosphere of the school and made both them and their children feel more welcome in the school. The fifth parent reported that other families

and children felt more welcome in the school due to the presence of the RTA (although she and her children already felt quite welcome in the school even without the RTA). School administrators particularly focused on this benefit of RTAs in the school. Five of the nine school administrators interviewed reported that the presence of RTAs led to improved communication with the Roma parents and two others reported that it created a more positive attitude toward school among Roma parents and their children.

At the same time, the presence of RTAs in the school appeared to allow some non-Roma teachers to shift the responsibility of interacting with Roma students and their parents to the RTAs. Four of nine teachers interviewed reported having little or no contact with Roma parents and relying on RTAs exclusively for communicating with these parents. In addition, teachers and school administrators in 6 of 11 schools examined reported relying on RTAs to work with Roma students, particularly those who had the least competence in the Czech language and who had the greatest educational problems. RTAs in two schools also reported that this allowed teachers to "focus their time" on those students who were higher-performing in the class – usually the non-Roma children.

In the interviews, neither school administrators nor teachers demonstrated any indication that their attitudes toward Roma students had changed. However, two teachers did report that they had gained greater understanding of the perspectives and needs of Roma students through their contact with RTAs. Both teachers suggested that they made changes in the teaching practices as a result of these insights. At the same time, comments by both teachers suggested a prior commitment to gaining a greater understanding of cross-cultural issues. As a result, the presence of RTAs serve as a resource to meet their continuing need rather than a catalyst for a change in their attitudes.

The presence of RTAs did not appear to have led to a greater discussion of cross-cultural issues or to increased recognition of prejudicial attitudes or discriminatory behavior against Roma students. All the teachers and RTAs interviewed in this research reported that there were few cross-cultural tensions between Roma and non-Roma students in the school or by between teachers and non-Roma students. None reported any discussions on these issues resulting from the placement of RTAs in the school. Nor did any of the RTAs report initiating such discussions. Several RTAs did say that, by their presence in the school, they hoped to demonstrate that Roma adults could be successful educators of children. However, this example was uniformly directed at Roma children— to serve as a role model – rather than at non-Roma adults in the school.

**Finding #2-D: Non-Roma teachers and students displayed different attitudes and behavior towards Roma students who attended the preschool program offered by the <u>Educational Centers Project (Slovakia)</u> and the <u>Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia)</u> compared to Roma students who did not attend this program.**

The research team in Slovakia conducted observations of 18 classes in grades 1 to 3 in three schools in Presov. The researchers visited each class for one to three days. All classes included some Roma students who had attended the preschool program offered by the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia). There was a total of 388 students enrolled in the 18 classes, including 57 Roma students (33 attended the preschool program conducted by the Project).

**Table IV-24. Average Interactions Per Student by Teachers with Roma Students in 18 Classrooms in Slovakia (2001)**

|  | Total Interactions | Questions | Statements | Percentage of Positive Statements |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Participants** | **39.9** | **23** | **16.9** | **56%** |
| **Non-Participants** | **22.1** | **11.6** | **10.5** | **40%** |

In their observations, the researchers recorded the nature of the interactions by teachers with Roma students. Each interaction initiated by a teacher was counted and categorized as a question, a positive statement, or a critical statement. The average number of interactions in each category, per student, was then computed.

They discovered that teachers were considerably more likely to interact with Roma children who had participated in the Project, than with Roma children who had not . They also discovered that interactions between teachers and Roma project participants were considerably more inclined to be positive rather than critical in nature.

**Table IV-25. Average Interactions Per Student (Roma Students with Teachers) in 18 Classrooms in Slovakia (2001)**

|  | Total Interactions | Questions | Responses | Requests |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Participants** | **30.7** | **7.9** | **13.8** | **9.0** |
| **Non-Participants** | **17.3** | **4.2** | **9.2** | **2.9** |

The research team also examined interactions of Roma students with their teachers. The researchers counted each interaction initiated by a student, noted the type of

student initiating the interaction and the type of interaction: question, response, and request. Average number of interactions per student in each category was computed.

Interactions initiated by Roma students followed the same pattern as those initiated by teachers. In both cases, there were 80% more interactions between teachers and Project participants than between teachers and non-participants.

**Table IV-26. Interactions Between Roma and Non-Roma Students in 18 Classrooms in Slovakia. (2001)**

|  | Questions | Answers | Request for Help | During Break | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Between Non-Roma & Project Participant** | 33 | 31 | 17 | 35 | 106 |
| **Between Non-Roma & Non-Participant** | 15 | 15 | 7 | 13 | 50 |

Interviews with elementary school teachers and Project staff suggest that teachers simply view Roma children who attended the preschool program conducted by the Project, as "different" from other Roma children. They are considered to be better socialized, more communicative, and to exhibit better personal hygiene. As a result, teachers are more willing to accept Roma Project participants into their class. They also report having higher expectations of these students. As a result, the Project has succeeded in changing the attitudes of non-Roma teachers not towards all Roma children, but only towards those who participated in Project activities.

A similar pattern was observed in interactions among students. The research team observed interactions between non-Roma and Roma students in the classroom and during breaks. Research identified the participants in each interaction (non-Roma, Roma Project participant, and Roma non-participant) and categorized the interactions (question, answer, or request for help).

There were 37.5% more Roma Project participants than Roma non-participants in these 16 classrooms. However, there were 112% more interactions between non-Roma and Roma Project participants than between non-Roma and Roma non-participants. This suggests that non-Roma students, like their teachers, also had different attitudes and exhibited different behavior towards Roma students who participated in Project activities.

During their visits to the three schools in Presov, the research team also conducted interviews with 79 students in grades 1 to 3, including 29 Roma Project participants, 13 Roma non-participants, and 37 non-Roma students. Children were asked several questions about their interactions and feelings toward their classmates. Responses to these questions reinforced the classroom observations.

Non-Roma children were asked which Roma child they would choose as a playmate: 21 (57%) chose a child who was a Project participant and only 7 (19%) chose a child who did not participate in the Project. Children were also asked which child they would

avoid during a trip: 12 (32%) chose a child who had not participated in the Project and only 6 (16%) identified a Project participant.

At the same time, these interviews suggested that non-Roma children still harbor negative attitudes towards Roma children – even to those who attended the Project. Although Roma made up less than 15% of the children in the classes observed by the research team, they accounted for 48% of the children who non-Roma students wanted to avoid on a trip. When asked to identify children that they would prefer to learn with or to play with, only 1 non-Roma child (3%) identified a Roma child. Moreover, 21 non-Roma children (57%) reported that they didn't like anything about their Roma classmates.

Interviews with elementary school teachers in Yugoslavia/Serbia suggest that a similar patterns exists for Roma children who participated in the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia). Teachers report that they were more willing to accept such Roma students in their classroom. They also reported that non-Roma students were less likely to reject and isolate Roma Project participants. They attributed their own attitudes to better socialization and communication skills on the part of the Roma children. They attributed the attitude of the non-Roma students, to improved personal hygiene on the part of the Roma children.

Interviews with Project staff reinforce these conclusions. Based on their observations during visits to schools and classrooms and to their interactions with elementary school teachers, Project staff confirms that Roma Project participants are more welcome and have greater interaction with non-Roma teachers and students in the school.

As a result, the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia) has apparently succeeded in changing the attitudes of non-Roma adults and children towards Roma children who participated in the preschool program, sponsored by the Project. As with the Slovakia situation, the Project has not changed the general attitude of non-Roma towards the Roma. Rather, non-Roma teachers and students have come to accept that Roma Project participants are "different" from typical Roma children.

### Finding #2-E: All seven Roma education projects reported some improvement in the self-esteem and self-characterization of participating Roma students.

The seven Roma education projects pursued both common and individual strategies to improve the self-esteem of Roma children.

- The Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria) sought to build the self-esteem of Roma children by emphasizing the recognition and celebration of their language, history, and cultural traditions.

- The Equal Opportunities Project (Romania) employed a similar strategy. However, this project also sought to create a more educationally supportive and engaging classroom and school environment.

- The Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic) also emphasized Roma language, history, and cultural tradition. However, this project also sought to present the RTA as a positive role model for Roma students.

- The four direct service projects each incorporated activities focusing on Roma language, history, and cultural traditions. However, each project sought to build the self-esteem of Roma students by enabling them to be more successful and, in some cases, more welcome in school.

In the written survey administered to students in March 2001 by the research team, students were asked to assess the impact on their own self-image of any cross-cultural discussions and lessons that occurred in their school. Of the 69 Roma project participants completing the survey, 90% reported a positive impact on their self-confidence and self-esteem. However a similar proportion (83%) of Roma students, who did not participate in the project, reported a positive impact.

A similar pattern is apparent in the response to other relevant questions. Students were asked about their attitudes toward Roma as a result of their school experiences. Among Roma project participants, 97% reported a positive attitude compared to 100% of those Roma students who had not participated in the project. Similarly, 67% of Roma project participants reported that the school lessons had improved their attitudes towards Roma. However, 63% of Roma students who were not project participants reported a similar result. These results suggest that the projects materials and activities may not have produced a similar or unique result among participating Roma students.

Based on the survey responses of Roma students, it appears that teachers in Bulgarian schools who did not participate in the project sought to incorporate lessons and discussions of Roma culture. Such a result was apparent from the interviews and site visits conducted by the research teams to several participating and comparison school sites. In three of the nine schools participating in the project, teachers were identified who had developed lessons involving Roma culture, independent of the project. Similar activities were observed in two of the three comparison schools visited.

The written surveys of teachers participating in the project conducted by the research team in March 2001, revealed considerable divergence of opinion regarding the project's impact on Roma student self-image. Only 25% of the teachers reported a positive impact while 38% reported a negative impact on Roma student self-image. At the same time, several articles written by or about teachers participating in the project, reported that Roma children in their classes demonstrated greater self-esteem due to the incorporation of Roma language, culture, and history into the learning curriculum. These articles stated that there were significant benefits to Roma students who participated in the project in some classrooms and schools. Taken together, the survey results and the articles suggest that the impact of participation in the Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria) on student self-image was quite variable.

All five parents or families of children attending schools participating in the Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic), which were interviewed by the research team, reported that the presence of a respected Roma adult (the RTA) in a school creates a more welcoming and less stressful environment for Roma children. Two parents reported that beginning school was highly stressful for their children and that their initial difficulties in school affected their self-esteem. The presence of RTAs reduced the stress and made the schools a less "alien" environment. The support provided by the RTAs also reduced the adjustment difficulties that many Roma children faced in entering school. Since they were in a more supportive and welcoming environment, Roma children felt better about themselves.

Several school administrators, teachers, and RTAs also cited the benefits of RTAs serving as role models, particularly for older Roma children. Six individuals (3 administrators, 1 teacher, and 2 RTAs) from four schools reported benefits from RTAs acting as role models. However, one factor limiting the impact of RTAs as role models was the decision made by schools to limit the contact of RTAs with older children. Generally, RTAs were assigned to work only with children in the preparatory classes or the lower marks. Relatively few RTAs (only 4 of 18 interviewed) reported having regular contact with upper grade students.

Although RTAs were intended to be used as a means for integrating a greater emphasis on Roma language, culture, and history into the school, it appears that they had very limited success in this area. Only one of the RTAs interviewed, reported that Roma students had exhibited a greater interest in their culture, due to his efforts. In fact, 3 of the RTAs interviewed reported that they did not even speak the Romany language. Only 5 RTAs reported actually using that language in the classroom and one of those used it solely for disciplinary purposes. RTAs, teachers, and administrators in three of the schools reported taking steps to incorporate a greater focus on Roma language, culture, and history in the school. However in all three schools, they reported that parent opposition or student indifference had led them to end their efforts.

In interviews with the research team, staff from the Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) reported that many participating children had exhibited an improved self-image, due to their participation in Project activities. One staff member specifically cited changes in the attitudes of several Roma girls. These girls expressed an interest in not marrying at an early age because of their capacity to pursue other opportunities. They specifically looked at Project staff as role models for what they could accomplish.

Interviews with staff in several schools (#1, #2, #3, #5. and #7) participating in the Equal Opportunities Project (Romania) revealed changes in the self-esteem and self-characterization of Roma children. School staff attribute these changes to various project-related strategies, including direct counseling and tutoring activities, greater outreach and engagement of their parents, and incorporation of Roma culture and history into the learning curriculum.

In their interviews with Roma children who did and did not participate in the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia), the research team posed two questions that were relevant to students' self-characterization and self-esteem. Roma children were asked about their aspirations. Among Project participants, 11 of 24 (46%) identified professions requiring secondary school education, compared to a smaller percentage of non-participants – 4 of 13 (31%). Roma children were also asked to describe themselves. Among Project participants, 10 children (47.5%) described only positive characteristics and 10 (47.5%) described a combination of positive and negative characteristics. One child (5%) used only negative characteristics in the self-description. Among non-participants, 3 children (33%) used only positive characteristics in their self-description, 4 children (44%) used a combination of positive and negative characteristics, and 2 children (22%) used only negative characteristics. Both results suggest that Roma children who participated in the Project had somewhat better self-images, than their peers who did not participate.

**Finding #2-F: Activities focusing on Roma language, culture, and history promoted by the Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria) served both to engage and alienate parents.**

A primary focus of this project was to develop and disseminate instructional materials on Roma history, culture, and traditions in both the Bulgarian and  Roma language. These instructional materials were specifically designed to be integrated into the curriculum. The national training activities provided teachers with lessons and strategies for accomplishing that integration.

Interviews with Project staff and reviews of media reports on the Project suggest that the Project did encourage greater discussion both within the schools and nationally, about cultural issues related to the Roma and about cross-cultural issues generally. Participating teachers also confirmed greater focus in their classrooms and in the schools around these issues. In the written teacher survey administered in March 2001 by the research team, 80% of participating teachers reported discussion of cross-cultural issues in the classroom, compared to less than 59% of non-participating teachers. Moreover, participating teachers cited a wider range of issues included in their discussions.

Project staff and teachers also reported great interest in the instructional materials and the topics they covered, among some Roma parents. Many Roma parents expressed their support for the use of these materials. Some, more affluent, Roma parents even expressed the desire to purchase these materials for their own use. Unfortunately, there was an insufficient number of materials printed to allow such sales.

Project staff and teachers reported that Bulgarian parents expressed initial concern and even skepticism about the nature and value of the Project. Some parents questioned the justification for focusing on such a small group and wondered why the Roma were being singled out for this treatment. Others were concerned about the diversion of time away from other subjects of study. Project staff reports that outreach efforts were generally successful in muting criticism and opposition on the part of Bulgarian parents to the Project. Generally, staff and teachers succeeded in placing the Project activities in the context of larger intercultural education efforts. Thus, the focus on the Roma was part of a larger effort to build greater cross-cultural understanding. Although this approach moderated opposition to the Project, it apparently did not succeed in building strong support for the Project among Bulgarian parents.

Project staff and teachers reported that some ethnic minority parents had very strong negative reactions to this Project. Some saw the emphasis on Roma as unfair and occurring at the expense of their own ethnic minority group. These parents generally were unconvinced by claims that this was part of a larger intercultural education effort. They remained unsympathetic to the Project.

Other ethnic minority parents saw the Project as a threat to their own cultural identity. This was particularly true of parents in one section of the country who had Roma origins but were culturally affiliated with the Turks. These Roma spoke Turkish not Roma and embraced Turkish cultural traditions rather than Roma traditions. Many expressed strong and even violent opposition to the Project's activities. Project staff report that one school, initially selected to participate in the Project, chose to withdraw due to strong opposition from such parents. Staff also cited several examples of teachers

who chose to end their involvement with the Project, after being confronted by such parents – at times violently. These parents viewed the Project's emphasis on Roma culture and tradition as a challenge and a threat to their own cultural beliefs – as an effort to turn their children away from Turkish traditions and "back" to Roma ones. As such, outreach efforts with these parents were unsuccessful and they remained opposed to the project.

The written survey of parents conducted in March 2001 by the research team suggested that a relatively small proportion of parents actually developed strong opinions on the project and its curriculum. Only 41% of responding parents reported even "some" awareness of the project. Only one-quarter of the parents, who completed the survey, stated an opinion about the written materials of the project – with 20% rating it positive and 5% rating it negative. Nevertheless, even a small number of parents with strong feelings can cause considerable divisiveness in a school community – and this apparently occurred in some of the participating schools.

The reactions among parents in Bulgaria suggest that the intercultural education approach used by this project could succeed in engaging ethnic minority parents in supporting the school. However, when these activities were primarily focused on one ethnic group, they also had an enormous potential for creating division in school communities.

**Finding #2-G: The focus on Roma cultural tradition by the <u>Roma Mentored Scholarship Project (Hungary)</u> during its summer camp served to increase interest of some Roma students in their cultural identity.**

The summer camp offered to student participants in this Project, included a focus on Roma history and cultural traditions. Participation in this camp was not compulsory and the camp also offered other topics of study for participating students. Nevertheless, participation in these activities served to increase the interest of some Roma students in their own cultural heritage.

This was confirmed in the interviews conducted by the research team with Project participants and others. In these interviews, 14 of 31 students (45%), 11 of 26 parents (42%), 12 of 27 teacher/mentors (44%) and 6 of 16 school administrators (38%), all reported that students exhibited greater interest in their cultural identify after participation in the summer camp sponsored by the Project.

**Finding #2-H: Attitudes among school staff and parents toward the intercultural education component of the <u>Equal Opportunities Project (Romania)</u> varied considerably in the participating schools.**

The intercultural education component of this project had two broad goals. On the one hand, it sought to increase cross-cultural tolerance and understanding among all adults and children in the school. At the same time, it aimed to increase accurate knowledge of both non-Roma and Roma adults and students about Roma history, culture, and tradition. In the process, it attempted to expand the opportunities of Roma students to develop and maintain competency in the Roma language.

