

External Evaluation of the Project

‘Special Classrooms for Children with Disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina’ 1997- 2000



Final Report

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We hope that in this evaluation we have done justice to the considerable achievements of the project. As evaluators we have learned a great deal from this process and we thank everyone for their openness, hospitality and friendliness. It was much appreciated.

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1. Executive Summary

The project, '*Special Classrooms for Children with Disabilities*' was established in 1997 by UNICEF (Bosnia and Herzegovina) with Medicins du Monde as its implementing partner in association with the Kennedy Foundation with the following objectives:

- (a) to provide children with disabilities the opportunity to attend special classes in regular schools;
- (b) to offer support, counselling and education for the parents of children with disabilities;
- (c) to train the teachers of the special classes;
- (d) to identify other children with disabilities outside of the special classes, refer them to local experts and offer support when necessary; and
- (e) to provide assistance in developing national policies and practices, including finance schemes, national personnel training and certification programs.

Progress in creating special classes

Overall, the project has made very good progress in meeting its objectives. By the end of the academic year 1999-2000, 36 special classes serving 254 children with disabilities, had been refurbished and equipped to a high standard in 16 elementary schools. A further seven schools joined the project in 2000-2001, bringing the total number of children to 386. Nevertheless, for a variety of reasons, there were reports of children with disabilities still not attending school.

The establishment of the special classes has been welcomed by the host schools, which in many cases are operating in difficult circumstances caused by the aftermath of war and shortages of funding, classrooms and materials. The active involvement of MdM staff in supporting, equipping and refurbishing the classrooms has been a distinctive feature of the project that continues to be appreciated by the schools.

Whilst this evaluation was not directly concerned with carrying out a financial audit of the project, no evidence of loss or misuse of project funds was apparent. Both UNICEF and MdM have detailed and transparent accounting procedures.

At a cost of approximately half a million dollars over three years since 1997, the project has made a significant contribution to the building of capacity and infrastructure within the country's education system. This is likely to be a lasting achievement which will pay dividends beyond the project funding period.

Supervisory support

Supervisory teams consisting of a defectologist¹ and a logoped (speech therapist) were recruited to support the work of the special class teachers in each of the project schools. At the time of the evaluation, 14 defectologists and 13 logopeds were working with the project. Most of them undertake this role in addition to their normal duties in special schools or institutions and are paid a fee from project funds. The special class teachers reported the support from the supervisors to be of significant value in helping them to develop the necessary skills for this work. Members of the evaluation team were impressed with the high quality of the relationships that have developed between adults and children. It was clear that many of the conditions for successful learning are in place and most teachers have well developed classroom management skills.

Categorisation of the children

One constraining factor arises from the current legal framework for the assessment and classification of children's eligibility for special education that is dominated by medical perspectives. These procedures are inherited from the past and involve a commission of experts to categorise children as disabled, or not disabled. Such approaches prevent the kind of innovations in teaching and learning that the project must support if it is to achieve greater inclusion and long-term sustainability. Many of the defectologists who work on the commissions are aware of these limitations and would like to see changes to make the process more educationally relevant.

Whole school approaches to inclusion

Evidence from the evaluation indicated that exchanges of ideas are taking place between mainstream and special class teaching staff in many schools. In schools where pedagogues work closely with the project there was evidence of a whole school approach to teacher development and meeting the needs of all pupils. In some cases children from special classes join their mainstream peers for certain activities and mainstream pupils were reported in most schools to be using the special class facilities and sharing lessons with the special class pupils. However, the existence of different curriculum in special and mainstream provision is a barrier to the development of such links. Furthermore, the highly prescriptive curricula in both mainstream and special classes poses difficulties for teachers who try to adapt their teaching styles to meet the educational needs of all pupils.

Although the trend in special education has been to move away from models of provision that rely on forms of separate education, the establishment of special classes in mainstream schools as an alternative to residential institutions or special school placement for children with significant disabilities is consistent with current practice.

¹ Defectology is an approach to the study and treatment of people with disabilities that is influential in Central and Eastern Europe. It draws on knowledge from medicine, pedagogy and psychology and has its own training programmes in certain universities. Within this approach children with disabilities are viewed as bio-psychosocial beings governed by the same laws of development as other children but with complications resulting from an impairment of some kind.

In this project, special classes are being used as an entry route to mainstream schools for children who previously were denied such opportunity. Though the project schools vary in how well integrated the special classes are within the mainstream school community, some supervisors have developed very close partnerships with mainstream colleagues (particularly pedagogues) and are developing innovative ways of working to promote inclusive practice and to prevent school failure. Such ways of working are at the cutting edge of practice in special education and should be encouraged.

Parents

The evaluators met with groups of parents in five of the six sites visited. The parents overwhelmingly support the project and they expressed high levels of satisfaction with the opportunities that have been provided for their children to attend mainstream schools and with the overall progress that the children were making especially in language development and social behaviour. The parents' main concern was whether the special classes would continue in the future as the project evolves.

Transport to and from school was identified by all of the parent groups as especially problematic. Many families do not have access to, or can afford, public transport. Others spend many hours escorting their children to and from school, waiting for their child until the end of the school day. Although transport is a problem for other parents, it is particularly acute here because of the greater distances that they may have to travel and the vulnerable nature of their children.

Parents have encountered many difficulties in forming associations. They feel that they need more support in forming associations as well as in finding suitable locations to meet.

Teachers and supervisors have been supported in their work with parents through training seminars which are reported as helpful. However, classroom observations and interviews with professionals suggested that they have little time to work directly with families. Moreover, the strategies they have for doing so tend to rely on an 'expert model' of parent-professional partnership where the professional is the expert about the child and any exchange of information tends to be one way rather than reciprocal.

Staff development and training

The three UNICEF/Kennedy Foundation training seminars are an integral part of the project and have received widespread support from those who have participated in them. The sessions that acknowledged local traditions and built on pre-existing knowledge were especially valued.

Many participants stated that they would welcome the chance to continue to attend the seminars in future and to establish networks in which they could meet others who work on the project more regularly. The seminars and supervision have made a significant contribution to the development of teachers' skills and knowledge and there is a continued need for this work within the project. In addition, there is also a wider need to implement new approaches to teacher preparation, continuing professional

development and award bearing courses, if the benefits of the project are to have a wider impact.

National policies

Key individuals in the various government agencies report that the project has made an important contribution, but there is still work to be done if the lessons from the project are to be incorporated into legislation and policy at the national level. The Project Co-ordinator has an important role to play in this regard. In addition, there is a continuing role for international agencies in supporting the ministries to locate the lessons learned from this project within broader European and world developments in special needs education.

One aspect of this work will be to review the existing funding arrangements for special education in Bosnia and Herzegovina which are currently fragile and unclear. Given the vulnerability of current funding flows, international humanitarian aid plays an important role in enabling schools to provide education for students with disabilities.

The future

Many aspects of the project are consistent with international trends in special education and, as with many other countries, some difficult decisions have to be taken. Once access to schooling has been achieved, educators face choices about the content of the curriculum, teaching methods and pedagogical approaches. The progressive trend within special education is to focus on the development of whole school approaches to teaching and learning and to re-structure schools so that they can accommodate increasingly diverse groups of pupils. Although this is often constrained by legal requirements