As described in the project description section, the philosophy of this Project encouraged individual schools and school staff to develop and pursue their own

strategies for accomplishing these goals. As a result, different schools placed different degrees of emphasis on these two goals.

Several schools (#1, #2, #4, and #5) integrated intercultural education activities with other Project components. They pursued intercultural education in the context of parent outreach and community partnership efforts. They also employed oral history strategies and techniques to support intercultural education efforts. In these schools, intercultural education efforts were generally associated with efforts to confront and address inappropriate attitudes and behavior toward Roma children and adults. However, school #4 was somewhat less aggressive than the other three schools in confronting these attitudes and issues.

Three other schools (#3, #7, and #8) pursued intercultural activities separate from other Project-related efforts. In these schools, intercultural activities involved dramas, displays, and festivals. These activities were generally associated with less comprehensive efforts to understand and address prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior against Roma children and adults. However, school #7 was considerably more aggressive than the other two schools in examining this issue.

The two remaining schools (#6 and #9) did not actively pursue activities related to intercultural education issues. Any activities of this type were of a more isolated nature. Staff in these schools, generally, failed to even acknowledge that cross-cultural problems existed.

The development of instructional materials on Roma history, culture, and tradition and the encouragement to teach Roma language to interested students, resulted in a diversity in responses from school administrators, school staff, students, and parents. Unlike the schools in Bulgaria, participating schools in Romania did not report the strong opposition of non-Roma parents to a focus on Roma language, history, culture, and tradition. In particular, no strong opposition among parents from other ethnic groups was reported.

Nevertheless, teachers in several schools reported a reluctance to allow the teaching of the Roma language or to incorporate a study of Roma history, culture, and traditions. In two schools (#6 and #7), teachers acknowledged concerns about the reaction of Romanian parents. In both schools, teachers feared that the image of the school would suffer and that Romanian parents would withdraw their children from the school. Teachers in those two schools and in three others (#4, #8, and #9) also expressed the belief that few Roma parents  wanted their children to study either the Roma language or its culture. Many of these teachers emphasized their impression that most Roma in their communities had abandoned use of both the Roma language and related cultural traditions. These opinions  were associated with teachers in urban schools. Teachers in the rural schools  failed to express similar opinions. In fact, there  was a widespread, but not necessarily accurate, perception that Roma living in urban communities  had abandoned their language and culture, along with their traditional way of life. However, interviews with Roma parents suggested that this  was not the case.

Several teachers also expressed the view, that emphasis on cultural differences embodied in the Project's approach to intercultural education, was fundamentally at odds with the egalitarian principles of society. They wanted to emphasize  the equality of people rather than emphasizing their differences. However,  the dichotomy suggested

by these teachers was a false one. It fundamentally misinterpreted the purpose and nature of the goals of the intercultural education component of the project. The intercultural education activities of the project celebrated <u>social</u> diversity. It did not challenge the notion of <u>legal</u> equality embodied in the egalitarian political principles.

Across all nine participating schools, Roma parents and their children expressed four different perspectives, regarding the study of Roma language and culture.

- A relatively large group of parents and children pointedly disagreed with the perspective of some teachers. They expressed strong interest in studying the Roma language and culture – either to maintain their connections or to rediscover their cultural heritage.

- Some Roma parents did express little interest in having their children taught the Roma language and culture. They had a greater interest in having their children instructed in Romanian and basic skills. These parents were in the minority among parents interviewed by the research team.

- A third group was opposed to the teaching of the Roma language in school but not the study of Roma cultural traditions. These parents considered the Roma language to be "private" – to be used only in the home and among relatives. They had little desire to see it shared with others, particularly with non-Roma.

- A fourth group was opposed to the particular content employed in this Project. These parents and adult claimed that the language and traditions taught were not "their" language and traditions. In fact, they conflicted with the version of Roma spoken in their home and their cultural traditions.

These perspectives confirmed that there was an important place for the study of Roma language, culture, and history in both urban and rural schools, despite the assumptions and perspectives of many teachers and others in the urban communities. However, the nature and direction of those efforts was most successful where Roma parents and the Roma community were actively engaged in the development and implementation of these efforts.

At the same time, the development and use of nationally recognized instructional materials to support the study of Roma language, culture, and traditions had the potential to create significant problems. Interviews by the research team with school staff and project staff, particularly in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Romania, revealed enormous cultural diversity among Roma groups across the region, in each country, and even in individual communities. In some cases, a centrally developed "description" of Roma language, culture, and traditions was as divisive as it was informative. An emphasis on diversity within the Roma community, involvement of members of the community, and an emphasis on oral history strategies and approaches could be more effective than using a more rigidly-defined set of instructional materials on this subject.

## Findings Responding to Research Question #3: Contribution of the Projects to Institutional and Systemic Change

**Finding #3-A: The <u>Equal Opportunities Project (Romania)</u> resulted in some institutional changes in most of the participating schools reviewed by this research. Moreover, broad-based institutional change occurred in several schools.**

As indicated in the project description, this project conducted training sessions, developed materials, and provided assistance around seven topics: school management; cooperative learning; remedial education; intercultural education; Roma culture and tradition; oral history; and parental involvement. The Project philosophy emphasized that each participating school should develop and adopt its own strategies and plans for promoting change within each of these seven areas. Although these changes were seen as benefiting Roma students, there was an understanding that benefits would not be limited to the Roma.

To assess the impact of this project on institutional change efforts in participating schools, the research team used it a sample of 9 participating schools. In each school, the research team carried out observations and site visits and conducted interviews with school administrators, school staff, students, and parents. In addition, the research team interviewed project staff and reviewed Project-related documents.

The research team recognized that institutional change would progress in a different ways and at different rates in each school. In order to analyze and characterize these results, the research team identified nine dimensions of change.

- Five of the participating schools (#1, #2, #5, #7, and #9) demonstrated greater reliance on the collaborative school decision-making processes promoted by the project.

- Teachers in six schools (#1, #2, #3, #5, #7, and #9) also integrated cooperative learning strategies in their classrooms.

- Six of the participating schools (#1, #2, #4, #7, #8, and #9) established targeted learning assistance programs (often using remedial education strategies) for Roma and non-Roma students with significant educational need.

- Teachers in seven schools (#1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, and #7) implemented strategies promoted in project training sessions to change their classroom organization, teaching practices, or curriculum content.

- Five of the participating schools (#1, #2, #3, #4, and #5) promoted a greater emphasis on the integration of intercultural education activities in the classroom or pursued other activities which advanced intercultural education.

- Teachers in five schools (#1, #2, #4, #5, and #7) made use of instructional materials on Roma history, culture, and traditions developed by the project.

- Teachers in four schools #1, #2, #5, and #9) integrated oral history strategies into the teaching practices used with their classes.

- Four schools (#1, #2, #5, and #7) used strategies promoted by the project to establish or strengthen community partnerships.

- Five schools (#1, #2, #3, #5, and #7) developed and implemented strategies designed to increase parental involvement in the school or providing successful parent education activities.

**Table IV-27. Institutional Change Efforts in Selected Participating Schools in Romania. (2001)**

| | Schools | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **#1** | **#2** | **#3** | **#4** | **#5** | **#6** | **#7** | **#8** | **#9** |
| **Collective Decision-Making** | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| **Cooperative Learning** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| **Targeted Learning Assistance** | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Teaching Practices** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| **Intercultural Education** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| **Roma Language & Culture** | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| **Oral History Strategies** | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| **Community Partnerships** | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| **Parent Involvement** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | |

Based on this assessment, four schools (#1, #2, #5, and #7) generally had consistent progress across most or all of the nine dimensions. These four schools shared several characteristics. First, these schools all had relatively strong and effective leadership. This included administrative leaders, active teachers, and involved parents. Second, these schools had a culture that supported risk-taking and experimentation. This was reflected in previous change efforts undertaken by the individual schools. In interviews, both school directors and teachers emphasized their commitment to changing the school. Third, these schools had both a population of participating teachers that was sufficient in number (usually about 10) and stable. In each school, turnover among the participating teachers was relatively small. Finally, these schools consistently demonstrated a positive attitude toward Roma students and a strong commitment to ensuring high-quality education for these and all students. During interviews, teachers in these schools did not make sweeping generalizations of Roma children or parents, nor did they demonstrate low expectations for their school performance.

Through project activities, the other schools have begun to develop some of these characteristics, as well. For example, schools #3 and #4 have begun to build a culture of school reform by successfully pursuing changes in classroom teaching practices. Those two schools, along with school #8, have begun to change staff attitudes toward Roma children by emphasizing intercultural education. Finally, school #9 has begun to

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strengthen school leadership through its emphasis on collaborative decision-making. These activities could serve as the foundation for additional changes in the future.

At the same time, our research revealed that severe staff turnover in three participating schools (#3, #8, and #9) significantly disrupted efforts to make institutional change.

- School #3 lost 70% of its staff, after its first year in the project and 50% of its staff, after the second year of the project. After two years, only the director and two teachers remained from the original project team. The director reported that such staff movement was a chronic problem in the school. The school planned to undertake extensive staff training in an attempt to compensate for the knowledge lost after the two previous years.

- In School #8, one of the participating teachers took the lead in developing an extensive oral history initiative. When she departed, the effort collapsed.

- School #9 had 8 of 18 participating teachers depart after the last school year. School staff acknowledged that efforts to implement new teaching practices ended because of these staff departures. As a result, materials distributed by the Project were left unused by staff in this school.

There were suggestions made during interviews of staff in one school (#9) that participation in the Project contributed to the departure of at least some of the staff. The participation of some teachers in the national training seminars caused dissention within the school between those who participated and those who had chosen not to participate – despite the fact that participation was apparently made available to all staff. Moreover, participating staff reported some dissatisfaction with the recognition and support they received from the school's leadership. Although the school's leadership sought to keep these teachers from leaving, in the end they were unsuccessful in that effort. Project staff acknowledged that national seminars did not provide training to school directors to help them address these kinds of problems that could arise during the implementation of Project activities in the schools.

A major limitation facing almost every school examined was the need to disseminate materials and knowledge effectively and fairly within the school community. All schools lacked the capacity and resources to carry out the needed internal dissemination efforts. Here too, Project staff acknowledged the national training seminars did not adequately address issues of team-building and internal training. Nor did they adequately discuss issues related to data-collection and analysis that would be needed to effectively monitor and support internal dissemination and implementation efforts.

**Finding #3-B: The placement of RTAs through the <u>Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic)</u> improved the relationship between Roma parents and the public schools. In addition, the presence of RTAs in some schools enabled teachers to implement different teaching practices in their classrooms.**

Although only 6 of the RTAs saw parent contact as a major portion of the role (either by providing "social work"-type assistance or through family visits), 16 of 18 RTAs interviewed confirmed that they had regular contact with Roma parents. Moreover, teachers and administrators in 9 of the 11 schools reported that this was a significant

function of the RTAs in their school. When problems arose that required communication with Roma parents, RTAs were generally expected to make contact, convey the problems or concerns, and seek to resolve them with the Roma parents.

Thanks to the presence of RTAs in the schools, school directors and teachers in five of the schools examined, reported that their schools' relationship with Roma parents had improved. They reported that problems with students in attendance and behavior could more readily be addressed with the intervention of the RTAs. Even in these schools, most teachers reported that their (teachers') contact with Roma parents was unchanged – and remained infrequent. However, contact between the RTAs and Roma parents had improved communication.

Most Roma parents shared these perceptions. Four of the five parents or families interviewed by the research team reported that the presence of a Roma adult in the schools made them a more welcoming environment. They also reported feeling more comfortable in the school and more willing to travel to the school when an RTA was available.

Although the RTAs themselves did not create institutional change in the participating schools, their presence increased the capacity of these schools to undertake other innovative activities designed to benefit Roma children. Specifically, the presence of RTAs allowed some of the schools to operate "preparatory classes". These classes were offered to school-age children (usually Roma) who were unprepared to begin first grade. In essence, the preparatory class took the place of kindergarten for these students. According to one school director, participation in the preparatory classes by Roma students, generally reduced failure rates during first grade and reduced the likelihood that these students would be placed in "special schools". Eight of the RTAs interviewed confirmed that they worked in the preparatory class and three worked exclusively in the preparatory class. Both school directors and teachers reported that the availability of RTAs significantly enhanced the quality of these classes. One school director went so far as to say that the preparatory class in that school could not operate without the RTA.

The availability of RTAs also enabled schools to undertake or expand assistance to older children as well. Eight of the RTAs interviewed conducted some form of after school activity primarily targeted on Roma children. Some RTAs participated in homework help or tutoring activities that helped address educational deficiencies of some Roma children. Others were involved in enrichment activities ("clubs") that included singing, dancing, cooking, sewing, and other activities. Although these activities did not directly address the learning needs of Roma students, RTAs reported that these activities were extremely important because they engaged Roma students with the school.

Finally, the presence of RTAs has resulted in changed teaching practices in some classrooms in the participating schools. One teacher agreed to establish an inclusive class (with mixed ability levels) rather than establish the traditional ability-grouped class. They reported that this innovative practice could only be pursued due to the presence of the RTA. Another teacher reported making greater use of cooperative small group activities due to the presence of an RTA and noted that Roma children were particularly responsive to group activities. Finally, a director, five teachers, and five RTAs (representing six schools) reported greater individualization in the teaching practices used in the classroom by teachers when RTAs were present. Greater

individualization was particularly valuable for Roma children who had deficiencies in their educational knowledge, skills, and experience and in their mastery of the Czech language.

**Finding #3-C: The <u>Kindergarten as Family Centers Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia)</u> contributed to the improvement of the relationship between Roma parents and the public schools.**

This Project seeks to improve the relationship between Roma parents and the public schools. To accomplish this, the Project employs two strategies. First, it provides training and experiences to Roma parents to build their confidence, knowledge, skills, and experiences in effectively engaging school staff and navigating the school bureaucracy. Second, Project staff assist Roma parents as intermediaries and mediators in their communications with the public schools.

In Yugoslavia/Serbia, the research team administered an open-ended written survey to 16 administrators and staff from 9 schools in 5 communities. Survey responses document improvement in the relationship between Roma parents and school staff. Ten (10) of 16 respondents (64%) reported that Roma parents whose children participated in the Project were more interested in the children's educational achievement and more engaged with their children's schooling experience than Roma parents whose children did not participate in the Project. In addition, 6 of 16 school staff (38%) reported that parents of Project participants are more cooperative with teachers and the school than other Roma parents. Finally, 5 of 16 respondents (32%) characterized parents of Project participants as having an "exemplary attitude" towards the public school. As a result, 12 of 16 (75%) reported having successful or very successful interactions with parents of Project participants.

The research team also reviewed the record of 105 Roma students who were enrolled in grades 1 to 3 during the 1999-2000 school year and had participated in the Project to assess the level of parent participation in school activities. These records revealed that 42% of the Roma parents participated regularly in school activities, while 47% participated on a part-time basis. Overall, almost 90% of these Roma parents were engaged in the children's school.

Only 7 Roma students who had not participated in the Project could be identified in these schools. Only 1 parent (14%) out of 7 participated in school activities on a regular basis and only 2 (29%) participated on a part-time basis. Overall, only 43% of the parents of other Roma children were engaged in the school activities – a considerably lower proportion than the parents of Project participants.

These conclusions were confirmed by Project staff. The research team administered an open-ended written survey to 30 Project staff (including 11 teachers, 14 teaching assistants, and 5 coordinators) – 11 of the staff were Roma. Based on their interactions with parents of Project participants, 23 of 30 staff (77%) reported that parents gained a greater understanding of working effectively with elementary school teachers, in support of their children's education.

**Finding #3-D: The <u>Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria)</u> has laid the foundation for additional, more expansive intercultural education efforts in the public schools.**

Initially, the instructional materials developed and disseminated by this Project were employed by teachers in 35 Bulgarian public schools. According to Project staff, the number of schools using these materials has declined to 20 over the last five years. Similarly, the results of interviews and site visits conducted by the research team in participating schools revealed that 3 schools continued to make active use of the program materials and 3 schools made more limited use of these resources. At the same time, the interviews and site visits indicated that 15 of 28 participating teachers who were still present in those schools, continued to make active use of the program materials and activities in their classrooms.

Several factors contributed to this decline. Continued opposition to the use of these materials by non-Roma parents, particularly those from other ethnic minorities, convinced some schools and teachers to discontinue the use of the materials and participation in the Project. The lack of continuing training or available materials led others to withdraw. The site visits in 3 of the participating schools revealed that, participating teachers had never received all program materials and that few materials remained available for classroom use in the schools. In one school, the program materials were found locked in the files of the school director. Still other teachers were affected by their isolation in their own school. Teachers who were the only ones trained to use the materials were less likely to continue to use the materials than those who were trained as part of a group.

Despite the gradual decline in its use, the materials developed by the Project were very well-received by many teachers and parents – in other countries as well as in Bulgaria. According to the March 2001 survey of parents, 80% of those expressing an opinion, characterized the instructional materials developed by the project as "good". Moreover, our research findings have documented that a program approach that combines teacher training and distribution of instructional materials can change the attitudes and knowledge of both adults and students.

The experiences of teachers and project staff under the Intercultural Education Project ,directly contributed to the development of a new and expanded version of the project, Developing Intercultural Experiences. This new proposal would also focus on intercultural education. However, it would target several ethnic minority groups in Bulgaria, as well as the Roma. In addition, it would require the participation of a larger number of teachers from each school. This will ensure that a "critical mass" exists in each participating school and maximizes the likelihood that program use will be sustained over time. Finally, the proposal incorporates a more extensive and decentralized training component.

Among the 8 schools that had participated in the Intercultural Education Project visited by the research team, 5 were participating in this follow-up project. In addition, one of the three comparison schools visited was also participating – and a second school had previously expressed an interest in participation.

Moreover, the Bulgarian government did adopt a special "Program for the Equal Participation of Roma in Bulgarian Society" in 1999. That policy includes a provision requiring schools to provide knowledge on Roma history and culture through mainstream education. Although the government has not taken action to implement this policy, it does provide a legal foundation for further development of intercultural education in the schools.

**Finding #3-E: The <u>Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic)</u> had moderate success with strategies designed to sustain its services over the long-term.**

Beginning in 1997, Project staff and representatives of Nová Škola initiated negotiations with the Czech Ministry of Education to formally accept the Roma Teaching Assistant as an official position in the public schools. These negotiations were successfully concluded in the spring of 1998. Formal recognition of this position also meant that the Czech government would accept responsibility for funding the salary of these positions. Prior to this time, salaries were provided entirely through funds raised and sponsorships arranged by Nová Škola. By obtaining formal governmental acceptance of this position, the Project took a significant step in ensuring that RTAs would continue to exist over the long-term.

At the same time, Project staff were also working with the Czech Ministry of Education to obtain governmental approval and funding for the basic training program for the RTAs. By 1999, the Ministry had agreed to certify and contract for such training. This accomplishment confirmed the need for ongoing training to prepare Roma adults for the RTA position.

Despite these successes, additional policy action is still required. The Project has identified four additional areas requiring policy development or clarification. These include:

- Development of more explicit standards for the RTA preparation course.

- Requirement of additional or continuing preparation courses (such as the Course of Further Education developed through the Project).

- Development of more explicit descriptions of the job responsibilities and expectations for RTAs.

- Increase in the salary of the RTA.

Although additional work needs to be undertaken to strengthen and support the RTA position, the Project has already created significant change in the national education system of the Czech Republic.

**Finding #3-F: The <u>Educational Centers Project (Slovakia)</u> and the <u>Kindergarten as Family Centers Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia)</u> had moderate success with strategies designed to sustain its services over the long-term.**

Both projects have successfully obtained governmental support. In establishing its sites, the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) negotiated with the School Board of Presov to obtain appropriate facilities. Such negotiations were eventually successful. As a result, both sites are used by the Project at no cost.

The Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia) has pursued a similar strategy in the continued establishment of its sites. In five sites, the Project has forged partnerships with local public kindergartens to share space and staff. A similar arrangement has been developed at a sixth site with the local public elementary school. At all six sites, the public institution bears the costs of the space and funds one of the

teachers. In exchange, the Project includes staff from the kindergarten or the elementary school in its staff training activities. Given the high quality of these activities, this exchange is seen as quite beneficial by the kindergarten and the school.

The relationships established by both Projects are crucial to the long-term sustainability of each Project. In Slovakia, support from these governmental agencies has ensured that the project has continued to operate for eight years. In Yugoslavia/Serbia, the shared space can provide the Project with a more cost-effective model for sustaining and expanding its services.

**Finding #3-G: The <u>Program for Educational Support (Macedonia)</u> succeeded in engaging the cooperation of NGOs in its activities, but had mixed success in engaging the support of governmental agencies.**

This program developed collaborative relationships with international and national NGOs to coordinate the delivery of services, including humanitarian assistance, to Roma families whose members were participating in activities conducted at the centers. For example, the program worked with Darhia to develop and offer Roma language camps, with BTR TV to develop and offer summer camps for Roma children, and with the American Refugee Committee to develop and offer health education seminars. As a result, the centers emerged as sites where a wide range of services, activities, and assistance could be offered to Roma families.

At the same time, the program successfully engaged representatives of the Macedonia Ministry of Education in the development and implementation of its services and activities. The local mayor and elementary school director (both Roma) also were involved in the project development and continue to serve on its board of directors. However, recent conflicts with local governmental authorities (including the mayor and one school director) have created problems for the program. These results highlight the complex challenges facing programs seeking to develop ongoing collaborations designed to sustain and expand services for Roma children and their families.

**Finding #3-H: The <u>Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria)</u>, the <u>Roma Mentored Scholarship Project (Hungary)</u>, and the <u>Equal Opportunities Project (Romania)</u> had more limited success in engaging the support of governmental agencies and NGOs to sustain their services over the long-term.**

Long-term sustainability of program services generally requires financial support from governmental agencies. Private funding sources simply can't be expected to fund operational costs of any project over the long-term. At times, long-term sustainability also requires legal and technical support from government and assistance from other NGOs. However, efforts by the other four projects to engage governmental and/or NGO support have been somewhat less than successful.

In Bulgaria, the Intercultural Education Project was unsuccessful in obtaining national government support for reprinting its curriculum materials, when it exhausted its original supply. The lack of new materials was cited as one reason for a decline in use of project activities in some participating schools. In Hungary, the national government has been unwilling to adopt the mentoring component of the Mentored Scholarship Project for its scholarship program for Roma secondary school students. In Romania,

efforts by the Educational Opportunities Project to engage elements of the national education training system have met with only limited success.

These examples all highlight the difficulties and challenges inherent in seeking the engagement and support of national governments or other NGOs for ongoing projects. Interviews with Project staff indicate that many of these Projects have a limited capacity to pursue such efforts – lacking the knowledge of appropriate strategies, the resources needed, and the time. As a result, even the efforts undertaken by these projects have been limited in scope and occurrence.

## Findings Responding to Research Question #4: Feasibility of Replication

**Finding #4-A: The cost per student of the institutional change projects is considerably lower than the cost per student of the direct service projects. However, their cost-benefit ratios are roughly equivalent.**

The research team obtained the most recent operating budget for each Project from the Project Director or the sponsoring agency. All monetary figures were converted into United States Dollars (USD).

**Table IV-28. Cost Per Student for Selected Roma Education Projects.**

| | Annual Budget | Student Population | Cost Per Student |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria)** | **57800 USD** | **4000** | **14 USD** |
| **Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic)** | **64500 USD** | **940** | **69 USD** |
| **Roma Mentored Scholarship Project (Hungary)** | **226514 USD** | **301** | **755 USD** |
| **Program for Educational Support (Macedonia)** | **200000 USD** | **385** | **519 USD** |
| **Equal Opportunity Project (Romania)** | **65680 USD** | **4400** | **15 USD** |
| **Educational Centers Project (Slovakia)** | **41200 USD** | **113** | **364 USD** |
| **Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia)** <br><br> *As food costs are an exceptional element to this project, costs per child without food costs taken into consideration are also shown. | **300000 USD** <br><br> **169650 USD** (without food) | **673** <br><br> **673** | **445 USD** <br><br> **252 USD** |

For three of these Projects, the most recent complete budget covers either the 2000 calendar year or the 1999-2000 school year. For the Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria), the research team employed the budget for the entire Project because it involved a complete sequence of material preparation, development, and distribution, and staff training rather than annualized activities. For the Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic), the research team employed the budget for 1998-99, the last year that the project conducted the introductory training program for RTAs. For the Equal Opportunities Project (Romania), the research team employed the average annual budget from 1998 to 2000. For the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia), the research team employed the budget for the 2000-01 school year.

The research team obtained actual counts or estimates of the total Roma student population participating in each Project. For direct service projects, this included only those Roma students who directly participated in activities sponsored by the Project. For institutional change projects, this included those Roma students who attended the class of a participating teacher or were enrolled in a participating school.

The three institutional change projects (in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Romania) all have costs per student participant that are considerably lower than the four direct service projects (in Hungary, Macedonia, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia/Serbia). Such a result reflects the differences in the targeted audience for their direct services.

The institutional change projects target schools and their staff with their services. The Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria) provided training and instructional materials to approximately 200 classroom teachers in 35 schools. During the last year that it conducted the basic training course for the RTAs, the Roma Teaching Assistant Project trained 47 RTAs from the Czech Republic and three other Eastern European countries. The Equal Opportunities Project (Romania) provided direct training, assistance, materials, and technical support to approximately 28 teachers and 220 teachers.

By serving schools and school staff, each of the institutional change projects were able to reach a much larger audience of students than those served by the four direct service projects. The teachers in the Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria) each returned to their classroom to use the materials and lessons with their students. The RTAs trained by the Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic) are placed in schools where they work with one or more classes of students. The Equal Opportunities Project (Romania) engages entire school populations.

In estimating the number of students involved in each of these Projects, the research team employed conservative assumptions. For example, researchers assumed that each RTA worked with only one class of 20 students, although many work with multiple classes. Researchers also considered only the students in the classes of teachers directly involved in activities sponsored by the Equal Opportunity Project (Romania), although this Project actually sought to engage the entire student population in each school. Even with these conservative assumptions, each institutional change project involved thousands of students and the cost per students was one-tenth or less than that of the direct service projects.

However, assessing the relative cost-benefits of the two types of projects is considerably more complicated. Research findings reveal that most of the students participating in

the four direct service projects had measurable and significant short-term gains. Students attending the preschool programs offered by the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) and the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia) were better prepared for elementary school. They had better marks, better attendance, and were more likely to be promoted once they entered school. Students receiving homework assistance through the Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) improved or maintained their marks in elementary school and had higher marks than Roma students who did not receive such assistance. Students receiving scholarships and mentoring assistance through the Roma Mentored Scholarship Project (Hungary) were more likely to successfully complete secondary school.

At the same time, research findings suggest that the impact of the institutional change projects were more limited in magnitude and scope – at least in the short period of time over which these projects have operated. The Equal Opportunity Project (Romania) promoted broad-based institutional change in some participating schools – changes that could lay the foundation for significant improvements in the education of Roma students. However, teachers in even the most successful schools characterized short-term achievement gains for students as "minor". The presence of RTAs in Czech schools enabled teachers to adopt teaching strategies that could be more effective with Roma students. Their presence also allowed Czech schools to implement and expand programs that could provide significant assistance to Roma students in the long-term. Measurable, short-term gains were only apparent for a relatively small number of Roma students – those who may have avoided failing a grade, due to the assistance provided by RTAs.

Ultimately, this research suggests that a trade-off exists. The significant expenditure associated with each of the direct service projects results in significant benefits for the participating Roma students. At the same time, the much smaller per student expenditure associated with the institutional change projects result in correspondingly modest short-term results for Roma students. However, the accumulation of expenditure over a longer period could result in more significant benefits over time. Nevertheless, the short-term benefits of each type of program reflect the level of short-term expenditure.

**Finding #4-B: Center-based direct service projects have pursued several opportunities to reduce costs. Additional opportunities may exist for these projects.**

The Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) has negotiated for rent-free facilities for two sites (Solivar and Zehna). These successful negotiations have reduced the cost of the project by approximately 10% (4150 USD or 35 USD per student).

The Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia) has negotiated for shared space and staff with local public kindergartens and an elementary school in six sites. This has resulted in an estimated budgetary savings of approximately 20% for those sites.

Additional opportunities exist for reducing the cost of the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia). Almost half of the budget for this project (47%) is used to provide daily meals to the participating children. As noted earlier, this is certainly an essential element of the project. However in other countries in the region

where the Step-by-Step model has been implemented, these expenses are generally provided by the government. If food and space costs are excluded from the budget, the per participant cost of this project is only 200 USD.

However, caution must be employed in pursuing these strategies. Research findings suggest the preschool programs of the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia) operating in shared sites, may not have been as successful as those operating in separate sites. Interviews with project staff suggest that factors other than the cost-saving efforts may have contributed to this situation. Nevertheless, these results suggest that extreme care must be taken in pursuing efforts to reduce project costs. Issues of cost cannot override issues of program quality or integrity. A careful monitoring of project outcomes must accompany any efforts to significantly reduce project costs to ensure that benefit considerations have not been sacrificed in the process.

The average per participant cost of the Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) would also be expected to decline over time at each of the existing centers. This is because approximately 10% of the budget over the first three years of the project was devoted to renovation of facilities at the two program sites. These are "one time only" costs and will not be needed for the ongoing operation of the program at these two sites.

### Finding #4-C: The <u>Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic)</u> has already been supporting efforts at program replication in other countries.

During the 1998-99 school year, the Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic) trained 12 RTAs from Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovakia along with 35 Czech RTAs through its "Course of Pedagogical Minimum". As with the Czech RTAs, the Project assisted the trained RTAs in the other three countries with placement in schools and provided them ongoing support after their placements. The Project's sponsoring organization (Nová Škola) has worked through the international Central European Romany Education Program (CEREP) to share and exchange information on RTA training and placement with interested NGOs in other countries. Based on these past experiences, Nová Škola currently is working to expand its capacity to support and facilitate the recruitment, preparation, and placement of RTAs throughout the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

### Finding #4-D: The <u>Educational Centers Project (Slovakia)</u>, the <u>Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia)</u>, and the <u>Program for Educational Support (Macedonia)</u> have the capacity to support efforts at program replication in the same country and possibly in other countries.

The Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia) has aggressively expanded its scope of operation since it began in 1997. In that year, the Project operated 5 classes in 3 sites. In 1998, the Project added 9 classes in 4 sites. In 1999, it added an eighth site. In 2000, the Project expanded to include 6 additional classes in 4 more sites. This year (2001), it has added four more classes in 2 sites.

Both the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) and the Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) have also replicated their program model to multiple sites. Over the last 8 years, the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) has established a total of 6 sites, although 3 sites have since been shut due to problems with the availability of

appropriate space. The Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) has recently replicated its model to a second site after the successful operation of its original site for two years.

These experiences have built the capacity of all three Projects to replicate their models further within their respective countries. Moreover, the Step- by- Step kindergarten model anticipates the adaptation of its elements and activities in response to national conditions and participant needs. It supports project staff undertaking such an effort. As a result, staff of the Kindergarten as Family Center Project in Yugoslavia/Serbia have practical experience in adapting program elements and activities to local settings and requirements. These experiences could be used to support the adaptation of the program model for use with Roma populations in other Central and Eastern European countries.

**Finding #4-E: Effective program replication requires adaptation to particular needs of the specific target audience and the conditions of the particular country.**

As expected under the Step- by- Step program model, the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia) adapted the general elements and activities of the program, in response to the needs of Roma children and the conditions in the country and communities. The description of this Project identified six key adaptations. These adaptations were implemented for a variety of reasons:

- One adaptation involved the use of mixed age classes. This enabled the Project to create educational conditions that were more familiar and comfortable for Roma children.

- Two of these adaptations involved the use of Roma teaching assistance and an emphasis on Roma language, culture, and tradition in teaching activities. These adaptations were designed, primarily, to ensure that the program more effectively appealed to Roma children and parents.

- Two other adaptations involved an emphasis on learning the official language of the country (Serbian) and the availability of non-educational services (such as bathing and clothes washing) to Roma children. These adaptations were designed to respond to specific needs of the Roma children in the community.

- The sixth adaptation involved the use of representatives of Roma NGO's to organize and coordinate the program sites and to conduct outreach into the community. This adaptation ensured that site development would reflect local conditions and resources.

Taken together, these adaptations ensured that the Project more effectively addressed the needs of its target audience and reflected the conditions of the host country.

A similar pattern emerged with two other projects. The Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria) drew on existing models of intercultural education. The Equal Opportunity Project (Romania) drew on existing models of education reform, particularly activities carried out by its Dutch NGO partner (SLO/Educaplan). Interviews with the designers of each Project revealed that conscious decisions had been made in each case to avoid

relying on the same materials or activities that had been employed in other countries. Instead, the designers of each Project used these experiences as models and developed Project materials and activities in close consultation with experts in each country. This ensured that the resulting materials and activities were relevant to the conditions and needs of their country – and of the Roma residing there. In fact, that was the explicit purpose of the type of grant ("Knowledge Transfer") provided under the MATRA Programme to SLO/Educaplan for the Equal Opportunity Project (Romania).

These experiences suggest that further replication of either direct service or institutional change models can be most effective where they incorporate deliberate adaptation of the general model to local conditions and needs. The Step- by- Step program model is a valuable example of a model that incorporates and promotes the concept of adaptation. At the same time, effective adaptation can best be accomplished by establishing strong working partnerships with local experts and educators. The Educational Opportunities Project (Romania), which brings together experts and educators from the Netherlands and Romania, can serve as an example and model for this process.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Question # 1 – Have the selected Roma education programs succeeded in (A) getting and keeping more Roma children in school through graduation and (B) improving the educational attainment of Roma children?

- Roma children who participated in the direct service projects had higher marks, more regular school attendance, and a greater likelihood of remaining in or completing school  compared to Roma children who did not participate in these projects.

- There was no expectation that the three institutional change projects would result in measurable changes in the educational attainment or school attendance of Roma children during the limited time of operation of these project.  However, there was some evidence (particularly anecdotal evidence) that documented benefits for some Roma students from all three institutional change projects.

Question # 2 -- Have the selected Roma education programs succeeded in promoting (A) changes in attitudes towards Roma children among teachers and other adult school staff, (B) changes in attitudes towards Roma children among non-Roma children and their parents, and (C) changes in self-characterization by Roma children?

- The three institutional change projects succeeded in changing attitudes of some non-Roma teachers and students towards Roma children.

- Two of the direct service projects – the Education Centers Project (Slovakia) and the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia) – succeeded in changing attitudes of non-Roma teachers and students only towards Roma children who participated in their programs.

- All seven Roma education projects reported improvement in the self-esteem and self-characterization of participating Roma students.

- Activities of the Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria) and the Equal Opportunity Project (Romania) focusing on Roma culture and tradition had mixed results.

Question # 3 – How have the selected Roma education programs promoted institutional or policy changes in the national education systems, which advance the goals of equity and educational success for Roma children?

- Both direct service projects – the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia) – and institutional change projects – the Equal Opportunity Project (Romania) and the Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic) – have demonstrated some success in improving the relationship between Roma parents and the public schools.

- The Educational Opportunities Project in Romania promoted institutional changes over a limited period of time in all of the participating schools that were examined. Moreover, broad-based institutional changes were observed in four of these schools.

- The Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic) and the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia) had the greatest success in ensuring that their services would be sustained over the long term. The other projects had only limited success in this regard.

Question # 4 -- What is the feasibility of replicating aspects or elements of the selected Roma education programs at other sites in the same country or in other countries within the region, taking into consideration factors such as cost, resource needs, institutional support, and culture?

- Cost-benefit ratios of the both institutional change and direct service projects are roughly equivalent, even though the cost per student participant of the institutional change projects is considerably lower. Opportunities may exist for lowering the costs of the center-based direct service projects. However, such changes could jeopardize the quality of the project.

- Several of the projects possess the capacity to support efforts at program replication within the same country or in other countries.

- Effective program replication requires adaptation to the particular needs of the specific target audience and the conditions of the particular country. It also required effective engagement of national and local educational authorities to ensure that these adaptations are sustained.

# Recommendations

This research project has documented the effectiveness of the selected Roma education projects in improving the educational attainment of Roma students or promoting institutional changes in schools. At the same time, additional work needs to be carried out if the progress accomplished by these projects is to be sustained and expanded. This section of the report presents recommendations based on the research findings listed in the previous section. These recommendations are directed at six audiences: the Soros Foundation Network and its Education Sub-Board; the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the Institute for Educational Policy (IEP); national Soros foundations; national governments; designers, directors, and staff of Roma education projects; and school staff.

The recommendations are organized into four categories. The first category (Program Support Recommendations) presents strategies for facilitating the creation, operation, and institutionalization of the Roma education projects and program models in Central and Eastern Europe. The second category (Program Design Recommendations) includes those recommendations related to the continued development of the Roma education program models. The third category (Project Implementation Recommendations) focuses on approaches for strengthening or enhancing the operation and implementation of Roma education projects. The final category (Research Recommendations) lists suggestions for continued research in the field.

## Program Support Recommendations

1.  The Education Sub-Board of the Soros Foundation Network should sponsor the development of a **comprehensive agenda for Roma education in Central and Eastern Europe**. This agenda should integrate and link specific program models to meet the array of needs of all school-age Roma children. This agenda should reflect the results of this research, the work of OSI Budapest, OSI New York, and IEP, and the recommendations of appropriate experts. It should also be linked to regional agendas for the reform of national education systems and the empowerment of Roma communities. The Roma Education Working Group (REWG), assisted by staff from IEP and OSI Budapest, should take the lead in developing this agenda.

2.  National governments, national Soros foundations, local Roma communities, NGOs, and local educators should collaborate in the development of **national agendas for Roma education throughout the region**. Each national agenda should be grounded on the regional agenda developed by the Soros Foundation Network while reflecting the particular conditions, needs, and accomplishments of each country. This agenda should identify:
    *   Program models that need to be developed or adapted as the next step in building a unique combination of program services to meet the educational needs of Roma children in the country.
    *   Projects designed to promote systemic change in the schools to ensure that they more effectively meet the educational needs of Roma students.
    *   Strategies for promoting linkages among projects providing direct services to Roma students and those promoting systemic change in the schools.

- Plans for assessing the effectiveness of projects and for promoting long-term continuation of effective projects.

Staff from OSI Budapest and IEP should provide technical assistance and support for these efforts.

3.    The Soros Foundation Network should establish a **regional fund to support the implementation of appropriate Roma education models**. Implementation projects should:
- Adapt the Roma education model to reflect the needs of Roma children in the target community and the specific conditions in the proposed host country.
- Develop and implement realistic plans to ensure that effective services are continued over the long-term.
- Assess and document their implementation and impact.
- Receive support through matching funds provided by the appropriate national Soros foundation, other private funders, or the national government.

NGOs, particularly Roma NGOs, should develop and implement these projects. Staff from OSI Budapest and IEP should provide technical assistance and support in the design and implementation of these projects.

4.    The Education Sub-Board should establish an **Advisory Board on Roma Education Programs to assist in the implementation of the regional agenda** on Roma education by the Soros Foundation Network. The Board would:
- Advise the Soros Foundation Network on the appropriate use of the regional fund for Roma education projects.
- Advise national Soros foundations in identifying appropriate Roma education projects to support and promote.
- Assist OSI Budapest and IEP in developing work plans in support of the agenda.

The membership of the Advisory Board can be drawn from the Roma Education Working Group.

5.    Given the scope and significance of the educational problems facing Roma children throughout the region, national Soros foundations should work closely with national governments and NGOs to ensure that **appropriate resources are directed in support of Roma education projects**. National Soros foundations should work collaboratively to ensure that Roma education issues are included as priorities, within comprehensive national efforts focused on school reform and Roma community development. In particular, national Soros foundations should allocate their resources in this area carefully, so as to leverage additional resources from other governmental and private funding sources.

6.    Effective assessment of direct service and systemic change projects depends upon the ready availability of accurate educational data on participating students. In order to ensure effective project assessment occurs, national governments should support and encourage schools and other appropriate institutions to **collect and archive relevant educational data on all students**. Where necessary, this should include a review of existing legal policies regarding the racial or cultural identification of specific students. Governments should strike a balance between legitimate efforts to reduce

discriminatory and prejudicial behavior and the needs of justifiable program evaluation and educational research. In addition, governments should make resources and training available to ensure that schools and other institutions have the knowledge and capacity to collect and maintain students data in a timely and cost-effective manner.

7.    The developers, administrators, and staff of existing Roma education projects possess a wealth of knowledge and experience regarding the design, adaptation, implementation, and sustaining of these projects. This knowledge and experience could make an invaluable contribution to efforts seeking to adapt or expand those projects to other sites. Unfortunately, existing projects lack the capacity to systematically share this knowledge and experience with others. The Soros Foundation Network should establish a **fund to support the dissemination of this knowledge and experience** by existing and new Roma Education projects. OSI Budapest and IEP should provide guidance and technical assistance to this effort.

## Program Design Recommendations

8.    Soros Foundation Network, NGOs, private funders, and international organizations should provide financial and technical support for the development and implementation of efforts to **coordinate institutional and systemic change projects with projects providing direct services to Roma students** to ensure a more effective response to the educational needs of Roma children. The Soros Foundation Network should take a leadership role in developing and implementing these efforts.

9.    Soros Foundation Network, NGOs, private funders, and international organizations should provide long-term financial and technical support for the continued development of **program models designed to make institutional changes in schools** to ensure that these schools more effectively respond to the needs of Roma students. The Soros Foundation Network should take a leadership role in developing these models. Support should be provided for program models that:
- Build the capacity and willingness of teachers to employ teaching strategies that reflect the learning styles and address the educational needs of Roma children.
- Build the knowledge and capacity of school administrators and staff, in order to develop sustained working partnerships with Roma parents and the community to respond to the educational needs of Roma children.
- Support the recruitment and preparation of Roma adults as educators in the public schools.
- Build knowledge and understanding among non-Roma educators and students regarding the history, experiences, and diverse cultural traditions of the Roma.
- Build the capacity and commitment of school communities to support changes in school structure, school operation, and classroom teaching to respond more effectively to the educational needs of Roma children.

10.    The Soros Foundation Network, NGOs, private funders, and international organizations should provide financial and technical support for the

development of **program models that offer a continuum of direct educational services to Roma children.** The Soros Foundation Network should take a leadership role in developing these models. These models should focus on designing and implementing effective strategies for integrating existing program interventions. Models should address a range of educational needs, including preparation, remediation, enrichment, and social development. These models should also span age groups of students from preschool to university. Support should be provided for program models that offer:

- Preschool services.
- Homework assistance and tutoring.
- Mentoring for students in secondary school.
- Scholarship programs.

11.     The **seven projects examined by this research should serve as foundations upon which to build more comprehensive educational program models** serving Roma children. The Soros Foundation Network, NGOs, private funders, and international organizations should provide financial and technical support to these projects, so that they can serve as starting points for creating integrated models that combine the direct service and institutional change activities to meet the spectrum of needs, across the continuum of ages, from grades K to 12, for all Roma children.

## Project Implementation Recommendations

12.     National governments, NGOs, national Soros foundations, and schools seeking to implement a proven Roma education model should ensure that the **program model is carefully adapted** to respond to the particular needs of Roma children and their parents and to the specific conditions of the host country and the immediate community. This effort should involve consultation with local Roma communities, as well as with local experts and educators. In particular, the socioeconomic and cultural diversity of the local Roma community must be accommodated through this effort.

13.     All Roma education projects should develop and implement a **realistic strategy for ensuring that successful services are sustained over the long-term**. Institutions providing funding for these projects should support and require the creation and implementation of such strategies.

14.     All Roma education projects should carry out **ongoing assessment and documentation** of its activities and outcomes. Products of this effort should be used to strengthen the quality of project operation and program services. These results should also be used to build support for sustaining the program services over the long-term. Institutions providing funding for these projects should support and require the creation and implementation of such efforts.

15.     National governments should provide financial, technical, legal, and policy support to ensure the **long-term continuation of effective Roma education projects** in their country.

## Research Recommendations

16. The Soros Foundation Network and other private funders should **sponsor continuing research on the development, operation, and impact of Roma education projects**. Specifically, research should focus on:
    - Short- and long-term impact on Roma children and their parents of center-based direct service projects offering a continuum of services including the Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) and the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia).
    - Long-term impact on Roma children and their parents of direct service projects offering preschool programs including the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia).
    - Long-term impact on schools and Roma students of systemic school change projects including the Equal Opportunity Project (Romania).
    - Long-term impact on schools and Roma students of projects that prepare and place Roma Teaching Assistants in public schools.

17. OSI Budapest and IEP should provide technical assistance to national Soros foundations, NGOs, and other appropriate institutions to support the effective development, adaptation, implementation, assessment, documentation, and dissemination of Roma education projects. To support this effort, OSI Budapest and IEP should conduct research on:
    - Strategies for conducting effective adaptation of Roma education models in response to local needs and national conditions.
    - Strategies for promoting effective integration of projects that provide direct services to Roma students.
    - Strategies for promoting effective institutional collaboration in support of implementation and long-term continuation of effective Roma education projects.
    - Strategies for engaging national and local education authorities, NGOs, and international organizations to provide financial, technical, and policy support for effective Roma education projects.
    - Effective approaches to program documentation and assessment.

18. OSI Budapest and IEP should employ multiple strategies to **actively disseminate the results of this and future research on Roma education projects,** sponsored and conducted by the Soros Foundation Network.

# Conclusion

This research project demonstrated that Roma education projects offering direct services to Roma students and their parents have successfully improved the educational attainment of Roma children. Roma children who participated in the preschool program offered by the Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) and the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia) were better prepared when they began elementary school. During the early elementary grades, these students had improved marks and better attendance. They were more likely to remain in school and be promoted to the next grade. Similarly, Roma children who received homework assistance under the Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) maintained or improved their marks during elementary school. Finally, those Roma children in secondary school who received scholarships and mentoring assistance under the Roma Mentored Scholarship Project (Hungary) were more likely to remain in and complete secondary school.

These four direct service projects succeeded in improving the educational conditions of Roma children in their respective communities. As a result, they closed the gap in educational attainment between Roma and non-Roma children. However, this research also demonstrated that much of this attainment gap still remained. Roma children in the preschool programs were better prepared for elementary school – but not as well prepared as non-Roma children. Roma children receiving homework assistance maintained their school performance, but maintained it at a level far below that of non-Roma children. Roma children receiving mentoring assistance and scholarships completed secondary school at much higher rates but the pool of Roma children capable of even qualifying for secondary school remained extremely small. Taken together, these projects do have the potential to significantly widen and strengthen the educational pipeline for Roma students.

At the same time, the direct service projects neither intended to nor succeeded in changing the educational environment facing Roma children in the public schools of Central and Eastern Europe. Many of the barriers to improved educational attainment by Roma children are grounded in the inadequacies and weaknesses of that educational environment.

This research project also examined Roma education projects designed, to create institutional change in the public schools to make the schools more responsive to the educational needs of Roma children. Taking into account the relatively short amount of time that these projects had been in operation, this research found that they succeeded in promoting some institutional changes in some participating schools. In several of the school examined, the Equal Opportunities Project (Romania) promoted changes in pedagogical practices used by teachers, in approaches used by schools for decision-making, and in the relationships between school staff and parents. It also promoted a greater emphasis on intercultural education among both teachers and students. By placing Roma Teaching Assistants in Czech schools, the Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic) expanded the capacity of some schools and teachers to implement teaching strategies and educational programs that were more responsive to the needs of Roma children. Through its materials and training activities, the Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria) did make some changes in the attitudes of some non-Roma teachers and students towards Roma children. At the same time, this

research confirmed that the immediate educational benefits of these projects to Roma students were relatively minor. As a result, this research confirmed that these projects required a much longer time horizon to accurately and fairly assess their effectiveness and impact. Nevertheless, the potential of these projects to change the educational environment facing Roma children make them promising complements to the direct service projects.

Ultimately, addressing the complex and varied needs of Roma children cannot rely upon a single strategy or approach. No individual project reviewed by this research holds the answer to the problems facing Roma students. Rather, the individual projects each can contribute a piece to a more comprehensive approach that requires further development and study.

Appendix 1

# Rome Education Research Project
# General Research Plan

The Open Society Initiative (OSI) Education Sub-Board has made a commitment to devote greater attention to improving educational programming for Roma children in Europe. As a foundation for this effort, it is sponsoring a focused research project to examine and learn from existing educational programs that serve Roma children and are considered successful. Based on criteria developed and recommendations provided by the Roma Education Working Group (REWG), seven educational programs have been identified to serve as the focus for the research project. These include:

- Roma Teaching Assistant project (CEGA and Interethnic Initiative), operating in Bulgaria.
- "Nadez" community center approach, operating in Macedonia.
- "Nová Škola" Foundation teacher training component, operating in the Czech Republic.
- Educational Centers approach operating in Slovakia.
- Whole School approach of the "Equal Chances" program, operating in Romania.
- Mentoring and Non-Mentoring Scholarships Program for secondary students operated by the Hungarian Foundation in Hungary.
- Step- by- Step Program, operating in Yugoslavia.

These programs were intentionally selected to demonstrate a range of program approaches and to examine a variety of operational contexts. Their diversity offers important lessons to guide strategic thinking in developing future educational programming for Roma children.

**Research Questions and Indicators**

**Question # 1 – How effective is each project in (A) getting and keeping Roma children in school through completion and (B) improving their educational achievement?** To determine program effectiveness, the research project will seek to examine several indicators across all sites, including:

- School attendance and absentee rates for students.
- Enrollment in preschool programs.
- Course marks and class marks.
- School dropout rates.
- Rates of school re-entry after dropping out.
- Movement from segregated to non-segregated schools.
- School completion rates.
- Disciplinary and behavioral incidents in school.
- Secondary school and university enrollment, attendance, and completion rates.
- Post-graduation employment.

Appendix 1

**Question # 2 – Has each project promoted institutional or policy changes in the public schools which advance goals of equity and educational quality?** In responding to this question, the research project will identify and examine changes in:

- National or local government educational policies.
- Government and school support and involvement for sustaining the project.
- School learning environments provided to all students.
- School instructional programs.
- School interest in Roma cultural activities.
- School governance structures.
- School interactions with families and the Roma communities.

**Question # 3 – Has the project resulted in (A) a change in attitude towards Roma children among teachers and other school staff, (B) a change in attitude towards Roma children among non-Roma children and their parents, and (C) a change in self-characterization by Roma children?** In assessing attitudinal changes of others towards Roma children, the research project will examine:

- Characterizations and expectations of Roma children, by school staff.
- Interactions between Roma children and school staff, both in the classroom and in non-academic (i.e. cafeteria, playground, etc.) school settings.
- Characterizations of Roma children, by non-Roma children and parents.
- Frequency and nature of interactions between Roma and non-Roma children, in both academic and non-academic school settings.
- Institutional treatment by schools (i.e. placement, disciplinary action, etc.) of Roma children compared to non-Roma children.

**Question # 4 – What is the feasibility of replicating each project within each country or in other countries, based on issues of cost, resources, institutions, and culture?** In assessing feasibility of program replication, the research project will develop standard program descriptions using several defined categories including:

- Project goals, purposes, and target population.
- Nature of Project intervention.
- Instructional philosophy.
- Participant assessment approach.
- Project management.
- Facilities requirements.
- Staffing requirements and staff qualifications.
- Equipment, material, and other resource requirements.
- Funding sources.
- Relationship and interaction with families and the community.
- Relationship and interaction with governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Appendix 1

**Research Philosophy**

This project will employ a participatory research model. Such a model emphasizes the active engagement of a program's designers, staff, participants, and other stakeholders in the research activities. Specifically, they would provide substantive input to:

- The identification and elaboration of the research questions.
- The development of the overall research plan.
- The design of data collection processes and tools.
- The analysis of the resulting research information.
- The preparation of written and electronic reports, summarizing the findings and results of the research project.

The role of the researcher in a participatory research approach is not to serve as an external and detached "judge" or "auditor" of the program. Rather, the lead researcher will carry out several well-defined roles, designed to involve the other members of the research "partnership", while ensuring a high-quality, utilitarian research project. The most important role is to ensure that all participants in the research "partnership" have <u>effective</u>, not simply formal, involvement. In this regard, it is important that expectations and responsibilities of project staff and other stakeholders are appropriate and realistic – especially in light of other demands on their time and attention. In particular, the research activities must be seen as complementing and strengthening the project, rather than intruding on its ongoing development and operation. Additional roles for the researcher include:

- Organizing and facilitating the development of all elements of the research plan.
- Overseeing and managing the implementation of the research plan.
- Ensuring that all participants in the research "partnership" have an understanding of the basics of research design, data collection and analysis, and presentation.
- Providing technical expertise on state-of-the-art research techniques, instruments, and procedures.
- Providing an external, critical perspective on data collection and analysis.
- Preparing reports/presentations on the findings and research of the research project.

This participatory model has three distinct benefits. First, it enables the research to directly draw upon the observations and insights of both "program insiders" (program designers, staff, participants, and other stakeholders) and "program outsiders" (researchers). Second, it actively involves a program's staff, participants, and other stakeholders in developing the research design, collecting the data, and deriving conclusions/recommendations. This gives them both greater understanding and greater commitment to the results – making it more likely that those results will be applied in the field. Finally, this model strengthens the capacity of each local program to understand, conduct, and eventually design their own research.

**Research Team**

The research team will involve a lead researcher and teams of local researchers (one for each of the seven projects). The lead researcher will design the project-wide research plan, develop data collection and analysis instruments and tools, oversee the work of the local research teams,

Appendix 1

coordinate the analysis of the data, and coordinate preparation of any resulting research reports. Each local research team will focus on data collection and preliminary data compilation, related to the educational program operating in their country. Of course, this research team will work closely with the research sponsor, the program staff and designers, participants, and other stakeholders in developing and carrying out the research project. In addition, they will work with the lead researcher to conduct analysis of the data and to prepare research reports. Each local research team will prepare a local research plan to define and guide their research activities.

## Data Collection and Analysis

**Phase 1: Background Information.** In order to provide a foundation and context for understanding the goals, objectives, and accomplishments of each of the projects, each local research team will develop a brief written background statement. This statement will describe:

- Structure and operation of the public school system in their country.
- Geographic distribution and socioeconomic characteristics of the Roma in their country.
- Challenges and educational problems facing Roma children in their country.

In preparing this written background statement, the local research team will rely on existing reports and needs analyses prepared by governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, funding agencies (including the Soros Foundation), and the news media. The statement should be a brief and concise summary and synthesis of these reports and analyses.

**Phase 2: Initial Interviews and Documentary Review.** This phase of the research project will produce two working documents for each of the seven educational programs – a Program Profile and a Data Inventory. A form for each document has been prepared by the lead researcher. This document will be jointly prepared by the lead researcher and each local research team. It will:

- Summarize available descriptive information on each program, using a standard set of categories
- List publicly available information sources, regarding each program's development, structure, operation, funding, and impact
- Identify gaps regarding both program description and required information sources

Each local research team will conduct an initial interview with the director of the program. Based on the results of this initial interview and the nature of the program's management responsibilities, the team may also conduct initial interviews with senior management staff responsible for budget and finance, staff supervision, curriculum and instructional design, and family and community outreach. Guidelines for this interview have been prepared by the lead researcher.

The local research team will conduct an initial interview with knowledgeable representative(s) of the local Soros foundation, other appropriate funding agencies, national or local governmental agencies, and local non-governmental organizations. Emphasis should be placed on selecting and interviewing individuals who are significantly knowledgeable and involved with the project – not

simply aware and peripherally involved in it. These individuals can be identified by the project director, the local Soros foundation, and OSI.

At the same time, the local research team will conduct a Web search for written or electronic descriptions of the program. As part of the initial interviews with the program director and foundation representative, they will also request descriptive or informational documents or videos related to the program. All documents and videos will be reviewed by the local research team.

Where appropriate, the local research team will create video or audio recordings of interviews conducted as part of the research project. These recordings will only be created with the full knowledge and informed approval of the interview subject. The recordings will be used primarily to assist in preparing summaries of the interviews. Selected recordings may be used for presentation or reporting purposes or may be archived for future reference. This also will occur only with the informed approval of the interview subject.

Summaries of the initial interviews and reviewed documents will be prepared in electronic form (using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel) by the local research teams and submitted to the lead researcher. The lead researcher will maintain a comprehensive, confidential database of all interview and document summaries. In addition, the lead researcher will work with OSI staff to develop and maintained a comprehensive archive, with copies of all print, videotape, or audio-recording materials obtained by local research teams.

The interview and document/video summaries will be used by each local research team, in consultation with the lead researcher, to prepare the Data Inventory and a first draft of the Program Profile for each program. Tentative, contradictory, or unconfirmed information will be included in the draft of the Program Profile with appropriate and explicit caveats.

**Phase 3: Collection of Statistical Data.** For each program, the lead researcher and local research team will use the Program Profile and Data Inventory to identify and prioritize available statistical data related to the program's service level, funding, operation, or impact. This will include records maintained by the schools and the program itself, as well as those maintained by program funders, local Soros foundation, and other governmental institutions. Data will be sought for at least the last three years. The local research team will make formal request for all publicly available data, identifying all privacy or access issues. Any procedures or requirements which arise, that may impede access to the data, will be referred to the lead researcher and/or OSI staff for resolution.

All data obtained by the local research team will be compiled into a computer-readable (Microsoft Excel) spreadsheet format, unless otherwise directed by the lead researcher. The resulting files will be submitted for review and analysis by the lead researcher. Technical assistance in the compilation or conversion of files, from one application format to another, will be provided through the lead researcher or OSI.

The local researcher will use standard statistical techniques to summarize and analyze the resulting data. It is anticipated that statistical data will be collected relating to the service level of

each program, its budget, and its impact on participants. The nature of the analysis used by the lead researcher will depend upon the nature of the data and the purpose of the analysis:

- **Data on a program's services** will be summarized using the characteristics of the target population (including age, gender, and previous educational achievement). Service data on programs targeting educational professionals will also look at the race/ethnicity and professional experience of the target population. Program service data will also be analyzed, based on the type of services provided, the sites where the service were provided (if multiple sites exist), and the time frame for providing services, in order to identify trends by service type, location, or over time.

- **Budgetary data** will be summarized, based on type, purpose, and source. This information will also be analyzed over time.

- **Student impact data** will be summarized, based on the age, gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, parents' educational experiences, and students' previous educational experiences.

As a frame of reference for understanding the student impact data obtained for each program, the project will select from among four different types of comparisons.

- **Peer Comparisons** will compare statistics for Roma children who are program participants with those who are not participating in the program. The characteristics of both groups will be examined to ensure comparability. The expectation is that valid, significant differences developed over time between the two groups.

- **Non-Peer Comparisons** will compare statistics for Roma children who are program participants with non-Roma children. Again, the characteristics of both groups will be examined to ensure comparability. The expectation is that valid, significant differences declined over time between the two groups.

- **Longitudinal Comparisons** will compare statistics for the same Roma children at various points in time to assess their growth and change. The expectation is that valid, significant trends will be apparent over time.

- **Developmental Comparisons** will compare statistics for Roma children using standards derived from developmental or educational research (i.e. achieve reading literacy by age 8) or based on policy decisions (i.e. have no more than 5% dropouts). The expectation is that Roma children will meet the established standards.

It is likely that most comparisons will rely upon either peer or non-peer comparisons. However, the selection of the type of comparison used for particular data in particular projects will depend upon the nature and purpose of the specific project, the available data, and logistical considerations associated with the collection of the data. The specific types of comparisons used for each project will be collaboratively determined by the research teams and lead researcher of the local research plan. However, practical considerations and opportunities that emerge during the research project may result in subsequent modifications in those initial decisions.

Appendix 1

**Phase 4: Interviews/Surveys of Project and School Staff.** Each local research team will either conduct interviews or administer a short written survey to all staff in the project they are examining. For projects that are school-based, a variation of the interview/survey will be conducted with relevant school staff. For programs that are directly serving educational professionals, another variation of the interview/survey will be conducted with participants.

Decisions about whether to conduct interviews or to administer a survey will depend upon the number of individuals in each category (project staff, relevant school staff, adult participants). Where the numbers are too large for even a written survey to be administered to all members of any group, the survey will be administered to a sample. These decisions will be made by the local research team, in consultation with the lead researcher and the research advisory committee. Decisions will be included in the local research plans.

Interviews will be scheduled by the local research teams, in consultation with the project director or school administrator. Interviews can be conducted either in person or by phone. The use of audio recordings would be appropriate with the same conditions discussed previously on page 5.

Surveys of program staff will generally be administered and completed during a staff meeting organized for this purpose. This meeting will be arranged by the local research team in consultation with the program director.

Surveys of school staff or other educational professionals can also be administered and completed in such a setting. As an alternative, the survey can be distributed at the beginning of the school day, completed during the day, and collected by the end of the day. In this situation, the local research team members should be available at the school throughout the day to answer questions and collect the surveys. The administration of the survey will be arranged by the local research team, in consultation with the school principal, headmaster, or other appropriate administrator. The local team may seek the assistance of the program, the foundation, or OSI to facilitate these arrangements, if impediments arise.

These interviews/surveys will solicit information from program staff, school staff, and adult program participants, regarding the structure and operation of the program, staff responsibilities and qualifications, and the program's impact on participants, families, schools, and the community. The survey will employ both multiple choice questions and open-ended questions soliciting narrative responses.

The lead researcher has prepared guidelines for interviews/surveys of the program staff and school staff. The local research teams and lead researcher will modify these guidelines, if necessary, to reflect specific issues or problems related to each project. In particular, modifications will be used to respond to the particular goals and characteristics of each program and to address gaps or ambiguities in information, as reflected in the first draft of the Program Profile.

Interview and survey results will be translated and compiled by the local research team using Microsoft Word. The results will be submitted to the lead researcher for analysis. In addition, this information will be used by the local research team and the lead researcher to prepare a revision of the Program Profile of each program.

Appendix 1

**Phase 5: Site Visits.** Each local research team will conduct visits to sites relevant to the operation of the project (including direct service centers or sites operated by the project and schools involved in or benefiting from project services). During these site visits, the local research team will:

- Tour the site.
- Observe a sample of classroom or project activities.
- Observe project staff or school staff meetings.
- Conduct follow-up interview(s) with the project director and other project managers.
- Conduct a series of individual or group interviews with project and/or school staff.
- Conduct a series of group interviews with project participants.

Most projects work in or benefit multiple schools. The local research team, in consultation with the lead researcher and research advisory committee, will develop criteria for selecting specific schools for visits. The criteria will include geographic distribution and the socioeconomic diversity of the student population, as well as additional project-specific criteria. The criteria will be defined in the local research plan.

The tour, observations, and interviews will be guided by protocols jointly developed by the lead researcher and the local research team. These protocols will be project-specific and will be developed based upon the results of the first four phases of research data collection and analysis. As noted earlier, video and audio recordings may be made as part of these site visits, but only with the informed consent of the interview subject. Again, any use of the recordings for presentation purposes must be approved by the interview subject.

Summaries of the observations, interviews, and focus groups will be prepared by the local research team using Microsoft Word and submitted to the lead researcher. This information will be categorized and studied by the lead researcher, the local research teams, and research advisory committee using matrix analysis, pattern-matching, trend analysis, and holistic interpretation. Where appropriate, this information may be transformed into numerical categories for standard statistical analysis. In addition, this information will be used to prepare a revised draft of the Program Profile.

**Phase 6: Participant Interviews and Field Interviews.** Each local research team will conduct field interviews with students, their families, and other relevant community members (including educational professionals). Interviews will be conducted either with individuals or with small groups in their homes, in community sites, or in other appropriate locations.

The number and types of interview participants will be determined jointly by the lead researcher and the local research team, based on the scope and nature of each project. Criteria for selection of interview participants will be developed and included in the local research plan.

The local researchers face a number of challenges in conducting interviews with Roma children and their parents. Identifying appropriate members of the community to interview, getting their trust for interviewing purposes, and overcoming language differences also pose major problems. The local researchers may try to engage members of the Roma community to assist them in addressing any or all of these problems. These individuals can serve to introduce and "vouch for"

the researchers with the Roma adults and children. Alternatively, they can serve as translators and even as interviewers. Plans for inclusion of members of the Roma community in these roles should be described in the local research plan.

The specific interview participants will be selected by the local research team, in consultation with project and foundation staff. Guidelines for the interviews will be jointly developed by the lead researcher and the local research team. These will be project-specific and will be developed based upon the results of the earlier phases of the research project. Any audio or video recordings made, as part of these interviews, will be treated as discussed previously.

Summaries of these interviews will also be prepared by the local research team using Microsoft Word and submitted to the lead researcher. As with the data gathered during phase 5, this information will be categorized and studied by the lead researcher, local research teams, and research advisory committee using matrix analysis, pattern-matching, trend analysis, and holistic interpretation. Where appropriate, this information also may be transformed into numerical categories for standard statistical analysis. This information will also be used to prepare a final version of the Program Profile, which will serve as a primary source for the final research report.

**Reporting the Results**

The lead researcher and the local research teams will prepare both a preliminary report (in January 2001) and a final report (in March 2001) to present the findings of this research project. The preliminary report will summarize information collected during the first three data collection and analysis phases of the project. The final report will summarize information collected during the entire project. Both reports will be organized around the four research questions (as further refined during the course of the research project). Each will employ both a case study methodology to present our findings for each of the seven programs and a cross-site analysis to present consistent trends and patterns.

This research report is designed to inform multiple audiences. Of course, this includes the OSI Education Sub-Board and the Soros Foundation network. However, it also includes:

- Administrators, staff, boards, and funders of each project.
- School administrators, staff, and governing bodies affected by the projects as well as others across the region.
- Roma families and communities.
- Roma governing agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- National and local governmental agencies across the region and particularly in the seven countries where these projects operate.
- International funders and advisory organizations.

Among these audiences, our research will be used as a basis for the development of strategic approaches to strengthen or expand educational services for Roma children. In addition, it will provide significant information to the administrators and staff of the participating project (and of other projects), by helping to identify their own strengths, weaknesses, and emerging issues or needs. It will also enable project administrators and staff to develop a better understanding of when and how to reflect on one's project and recognize avenues for improvement.

Appendix 1

In order to address the needs of these various audiences, the final report will encompass multiple elements. These will include:

- Detailed report, presenting our findings and conclusions across all projects
- Brief summary of our findings and conclusions across all projects
- Detailed reports, presenting findings, conclusions, and recommendations for each project
- Brief summaries of our findings, conclusions, and recommendations for each project

As researchers, we are also interested in learning about our own research processes – understanding both its successes and shortcomings – and sharing what we learned with our colleagues. As such, we will seek to consistently document and archive our research plans, tools, and developmental processes throughout this project.

# Notes

1 [page 1] There are two acceptable spellings for this term: "Roma" and "Rroma". To simplify matters for the readers, we have chosen to use the first spelling "Roma" throughout the text of this report. The only exception has been, where quoted written passage has employed the other spelling for this term. In those circumstances ,we retained the spelling used in the original source.

2 [page 1] In January 2001, the OSI Education Sub-Board organized a Roma Education Working Group. The mandate of the REWG was to provide expert opinions on and advice to the ESB, regarding the education of Roma pupils. Members were chosen from within and outside the Roma community and included experts in the field of education and/or Roma issues. Original members included: **Mr. Tomislav Reskovac**, Chair, Executive Director, OSI Croatia, OSI Education Sub-Board member; **Ms. Eva Hegyesi Orsos**, Co-Chair, Board of Directors, European Roma Rights Center (ERRC); Roma Advisory Board member; **Ms. Nicoleta Bitu**, Founding member and Board member of Romani CRISS, OSI Women's Network Program Fellow; **Mr. Michael Stewart**, Professor Department of Anthropology, University College London, Lecturer at Nationalism Program, CEU; **Mr. Jean-Pierre Liegeois**, Director Centre de Recherches Tsiganes, Université René Descartes, Faculté des Sciences humaines et sociales, Département de Sciences sociales, **Mr. Elvis Ali**, Roma Program Coordinator, OSI-Macedonia.

3 [page 4] The Institute for Educational Policy was the OSI-Budapest office responsible for overseeing the development and management of this research project.

4 [page 8] The original REWG was narrowed to a smaller group (Expert Committee) to assist IEP in overseeing the development and management of this research project.

5 [page 10] Originally, the research was to be completed over a five-month period (ending in February 2001). Difficulties in collecting research information resulted in an extension of the period of time for data collection and analysis by one month.

6[page 14] The data in Table 1 is taken from multiple sources.

Official estimates for Bulgaria are taken from Police records, for the Czech Republic from the 1991 national census, for Hungary from the 1990 national census (Clark, 1998), for Macedonia from the 1994 national census (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1997), for Romania from the 1989 national census (Clark, 1998), for Slovakia from the 1991 national census (Slovak Republic, 1998), and for Yugoslavia from the 1991 national census (Council for Human Rights, 1998).

MRG Report estimates refer to figures developed in the 1995 Minority Rights Group Report by Liegois and Gheorghe (Clark, 1998).

NGO estimates for Bulgaria are taken from the Democratic Union of Roma in 1996 (Clark, 1998), for Macedonia from the European Roma Rights Center (1998), and for Yugoslavia from the Council for Human Rights (1998).

Independent estimates are taken from Jeremy Druker (1997).

[7] [page 15] The Czech Republic stopped collecting data on students' ethnicity in 1990 and Hungary stopped in 1993 (ERRC, 1999; Radó, 1997).

[8] [page 16] For example, there was the Czechoslovak law on the Permanaent Settling of Nomadic Individuals in 1958 – "Zakon o trvalem usiddleni kocujicich osob", no. 74/1958. Beginning from the 1960's, Romanian authorities also began to settle the groups of Roma who had previously been nomadic. Estimates place the number of nomadic Roma at 65,000 in 1977. By the beginning of the 1980's, almost all had been settled and worked (Achim, 1997). On the history of forced settlement, see also Crowe, David M. A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia.

[9] [page 27] See Appendix 4 for detailed data sheets on each country.

[10] [page 27] Most data that exists for the Czech Republic was collected when Czechoslovakia was still a country. The Czech and Slovak Republics only divided in 1993, so there are few studies done since that time to give us separate statistics.

[11] [page 28] In Bulgaria, kindergarten includes children aged 2 to 7. In the Czech Republic, kindergarten continues through until age 6. In Macedonia, kindergarten is available for children between ages 3 and 6. In Slovakia, kindergarten is available for children from ages 2 until 6. In Yugoslavia, kindergarten is provided to children between ages 1 and 7.

[12] [page 29] In Bulgaria, compulsory schooling begins at age 7 and continues through until age 16 (ten years). In the Czech Republic, compulsory schooling begins at age 6 and continues for nine years (through elementary school). In Macedonia, compulsory schooling begins at age 7 and continues for 8 years. In Slovakia, compulsory schooling begins at age 6 and continues for 10 years. In Yugoslavia, compulsory schooling occurs between ages 7 and 14 (eight years).

[13] [page 30] According to the author of the report, mention should be made of the 'Nadez' (Hope) project, which is one of the projects included in this research, as having considerable impact on improving school attendance.

[14] [page 31] Comprehensive statistical evidence documenting this is available from the late 1960s to 1990. See Tables # 8 and 11 in Čaněk, 1999 also see the ERRC Report "A Special Remedy: Roma and Schools for the Mentally Handicapped in the Czech Republic".

[15] [page 32] See various sources from Bulgaria data sheet.

[16] [page 37] *European Roma Rights Center* interview with Erzsébet Simon, November 12, 1997, Hungary.

[17] [page 37] See Appendix 3 for brief descriptions of the national educational systems in each of the seven countries included in this research project. See Appendix 4 for statistical information on the condition of education for Roma children in each of the seven countries included in this research project.

[18] [page 38] *European Roma Rights Center* interview with special school teacher Júlia Z., November 18, 1997, Dömsöd, Hungary.

19 [page 41] The exchange rate of Lei to USD during September 1997 hovered around 8,500 Lei per USD.

20 [page 41] Even when some school books are provided by the state as a result of the constitutional provision which declares that education is free, there are some books required by teachers who choose to complement state curriculum with other materials.

21 [page 41] *European Roma Rights Center* interview with Mariana Buceanu, Rromani Criss, September 24, Bucharest, Romania.

22 [page 42] *European Roma Rights Center* interview with Lorena Iuonac, September 10, 1997, Satu Mare, Romania.

23 [page 42] *European Roma Rights Center* Interview with Olimpia Varadi,  September 22, 1997, *Pata Rât* Community, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

24 [page 42] *European Roma Rights Center* Interview with Ana Lacatus,  September 22, 1997, *Pata Rât* community, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

25 [page 43] *European Roma Rights Center* interview with Romanita Iordache, local monitor for the ERRC, March 14, 1998, Bucharest, Romania.

26 [page 43] *European Roma Rights Center* interview with Tiberiu Kovaci, September 10, 1997, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

27 [page 44] *European Roma Rights Center* interview with Lakatos Mátyásné and Júlianna Sztojka, October 17, 1997, Dömsöd, Hungary.

28 [page 57] According to the "Methodological Instruction of the Ministry of Education for the Establishment of Preparatory Classes for Socially Disadvantaged Children and Establishment of the Function of Educator–Assistant Teacher" No. 25 484/2000-22, "In schools in which the teaching of a significant number of socially disadvantaged children and students takes place, a school director can prevent problems of communication and adaptation and other behavioral and educational problems of students through the establishment of the function of Educator–Assistant Teacher."

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Appendix 2

# List of Data Collection Activities:
# Bulgaria

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| Interviews with – <br> • Two Project Coordinators <br> • Two officials from the Ministry of Education <br> • Staff from IEIF involved in new intercultural education project <br> • Three consultants involved with public information on project <br> • Author of project materials <br> • Staff involved in observation and evaluation of project <br> • Roma foundation staff |
| Documents and articles related to the project including – <br> • Eight articles from "Ethnoreporter Journal" <br> • Two articles from "The Today" newspaper <br> • Two articles from the "Teacher's Matters" weekly <br> • Article from the "Literature Forum" <br> • Article from "The New Life" newspaper <br> • Article from "The Democracy" daily <br> • Article from "The Drom Drmendar" <br> • Written reports on program sites prepared by four project consultants |
| Written survey of teachers |
| Written survey of students |
| Written survey of parents |
| Observations and interviews conducted during site visits to 9 participating and 3 non-participating schools |

Appendix 2

## List of Data Collection Activities:
## Czech Republic

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| Interviews with – <br> • Current and former project directors <br> • Two officials with Ministry of Education Policy Research <br> • Executive Director of Nová Škola <br> • Staff person from European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights <br> • Staff person from Humanitas Profes |
| Interviews with – <br> • Seven school directors and two deputy directors <br> • Nine teachers <br> • Eighteen RTAs |
| Interviews with six parents |
| Group interviews with two groups of students |
| Student records collected from six schools |

Appendix 2

## **List of Data Collection Activities:**
## **Hungary**

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| Documents related to the project including –<br>• Reports of Soros Foundation Hungary over three years<br>• Articles from Educational Weekly Journal<br>• Fifteen articles written by mentors about their experiences<br>• Conference paper presented by Project Director |
| Report of Sonda Ipsos Institute on interviews conducted with scholarship recipients and mentors from 1994 to 1999 |
| Program applications submitted by students from 1997 to 1999 |
| Interviews with students, parents, teachers, formmasters, and headmasters |
| Student records from ten schools |

Appendix 2

## **List of Data Collection Activities:**
## **Macedonia**

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| Documents related to the project including – <br>• Six funding proposals <br>• Various weekly, monthly, quarterly, biannual, and annual reports submitted by the project to various government agencies or funding agencies <br>• Various newspaper articles |
| Interviews with staff from Open Society Institute Macedonia, staff from the original and second HOPE center, school director from the two schools attended by students from each HOPE center, and teachers from each of the schools |
| Interview with group of Roma children attending center |
| Student records from 1998 to 2001 of participating Roma children |
| Observation of staff/parent meeting |

Appendix 2

## List of Data Collection Activities:
## Romania

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|---|
| Forty-five documents (totaling about 600 pages) including monitoring, seminar, working visit, meeting, financial, and evaluation reports submitted to sponsoring organization (MATRA) or managing organization (Centrul Education 2000+) by the project |
| Interviews with –<br>• Former and current program coordinator<br>• Director of NGO<br>• Various project staff and trainers<br>• Two officials with Ministry of Education<br>• Staff from county inspectorates<br>• MATRA represenative |
| Student records for students from nine participating schools |
| Interviews conducted with school directors, teachers, students, parents, and community leaders in association with site visits to participating and non-participating schools |

Appendix 2

## List of Data Collection Activities:
## Slovakia

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| Interview with Project Director |
| Observation and site visit to the three centers |
| Two standardized readiness tests administered to students |
| Structured observations in 18 elementary school classes |
| Written survey of teachers in grades 1 to 4 |
| Interviews with students during site visits |
| Interviews with parents of participating students |
| School records of students |

Appendix 2

## **List of Data Collection Activities:**
## **Yugoslavia/Serbia**

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|---|
| Interviews with current and former program coordinator and staff from several centers |
| Written survey for project staff |
| Written survey for school staff |
| School records of Roma children |

# Final Report to Education Sub-Board on Roma Education Research Project

April 28, 2001

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Roma[1] adults and children have traditionally been among the most marginalized and disenfranchised social groups in Central and Eastern Europe. The Soros Foundation Network has recognized that, by providing the next generation of Roma with the knowledge, skills, and experiences denied their parents and grandparents, it can help break the cycle of oppression and deprivation that has afflicted Roma for generations. In the past, foundations' efforts were not always or necessarily strategically focused on program areas that could make the most impact. Moreover, these efforts were not necessarily commensurate with the magnitude of the problems in the countries where they were implemented.

Over the last six months, the Roma Education Research Project has examined seven programs developed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to expand the educational opportunities and improve the educational achievement of Roma students in the region. This document summarizes findings and recommendations resulting from this research.[2] These findings and recommendations seek to provide information upon which decisions will be made by the Soros Foundation Network regarding ongoing and future support for its agenda on Roma education.

## Purpose

The Institute for Educational Policy worked with the Roma Education Working Group and leadership from OSI Budapest and OSI New York, to identify research questions, whose answers would be instrumental in defining future strategies for Roma education by the Soros Foundation Network. These research questions have served as the focus for the activities of the Roma Education Research Project.

**Question # 1 --** Have the selected Roma education programs succeeded in (A) getting and keeping more Roma children in school through graduation and (B) improving the educational attainment of Roma children?

**Question # 2 --** Have the selected Roma education programs succeeded in promoting (A) changes in attitudes towards Roma children among teachers and other adult school staff, (B) changes in attitudes of non-Roma children and parents towards Roma children, and (C) changes in self-characterization by Roma children?

**Question # 3 --** How have the selected Roma education programs promoted institutional or policy changes, which advance the goals of equity and educational success for Roma children, in the national education systems?

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[1] The term "Roma" is used in this report to refer to many groups who variously identify themselves as Rom, Roma, Cigany (including Hungarian Cigany and Romanian tigani), and Baies (Boyash). To the extent that all these people are treated similarly by the majority population, they all suffer from similar forms of discrimination and social exclusion. In addition, there are two acceptable spellings for this term: "Roma" and "Rroma". To simplify matters for the readers, we have chosen to use the first spelling "Roma" throughout the text of this report.

[2] A more detailed written presentation of the research results has also been prepared as **Research on Selected Roma Education Programs in Central and Eastern Europe: Final Report**.

**Question # 4 --** What is the feasibility of replicating aspects or elements of the selected Roma education programs at other sites in the same country or in other countries within the region, taking into consideration factors such as cost, resource needs, institutional support, and culture?

## Research Plan

The Roma Education Research Project was organized around a participatory research approach. Under this approach, independent teams of researchers worked in partnership with national and local decision-makers, educators and other experts, and Roma parents and children to collect appropriate research data and make sense of its meaning. This process ensured the active engagement of program designers, staff, participants, and other knowledgeable stakeholders in the research process. Ultimately, it contributed to the creation of a high-quality, utilitarian research project, which combined the observations and insights of program "insiders" (program designers, staff, participants, and other stakeholders) with those of program "outsiders" (the independent research teams).

The research plan was divided into three broad phases. Each phase involved data identification, collection, synthesis, and analysis activities and incorporated both statistical data and qualitative information. Within each phase, all activities – particularly those related to data analysis – were informed by and built on the results of the earlier phases. The **first phase** focused on the collection of background information on each national school system, assessments of the educational conditions of Roma in each country, and descriptions of each Roma education program. The **second phase** focused on the collection of both statistical and qualitative data from both program sites and schools on the program's implementation, operation, and impact. The **third phase** involved the collection of information from a sampling of Roma students and their families. [3]

## Background

We can envision the public education system of each country, as a pipeline that guides children from preschool and kindergarten through elementary school to secondary school. For Roma children and youth, the "education pipeline" in every country in Central and Eastern Europe is very narrow and extremely leaky. Compared to other ethnic groups in each country, fewer Roma children enroll in preschool or kindergarten and continue onto elementary school. Those who do attend, generally have poor attendance and low marks. A higher proportion of Roma children drop out of school at each level. As a result of this situation, Roma have much higher levels of illiteracy and much lower levels of educational attainment than any other group.

Our interviews with Roma parents and students, program staff, and public school staff, along with our review of the research literature, have identified several factors that have contributed to

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[3] The research teams faced a series of methodological challenges in carrying out the research plan. These challenges affected the collection of some relevant research information and required the use of alternative strategies or the collection of alternative information. A discussion of these challenges is included in ***Research on Selected Roma Education Programs in Central and Eastern Europe: Final Report***.

the creation of an inadequate educational "pipeline" for Roma children and youth. The factors include:

- Nature of traditional teaching practices, which are incompatible with both Roma learning styles and with practices recommended as a result of contemporary education research.

- Lack of experience and skills among teachers in schools with large Roma student populations.

- Low academic expectations held by teachers of Roma children.

- Lack of competency in the majority standard language by Roma.

- Continued prejudice against Roma children by non-Roma adults and children in the schools.

- Extreme levels of deprivation suffered by most Roma families.

- Negative attitudes of many Roma parents and children towards public schools.

- Lack of academic knowledge by Roma children.

- Lack of access to basic health care and personal hygiene for some Roma children.

The seven Roma education projects, which were examined, sought to improve the educational attainment of Roma children by addressing some of these barriers.[4]

## Description of Roma Education Programs

Based on criteria developed and recommendations provided by the Roma Education Working Group (REWG), seven Roma education programs were identified to serve as the focus of this research. These included:

- Intercultural Education Project in Bulgaria (curriculum development and a national training program).

- Roma Teaching Assistant (RTA) Project in the Czech Republic (training and financial assistance to RTAs).

- Roma Mentored Scholarship Project in Hungary (mentoring and scholarship assistance to secondary school students).

- Program for Educational Support in Macedonia (center offering educational assistance to parents and their children from preschool to secondary school).

- Equal Opportunities Project in Romania (training, materials, and technical assistance to promote school-wide reform).

- Educational Centers Project in Slovakia (centers offering educational assistance to preschool and elementary school students).

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[4] Table 4 in Appendix lists the barriers addressed by each program.

- Kindergartens as Family Centers Project in Yugoslavia/Serbia (centers offering adapted version of Step- by- Step program).

These seven programs were intentionally selected to demonstrate a range of service approaches and to examine a variety of operational contexts.[5]

**Program Philosophy: The Roma education projects examined by this research can be divided into two distinct groups. The first group provides direct educational and related services to Roma children and their parents. The second group focuses its activities on creating institutional change in the schools to benefit Roma children and their parents.**

The direct service projects include: Roma Mentored Scholarship Project in Hungary, Program for Educational Support in Macedonia, Educational Centers Project in Slovakia, and Kindergartens as Family Centers Project in Yugoslavia/Serbia. The institutional change projects include: Intercultural Education Project in Bulgaria, Roma Teaching Assistant Project in the Czech Republic, and Equal Opportunities Project in Romania.

All projects generally aspire to the same set of outcomes for Roma children from their activities.[6] These include higher rates of school enrollment and completion, regular school attendance, higher marks, improved attendance, greater competence in the majority language, connections with Roma cultural traditions, greater motivation to learn, and improved self-confidence. However, the two groups of programs employ distinctly different time frames. The first, focusing their services on Roma students, generally anticipated measurable outcomes in the short-term (three to five years). The second, focusing their services on teachers and schools, generally expected outcomes emerging over a longer time period (five to eight years).

Both groups of projects seek to benefit Roma children and parents. However, the direct service projects anticipate that these benefits will result directly from the services they provide. The institutional change projects anticipate that benefits to Roma children and parents will indirectly result from changes made by their services to the operation of schools and in the behavior of school administrators and teachers.

**Nature of Services: As a whole, the Roma education projects offered several services and targeted – either directly or indirectly – all age groups of Roma children within the educational "pipeline" from preschool to secondary school. With one exception, each individual project limited itself to one or two age groups.**

The four direct service projects offered seven categories of assistance to Roma children and their parents, including:

- Kindergarten or preschool preparation activities (Macedonia, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia/Serbia).

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[5] Brief profiles of each project are included in the Appendix.

[6] Table 5 in the Appendix lists the anticipated outcomes for each Roma education program.

- Homework assistance and tutoring to elementary school students (Macedonia and Slovakia).

- Enrichment activities to both elementary and secondary school students (Macedonia).

- Mentoring support to secondary school students (Hungary and Macedonia).

- Scholarship assistance to secondary school students (Hungary and Macedonia).

- Parent training, education, and support (Macedonia, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia/Serbia).

- Humanitarian assistance to families (Macedonia, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia/Serbia).

As this list indicates, only the project in Macedonia offered the entire spectrum of direct services. However, the nature of services offered by the Macedonia project were often more narrowly focused than similar services offered by the other projects. For example, the preschool programs offered by the projects in Slovakia and Yugoslavia/Serbia focused on a wider set of skills and employed a wider range of learning activities than did the program of the Macedonia project.

**Table 1. Age Range of Services Provided by Roma Education Projects**

|  | Preschool | Elementary | Secondary |
|---|---|---|---|
| Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria) |  | X | X |
| Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic) |  | X | X |
| Roma Mentored Scholarship Project (Hungary) |  |  | X |
| Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) | X | X | X |
| Equal Opportunities Project (Romania) |  | X | X |
| Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) | X | X |  |
| Kindergarten As Family Center (Yugoslavia) | X |  |  |

The three institutional change projects each employed distinctly different approaches to creating institutional change on a school-wide level.

- The project in Bulgaria sought to change the climate of elementary and secondary schools by integrating intercultural education into the curriculum and promoting greater cultural sensitivity and understanding among teachers and students.

- The project in the Czech Republic sought to recruit, train, and place Roma adults as Roma Teaching Assistants (RTAs) in Czech elementary schools. Since the project did not control or influence the use of RTAs in the schools, it could not target Roma students for specific educational assistance or support. Instead, the project sought to change the environment of the school for Roma children and their parents through the inclusion of Roma adults in the educational staff of the school.

- The project in Romania was the most ambitious of the institutional change initiatives. Using a decentralized approach, it sought to develop changes in the way schools were organized and operated, in the way they interacted with parents and teachers, in their understanding and approach to cultural differences, and in their approach to teaching. These changes were designed not only to improve the learning environment for Roma students, but also for all other Romanian students.

**<u>Scope of Services</u>: The three institutional change projects generally targeted a much larger population of Roma children than did the four direct service projects.**

By providing materials, training, and technical assistance to teachers and schools, the institutional change projects involved a much larger number of students than the direct service projects. Serving one school allowed the institutional change projects to involve the 300 to 500 students who attended the school. These projects sought to build the capacity of teachers or schools to more effectively serve their students. In this way, the number of students benefiting from the project could be much larger than the number of school staff who directly participated in the project activities.

The same process did not occur with direct service projects. The nature of the services offered by these projects, required direct contact between project staff and participating students. As a result, the number of students benefiting from the project was equal to the number of participants. Given existing resource limitations, direct service projects generally served fewer students than institutional change projects.

This difference also had significant implications for potential expansion of each type of project. The direct service projects did expand the number of students served, by increasing the number of sites and/or the number of project staff available to work with students. More sites and more staff meant an increased budget for the project – either in the form of increased cash expenditure for facility costs and salaries or increased contributions of donated facilities or staff. As a result, expansion of direct service projects required an increased investment of resources into the project.

Institutional change projects could and did expand over time without an increased investment of outside resources. Through their ongoing professional interactions with colleagues, participating teachers shared their experiences, knowledge, and materials with colleagues in the same school and even with colleagues in other schools. This meant that the population of participating teachers and their students could increase over time, even if the resources invested in the project were not increased.

**<u>Delivery of Services</u>: Service delivery is distinctly different for the institutional change projects and the direct service projects. Institutional change projects are school-based. Direct service projects generally operate out of community-based centers.**

The three institutional change projects operate at a variety of national, regional, or local sites. However, the focus of their work is in participating schools.

In contrast, three of the four direct service projects (Macedonia, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia/Serbia) are center-based initiatives. Services are offered to students and parents in a center located in their neighborhood. The nature of the centers varies. Some centers in Yugoslavia/Serbia share space with elementary schools or public preschool programs. Other centers in that project have their own space. The centers in Macedonia and Slovakia each have their own space.

The fourth direct service project (in Hungary) has a unique delivery approach. As it provides one-on-one tutoring and mentoring assistance to participating students, its activities occur wherever space is available, including schools, community centers, and homes.

**Period of Operation: Most of the projects examined in this research have only been operating for a relatively short period of time. This has significant implications when assessing the impact of the institutional change projects, given their approach and expectations.**

**Table 2. Starting Date for Roma Education Projects**

| | |
|---|---|
| Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) | 1993 |
| Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria) | 1995 |
| Kindergarten As Family Center (Yugoslavia) | 1997 |
| Roma Mentored Scholarship Project (Hungary) | 1997 |
| Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic) | 1997 |
| Equal Opportunities Project (Romania) | 1998 |
| Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) | 1998 |

These limited periods of operation have enormous significance for assessing the impact of these projects. Given their indirect approach, the institutional change projects expect to have significant measurable impact on participating students within a longer time frame (five to eight years) than direct service projects (three to five years). Thus, we should expect that the magnitude of changes resulting from each of the two groups of projects will be very different, given the relatively short time frame within which these have operated.

## Findings

**Question # 1 -- Have the selected Roma education programs succeeded in (A) getting and keeping more Roma children in school through graduation and (B) improving the educational attainment of Roma children?**

**Roma children who participated in the direct service projects had higher marks, more regular school attendance, and a greater likelihood of remaining in or completing school, when compared to Roma children who did not participate in these projects.**

Participation in the preschool programs provided Roma students with better preparation for elementary school. In **Slovakia**, the research team administered a standardized school readiness test to Roma students who did and did not participate in the project. Twice as many project participants (64%) demonstrated school readiness than non-participants (33%). A review of school readiness data in **Yugoslavia/Serbia** produced similar results. In this case, the project also increased competency in the majority language (Serbian).

A comparison of school records in grades 1 to 3 in **Yugoslavia/Serbia** and **Slovakia** revealed that project participants had significantly higher school marks, attendance, and school completion rates than non-participants.

However, the results of both the standardized school readiness test and school records in **Slovakia** revealed that program participation reduced, but did not eliminate the performance gap between Roma and non-Roma students. This suggests that participation in preschool programs alone is not sufficient to meet all the educational needs of Roma children.

Elementary school tutoring and homework assistance improved school academic achievement and attendance of participating Roma students. A review of student records in **Macedonia** revealed that 20% of Roma students participating in the project improved their marks from one school year to the next, while 75% maintained the same marks. These results are particularly significant because Roma students typically see their marks decline as they proceed through school. About 5% of the participating Roma students recorded deterioration in their marks. These were all students who had discontinued project participation. This suggests that continued participation in project activities is essential to maintain the reported academic benefits.

A comparison of the marks of program participants with program non-participants in **Macedonia** also revealed that program participants had better school marks than their peers who had not participated. The average mark of program participants in fourth grade in one school was 3.7 (on a five-point scale with 5 as the highest mark). The average mark of program non-participants in the same class was only 1.5. The average mark of a comparison fourth grade class (with no program participants) was 1.9.

In **Hungary,** a review of school records for a small sample of Roma secondary school students receiving scholarships revealed that they had higher marks and better attendance than the average for all students in their secondary school. Moreover, none of these students dropped out of school during the year they received the scholarship.

**The three institutional change programs did not anticipate producing measurable changes in the educational attainment, school attendance, or school completion rates of Roma children in schools during their periods of operation. However, there was some evidence of benefits for some Roma students from all three institutional change projects.**

Researchers in the **Czech Republic** conducted longitudinal comparisons of student records in schools with RTAs to assess change in student performance over time. Researchers in **Romania** also analyzed the records of students in participating schools compared to those for students in non-participating schools. There were no consistent differences in school attendance rates, classroom grades, or school completion rates for any of the three institutional change projects.

The developers and staff of the projects in the **Czech Republic** and **Romania** reported that such results were not surprising, given that both projects took a long-term, rather than a short-term, perspective on anticipated student outcomes. [7]

Statistical evidence from the **Czech Republic** suggested that the presence of RTAs may have reduced the number of Roma students failing to progress to the next grade. Such a result would be expected in those schools that chose to have RTAs work with Roma children who were having the greatest difficulties in school. However, all RTAs were not used in this manner and the project did not attempt to control or influence how RTAs were used by schools.

Anecdotal evidence and written survey results gathered from school staff in all three countries, also suggested that some Roma children may have improved school achievement, improved attendance, or greater engagement in school due to their participation in the respective program. However, staff acknowledged that these gains were likely to have been limited in magnitude or scope.

**Question # 2 -- Have the selected Roma education programs succeeded in promoting (A) changes in attitudes towards Roma children among teachers and other adult school staff, (B) changes in attitudes towards Roma children among non-Roma children and their parents, and (C) changes in self-characterization by Roma children?**

**Five projects demonstrated some success in changing attitudes of non-Roma teachers and students towards Roma children.**

The projects in **Bulgaria** and **Romania** encouraged non-Roma teachers and students to identify, understand, and confront prejudicial attitudes and treatment of Roma students. Surveys of students in Bulgaria documented differences in attitudes towards Roma students among both Bulgarian and non-Roma ethnic minority students who had participated in the project, compared to their peers who had not participated. Staff interviews in both countries and parent surveys in Bulgaria, also documented some success in some participating schools. Success was the greatest in those schools already interested in building intercultural understanding.

The project in the **Czech Republic** used Roma Teaching Assistants to help change attitudes towards Roma children. RTAs served as both intermediaries and advocates between Roma and non-Roma in the school. Staff and participant interviews documented some success, particularly in schools with leadership already committed to promoting greater intercultural understanding.

The direct service projects in **Slovakia** and **Yugoslavia/Serbia** offering preschool programs, succeeded in changing attitudes of teachers and students only towards Roma students who had attended their preschool. Interviews with program and school staff revealed that Roma project participants were seen as "different" from other Roma children by school staff and students: more "interested" in school; better able to communicate with non-Roma children and adults; and possessing better hygiene. Observations in Slovakia demonstrated that Roma project participants

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[7] See Table 5 in the Appendix for more information on project perspectives about anticipated educational outcomes.

were better treated in classrooms than Roma students who had not attended the preschool program.

**All projects reported improvement in self-esteem and self-characterization by Roma students.**

The **seven project**s employed both similar and individual strategies in addressing these issues. All seven sought to emphasize Roma language, culture, and history with varying degrees of success. However, the Roma Teacher Assistant Project in the **Czech Republic** also sought to address this issue by having the RTA aggressively serving as an intermediary between the school and the Roma students and their parents and as an advocate for them within the school. The Equal Opportunities Project in **Romania** also sought to create a more supportive school environment. The four direct service projects all sought to build self-esteem in Roma students as a direct result of improved school performance by those students.

Interviews with students, parents, and school staff provided anecdotal evidence of improvements in self-esteem and self-characterization among Roma children. Written surveys of students, teachers, and surveys in **Bulgaria** provided mixed results, but suggested that there were positive effects of the Intercultural Education Project on the self-esteem of Roma students in some schools.

**Intercultural education activities focusing on Roma culture and tradition had mixed results.**

Two projects – the Intercultural Education Project in **Bulgaria** and the Equal Opportunities Project in **Romania** – emphasized activities that focused on celebrating Roma culture, history, tradition, and language. Interviews with Roma children and parents, as well as with project and school staff, suggest that this feature did serve to make some Roma students and parents feel more welcome in school. The celebration of their culture also made some Roma students feel more positive about themselves.

At the same time, these activities also created some divisiveness among certain school staff and parents, including some Roma parents. Some parents from non-Roma ethnic minorities complained that Roma were being singled out for "special treatment" – at the expense of their group. Some Roma parents, who no longer embraced their cultural traditions, saw it as a criticism or even an attack on their current beliefs. Even some Roma, who still embraced their cultural traditions, expressed concerns because these activities tended to ignore the enormous cultural diversity that exists within the Roma community. These results demonstrate the importance of balancing cultural education and cultural diversity in an intercultural education effort.

**Question # 3 -- How have the selected Roma education programs promoted institutional or policy changes in the national education systems which advance the goals of equity and educational success for Roma children?**

**Both the direct service and the institutional change projects demonstrated some success in improving the relationship between Roma parents and the public schools.**

All but one project (the Roma Mentored Scholarship Project in **Hungary**) sought to improve the relationship between schools and Roma parents. Interviews with Roma parents, as well as with project and school staff, indicated that contacts between Roma parents and public schools occurred more frequently and that these contacts were more positive where parents or schools were participating in the projects.

Projects pursued different strategies to accomplish this. The **three center-based projects** focused on building the knowledge, skills, and experiences of Roma parents to effectively engage with school staff. This approach generally required additional intervention by project staff as intermediaries and mediators between Roma parents and public schools. The Intercultural Education Project in **Bulgaria** did not provide training to either teachers or Roma parents. Rather, it created collaborative activities, which would bring together both Roma parents and teachers. The Roma Teaching Assistant Project in the **Czech Republic** focused on providing an intermediary (the RTA) to promote and mediate contacts between Roma parents and the public schools. Finally, the Equal Opportunities Project in **Romania** focused on building knowledge and skills of both Roma parents and non-Roma teachers, in order to effectively work together. In participating schools where this approach was successfully implemented, it built the capacity of both parents and teachers to continue to strengthen their working relationship. As a result, it had the greatest potential for being sustained.

**Among the institutional change projects, the Equal Opportunities Project in Romania demonstrated the most significant institutional changes in the school.**

Based on a review of project documents and interviews with school staff, it appears that the Equal Opportunities Project in **Romania** led to the most significant institutional changes in some participating schools. These schools reported changes in the way they operated, the way teaching occurred (for both Roma and non-Roma students), and the relationship of the school with parents (both Roma and non-Roma) and the community. However, the results of this project were mixed. In some schools, project activities did not result in sustained changes in school operation, teaching, or parent/community relationships.

A review of the characteristics of the participating **Romanian** schools suggests that four factors may have contributed to the success of the projects in particular schools. Successful schools had (1) strong and effective administrative leaders, (2) a culture which supported and even encouraged risk-taking and change, (3) a population of participating school staff that was sufficient (usually 5 to 10) and stable, and (4) a strong commitment to ensuring a high-quality education for all students, including Roma students. Schools that lacked these characteristics were less successful.

Institutional changes in participating schools, resulting from the Roma Teaching Assistant Project in the **Czech Republic,** were considerably more limited. Some changes were reported by school administrators, teachers, and RTAs in the way classes were organized and the manner in which teaching was conducted (primarily for Roma students). Generally, these changes were limited to only a few classrooms and only some of the participating schools.

**Both the direct service and the institutional change projects had only limited success in ensuring that their services would be sustained over the long term. The Roma Teaching**

**Assistant Project in the Czech Republic and the Kindergarten as Family Center Project in Yugoslavia/Serbia had the greatest success in this regard.**

The Roma Teaching Assistant Project in the **Czech Republic** had the greatest success in ensuring long-term continuation of its activities. By 1999, it had succeeded in convincing the Czech Ministry of Education to formally recognize the Roma Teaching Assistant as an official public school position, to certify a program of preparation for the position, and to pay the salaries. However, additional policy action is still needed, including the development of standards for the RTA preparation courses, greater definition of the job responsibilities of RTAs, and an increase in the RTA salary. Nevertheless, these policy accomplishments have been significant.

Both the Kindergarten as Family Center Project in **Yugoslavia/Serbia** and the Educational Centers Project in **Slovakia** have taken some important steps in promoting long-term continuation. At several of its sites, the project in **Yugoslavia/Serbia** has forged partnerships with public kindergartens and public elementary schools to share space, staff, and training activities. Similarly, the project in **Slovakia** negotiated with public institutions for shared access to public facilities. These linkages allow the project to leverage important public resources and assistance in support of its activities. They also demonstrate the value and benefits that can result from such collaboration.

Efforts to engage governmental and/or NGO support have been less successful for other projects. In **Bulgaria**, the Intercultural Education Project was unsuccessful in obtaining national government support for reprinting its curriculum materials, when it exhausted the original supply. The lack of new materials was cited as one reason for a decline in use of project activities in some participating schools. In **Hungary**, the national government has been unwilling to include the mentoring component of the Mentored Scholarship Project in its scholarship program for Roma secondary school students. In **Macedonia**, conflicts with local authorities have created problems for the Program for Educational Support. In **Romania**, efforts by the Equal Opportunities Project to engage elements of the national education training system have met with only limited success due to either a lack of skill or a lack of interest among the trainers.

**Question # 4 -- What is the feasibility of replicating aspects or elements of the selected Roma education programs at other sites in the same country or in other countries within the region, taking into consideration factors such as cost, resource needs, institutional support, and culture?**

**Cost-benefit ratios of both the institutional change and direct service projects were roughly equivalent, even though the cost per student participant of the institutional change projects was considerably lower. Center-based direct service projects have pursued opportunities for lowering their costs. Additional opportunities for cost savings may exist in these projects. However, care must be taken to ensure that program quality is not sacrificed for cost saving efforts.**

The three institutional change projects consistently serve much larger Roma student populations than the four direct service projects. The institutional change projects generally involve thousands of students, while the direct service projects only involve hundreds of students – at the

most. As a result, the cost per student participant of institutional change projects is one-tenth that of the direct service projects.[8]

However, there is a trade-off. Interviews with project and school staff suggested, that only a few Roma students demonstrated benefits from participation in the institutional change projects in the short-term. As a result, longitudinal and cross-site comparison of student data revealed no significant benefits across the larger participating student population. At the same time, short – term benefits from participation in the direct service projects were more consistent and significant. These analyses suggest that in the short-term cost-benefits between the two approaches are not significantly different – despite the enormous differences in relative costs per student participant.

Two of the center-based direct service projects have taken steps to significantly improve their cost-benefit ratio. The Educational Centers Project in **Slovakia** negotiated with local authorities for rent-free facilities for two of its sites. In a similar approach, the Kindergarten as Family Center Project in **Yugoslavia/Serbia** developed partnerships with public kindergartens and elementary schools to substantially reduce the cost of site facilities and staffing.

However, this effort may have affected program success. A review of student records revealed that Roma students attending separate sites performed better in elementary school than did their peers in shared sites. Discussions with project staff suggest that other factors aside from the cost-saving efforts may have contributed to differences in student results. Nevertheless, these results suggest, that a careful monitoring of project outcomes must accompany any efforts to significantly reduce project costs to ensure benefit considerations have not been sacrificed in the process. Issues of cost cannot override issues of program quality or integrity.

**Several of the projects were well-positioned to support efforts at program replication, within the country or in other countries.**

During their period of operation, the three center-based projects have already replicated their program model to several sites. The Kindergarten as Family Center Project in **Yugoslavia/Serbia** has been implemented in 14 different sites. The Educational Centers Project in **Slovakia** has been implemented in a total of 6 sites. The Program for Educational Support in **Macedonia** has recently been replicated to a second site. As a result, all three projects possess both the experience and capacity to replicate their existing program model to further sites within the country in which each currently operates.

Moreover, the Step- by- Step kindergarten model anticipates the adaptation of its elements and activities, in response to national conditions and participant needs. It supports project staff undertaking such an effort. As a result, staff of the Kindergarten as Family Center Project in **Yugoslavia/Serbia** have practical experience in adapting program elements and activities to local settings and requirements.

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[8] See the Appendix for detailed information on service population and annual budget of each project.

The Roma Teaching Assistant Project in the **Czech Republic** already has considerable experience working in other Eastern and Central European countries. In 1998 – 99, it trained RTAs from Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovakia. Since that time, it has continued to provide assistance and support to RTAs in those countries. Moreover, the sponsoring organization (Nová Škola) has actively sought to develop its capacity to support the expansion of RTAs in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

**Effective replication required adaptation to the needs of the target audience and the national conditions. It also needed effective engagement of national and local educational authorities to ensure that these adaptations were sustained.**

Interviews with project developers and project staff in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia/Serbia have documented the importance of adapting a program model – including both direct service and institutional change models – to take into account the local conditions and the particular needs of the target audience.

As noted earlier, Step- by- Step explicitly incorporated the flexibility in its program model to encourage and enable its adaptation in response to different national conditions. For the project in **Yugoslavia/Serbia**, program elements and activities were also adapted to the needs of Roma children and parents. This involved using Roma speakers as teaching assistants, incorporating Roma language and culture in the learning activities, and providing humanitarian services to meet the non-educational needs of Roma children and families.

The institutional change projects in **Bulgaria** and **Romania** drew on general models of intercultural education (Bulgaria) and education reform (Romania). However, rather than relying on "off-the-shelf" materials and program strategies which certainly exist, each project sought to develop its materials and activities in close consultation with experts in each country. This ensured that the resulting materials and activities were relevant to the conditions and needs of their country – and of the Roma residing there.

These experiences suggested that further replication of either direct service or institutional change models should incorporate deliberate adaptation to local conditions and needs. This can only be accomplished by establishing strong working partnerships with local experts and educators. The Equal Opportunities Project in **Romania,** which brings together experts and educators from the Netherlands and Romania, can serve as an example and model for this process.

National and local education authorities are generally in a critical position for ensuring that appropriate policies are developed and adequate resources allocated to support the effective adaptation of either the direct service or institutional change program models. Although several projects had success in engaging the active support and assistance of local education authorities for their efforts, they generally had less success in engaging the support of national authorities. This suggests that projects need to develop and apply different strategies to seek to effectively engage the support of national and local education authorities.

## Conclusions

**The Roma education projects examined by this research have succeeded in improving the educational attainment of participating Roma children. With appropriate support, participating Roma children have achieved high marks, maintained regular school attendance, and remained in school.**

Both statistical and qualitative data from Hungary, Macedonia, Slovakia, and Yugoslavia/Serbia have documented positive benefits from participation by Roma students in the direct service projects. Project participants have improved school achievement and attendance. They are more likely to continue in school. They are more likely to develop competence in the majority language, while maintaining connections with Roma traditions (if they so desire). In addition, qualitative data from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Romania suggests that some Roma children, who attended schools that have participated in the institutional change projects, have also demonstrated limited gains in school achievement and attendance.

**Several of the Roma education projects examined by this research have begun to promote institutional change, but only in particular schools. However, these institutional change projects require a longer time horizon to develop than direct service projects.**

Qualitative data, particularly from Romania, indicates that institutional change can successfully proceed in schools with strong administrative leadership, a culture committed to change and risk-taking, and a critical mass of committed staff. Several schools in Romania participating in the Equal Opportunities Project demonstrated changes in their operation, their teaching practices, and their interactions with parents and the community. At the same time, designers and staff involved with the institutional change projects emphasize that a much longer time horizon is needed to see significant institutional changes emerge in schools. This reflects both the inherent conservatism of schools as institutions and their enormous complexity.

**By itself, none of the individual program models can respond to the entire spectrum of educational needs of all Roma children in any single country, much less across the entire region. However in combination, they do offer comprehensive solutions to meet the educational needs of Roma children across the continuum of ages.**

The various educational interventions employed by the direct service projects were able to address some of the educational needs of Roma children at different stages of their educational experience. Preschool programs improved Roma students' preparation for elementary school. However, participating Roma students remained less prepared for school than non-Roma children. Homework help and tutoring programs maintained the academic achievement of Roma children in elementary school, but only if these students continued to participate in the programs. Only a small proportion of the students demonstrated the improvement needed to close the achievement gap with non-Roma students. Secondary school mentoring and scholarships succeeded in keeping Roma students in school, but the pool of Roma students eligible for that program remained relatively small.

The limited success of these projects also likely reflected continuing inadequacies in the existing national educational systems to effectively meet the educational needs of Roma children.[9] Only successful institutional change projects – designed to fundamentally change how schools operate, how they teach, and who does the teaching – can ultimately address these institutional and systemic inadequacies.

**Roma education projects need to place a greater emphasis on assessment, documentation, and collaboration to ensure that their services are sustained over the long-term.**

Effective services provided by successful Roma education projects must be sustained over the long-term, if the cycle of deprivation and oppression among the Roma is to be broken. However, we found that many of the Roma education projects have made only limited efforts to ensure that such services are sustained. In part, this reflected a limited capacity to assess and document the operation and impact of program activities and to develop effective collaborations with other programs, NGOs, and government agencies. A capacity for documentation and assessment is critically important to support efforts to develop, strengthen, and disseminate effective program models. At the same time, such a capacity can help demonstrate to decision-makers, educators, and the public that Roma children can be educationally successful in the appropriate school environment and with needed support.

## Recommendations

1.  The Education Sub-Board of the Soros Foundation Network should sponsor the development of a **comprehensive agenda for Roma education for Central and Eastern Europe**. This agenda should integrate and link specific program models to meet the array of needs of all school-age Roma children. This agenda should reflect the results of this research, the work of OSI Budapest, OSI New York, and IEP, and the recommendations of appropriate experts. It should also be linked with national agendas for the reform of national education systems and the empowerment of Roma communities. The Roma Education Working Group (REWG), assisted by staff from IEP and OSI Budapest, should take the lead in developing this agenda.

2.  The Soros Foundation Network should promote the development of **national agendas for Roma education throughout the region**. Each national agenda should identify programmatic priorities, unique combinations of program models, and strategies for long-term continuation of effective projects. This agenda should respond to the particular conditions in the country and its specific needs for change. Each national agenda should be collaboratively developed by governmental agencies, NGOs, educators, representatives of the national Soros foundation, and members of the Roma community. OSI Budapest and IEP should allocate appropriate staff and other resources to provide technical assistance and support to this effort.

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[9] These institutional inadequacies are listed on page 3 of this report and are described in some detail in the full research report.

3.  The Soros Foundation Network should sponsor projects that **offer a continuum of services** in response to an array of needs and across various age groups (from preschool through secondary school) and **coordinate institutional and systemic change projects with projects providing direct services to Roma students,** to ensure a more effective response to the educational needs of Roma children.

4.  The Soros Foundation Network should continue development of **program models that effectively provide direct educational services to Roma children**, including preschool programs, programs offering homework assistance and tutoring, mentoring programs, and scholarship programs. Effective models should incorporate strategies for adapting services and activities in response to the conditions and needs of specific countries and communities. These program models should emphasize ongoing assessment, documentation, and dissemination of these activities.

5.  The Soros Foundation Network should support continued development and implementation of **projects that promote institutional change in schools, which enables them to more effectively respond to the needs of Roma students**. These institutional change projects should emphasize ongoing assessment and documentation of their activities. The Network should also support efforts to build on institutional change projects to promote policy changes in national school systems.

6.  The Soros Foundation Network should focus on the **seven projects examined by this research as appropriate foundations upon which to build more comprehensive educational programs** for Roma children. Each individual project should be used as starting points for creating integrated models, which combine direct service and institutional change activities, to meet the spectrum of needs across the continuum of ages from grades K to 12 for all Roma children.

7.  The Soros Foundation Network should develop an expectation that all Roma education projects must **develop and implement a realistic strategy for ensuring that successful services are sustained over the long-term**. IEP and OSI Budapest should allocate sufficient staff and other resources to build the capacity in the region to support this process by focusing on institutional collaboration, program assessment, and program documentation. There is also the potential to form working partnerships with other OSI programs, in order to apply their expertise in support of efforts to engage national and local education authorities, NGO's, and international organizations in effective institutional collaborations.

8.  The Soros Foundation Network should establish a **regional fund to support the implementation of appropriate Roma education models**. Implementation projects should be supported through matching funds provided by the appropriate national Soros foundation. NGOs, particularly Roma NGOs, should develop and implement these projects in cooperation with local Soros foundations. Staff from OSI Budapest and IEP should provide technical assistance and support in the design and implementation of these projects.

9.     The Education Sub-Board should establish an **Advisory Board on Roma Education Programs to assist in the implementation of the regional agenda** on Roma education by the Soros Foundation Network. The Advisory Board should advise the Network on appropriate use of the regional fund, assist national Soros foundations and the Network in developing appropriate Roma education strategies and projects, and assist OSI Budapest and IEP in creating implementation plans in support of this work. The membership of the Advisory Board can be drawn from the Roma Education Working Group.

10.    The Soros Foundation Network should promote and sponsor **continuing research on the impact and further development of Roma education projects**.

11.    The Soros Foundation Network should employ multiple strategies to **actively disseminate the results of this and future research on Roma education projects** conducted by IEP, OSI, and the national foundations.

# Appendix: Project Descriptions

The **Intercultural Education Project** began in 1995 and represented the Bulgarian component of the Roma Rights and Education Project (funded by PHARE). It involved: (1) the development and distribution of instructional materials on Roma history, culture, and traditions, (2) national training activities for school directors and teachers to promote and support the use of these instructional materials to advance intercultural education in the classroom, (3) consultative meetings in the schools to support continued use of the instructional materials in the classroom, and (4) school-based outreach activities. It targeted interested school directors and teachers in both elementary and secondary public schools in Bulgaria. Project training and support activities generally ended in 1998. From 1995 to 1998, the project budget totaled 57800 USD of cash expenditure. At its peak, the project was implemented by about 200 teachers in 35 schools in 23 towns across the country. Currently, project materials are actively used in 20 schools.

The **Roma Teaching Assistant Project** was begun in 1996 by Nová Škola, a Czech NGO. It included: (1) recruitment, certification, and training of Roma adults to serve as Roma teaching assistants in Czech schools, (2) assisting in the placement of certified RTAs in Czech elementary schools with large numbers of Roma children, and (3) financial support to selected RTAs in the form of salary supplements. During the project's first two years of operation, all components were conducted and funded by Nová Škola. Since 1998, some elements of the project model have been funded by the Czech Ministry of Education and conducted by another NGO. However, Nová Škola has continued to fund activities related to all three project components. During the 1998-1999 school year, Nová Škola devoted 69529 USD to project activities and the Czech government contributed no less than 70875 USD for the salaries of at least 20 RTAs. According to the Czech Ministry of Education, 217 RTAs are currently working in Czech elementary schools throughout the country.

The **Roma Mentored Scholarship Project** included: (1) monthly financial payments to low-income Roma secondary school students to support their education, (2) paid mentors who provide tutoring assistance to scholarship recipients as well as assistance with personal and school-related problems, and (3) a ten-day summer camp for scholarship recipients and their mentors. It has operated using the current model since the 1997-98 school year. A total of 301 mentored scholarships were awarded to Roma secondary school students throughout Hungary, during the 1999-2000 school year. This project was developed, operated, and funded entirely by the Soros Foundation Hungary. Its annual budget for the 1999-2000 school year was 226,514 USD. This project was expected to be phased out at the end of the 2000-01 school year.

The **Program for Educational Support** was a center-based initiative which provided: (1) an array of twelve (12) age-appropriate educational and other services to Roma students of pre-, elementary, and secondary school age and (2) training, humanitarian assistance, and support to Roma parents. Services were provided to 365 Roma children and their families in two centers located in Shuto Orizari, a predominantly Roma neighborhood in Skopje. It started as a three-year pilot project in October 1998 by Nadez (Hope), a Macedonian NGO restructured for this purpose. Total funding for the project over this three-year period was 611,000 USD.

The **Equal Opportunities Project** included: (1) national training sessions for Romanian elementary and secondary school administrators and teachers, (2) local training sessions, (3) school visits, (4) informational and instructional materials to support these training sessions and site visits, and (5) school-based implementation activities. These training, support, and school-based activities were focused on seven subjects: school management and community partnerships, cooperative learning, remedial teaching and language development, intercultural education, Roma culture and tradition, oral history, and parental involvement. The project was jointly designed and implemented in 1998 by Centrul Educatia (Center Education) 2000+ (a Romanian organization), SLO/Educaplan (a Dutch organization), and the Dutch government. The project has been implemented in a total of 28 schools nationwide. The average annual budget for the project over the last three years was 65,680 USD.

The **Educational Centers Project** was a center-based initiative which provided: (1) a preschool program for Roma children, (2) assistance for Roma children to successfully enroll and attend elementary school, and (3) assistance and support to Roma parents. The project operated three centers – one in Presov and two in villages outside of Presov (Zehna and Solivar) – to serve Roma children and families in those communities. The project provided assistance to 87 Roma children in preschool and 26 Roma elementary school students. The Educational Centers were operated by the Foundation for Romany Children. The project was begun in 1993. The annual budget for this project (including both cash expenditures and in-kind contributions) was approximately 41200 USD.

The **Kindergarten as Family Center Project** was an implementation of the Step- by- Step kindergarten model. Following the Step- by- Step model, this project employed a center-based approach to deliver developmentally appropriate educational services to Roma preschool students. Activities targeted both Roma students and their parents. Adaptations were designed to meet the particular needs, cultural values, and living conditions of Roma children and their parents. This project was run by the Center for Interactive Pedagogy (CIP), a non-profit NGO based in Belgrade, and partially funded by the Open Society Foundation (OSF) Yugoslavia. The project began to serve Roma students in 1997. During 2000-01, the project served 623 preschool children (including 534 Roma children), in 25 preschool groups on 14 sites. The annual budget for the project was approximately 300,000 USD.

**Table 3. Cost Per Participating Student of Roma Education Projects**

|  | Budget | Participating Students | Cost Per Student |
|---|---|---|---|
| Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria) | 57,800 USD | 4000 | 14 USD |
| Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic) | 64,500 USD | 940 | 69 USD |
| Roma Mentored Scholarship Project (Hungary) | 226,514 USD | 301 | 755 USD |
| Program for Educational Support (Macedonia) | 200,000 USD | 385 | 519 USD |
| Equal Opportunities Project (Romania) | 65,680 USD | 4400 | 15 USD |
| Educational Centers Project (Slovakia) | 41,200 USD | 113 | 364 USD |
| Kindergarten As Family Center (Yugoslavia/Serbia) | 300,000 USD | 623 | 481 USD |

The research team obtained the most recent operating budget for each project from the project director or the sponsoring agency. All monetary figures were converted into United States Dollars (USD). For three of these projects, the most recent complete budget covers either the 2000 calendar year or the 1999-2000 school year. For the Intercultural Education Project (Bulgaria), the research team employed the budget for the entire Project because it involved a complete sequence of material preparation, development, and distribution, and staff training rather than annualized activities. For the Roma Teaching Assistant Project (Czech Republic), the research team employed the budget for 1998-99, the last year that the project conducted the introductory training program for RTAs. For the Equal Opportunities Project (Romania), the research team employed the average annual budget from 1998 to 2000. For the Kindergarten as Family Center Project (Yugoslavia/Serbia), the research team employed the budget for the 2000-01 school year.

| Table 4. Educational Achievement Barriers to be Addressed by Seven Roma Education Programs | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Inter-Cultural Educ. Project (Bulg.)** | **RTA Project (Czech Rep.)** | **Roma Mentored Scholar-ships (Hung.)** | **Prog. for Educ. Support (Mac.)** | **Educ. Opp. Project (Rom.)** | **Educ. Centers Project (Slov.)** | **KG as Family Center Project (Yugo.)** |
| Differences in Traditional Teaching Practices & Learning Styles of Roma Students | | | | | D | | |
| Quality of Teaching in Schools | | | | | D | | I |
| Low Expectations About Roma Students by Teachers | | I | | | D | I | I |
| Lack of Competence in Majority Language by Roma Children | I | I | | D | I | D | D |
| Prejudice Against Roma Children in School | D | I | | | D | | I |
| Deprivation Among Roma Families | | | D | D | | | D |
| Attitudes of Roma Parents and Children Towards Public Schools | I | I | D | D | I | D | D |
| Lack of Academic Knowledge and Experience by Roma Children | | I | D | D | I | D | D |
| Health Issues Among Roma Children | | | | D | | D | D |
| **D – Project activities seek to DIRECTLY address the barrier.** <br> **I – Project activities seek to INDIRECTLY address the barrier.** | | | | | | | |

| Table 5. Anticipated Educational Outcomes of Seven Roma Education Programs | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Inter-Cultural Educ. Project (Bulg.)** | **RTA Project (Czech Rep.)** | **Roma Mentored Scholar-ships (Hung.)** | **Prog. for Educ. Support (Mac.)** | **Educ. Opp. Project (Rom.)** | **Educ. Centers Project (Slov.)** | **KG as Family Center Project (Yugo.)** |
| Higher Enrollment in Preschool | | | | **S** | | **S** | **S** |
| Higher Enrollment in Elementary Schools | | | | **S** | **L** | **S** | **S** |
| Higher Completion of Elementary Schools | **L** | **L** | | **L** | **L** | **L** | **L** |
| Higher Enrollment in Secondary Schools | | | **S** | **L** | **L** | | |
| Higher Completion of Secondary Schools | **L** | | **S** | **L** | **L** | | |
| Higher Enrollment in University | | | **L** | | | | |
| Regular School Attendance | **L** | **L** | **S** | **S** | **L** | **S** | **S** |
| Improved School Marks | **L** | **L** | **S** | **S** | **L** | **S** | **S** |
| Improved Classroom Behavior | **L** | **L** | | **S** | **L** | **S** | **S** |
| Greater Competence in Majority Language | **L** | **L** | | **S** | **L** | **S** | **S** |
| Maintained Connection with Roma Cultural Traditions | **L** | | | **S** | **L** | **S** | **S** |
| Greater Motivation to Learn | **L** | | **S** | **S** | **L** | **S** | **S** |
| Greater Self-Confidence & Self-Esteem | **L** | | **S** | **S** | **L** | **S** | **S** |
| **S – Outcomes of project activities should result in the SHORT-TERM.** **L – Outcomes of project activities should result in the LONGER-TERM.** | | | | | | | |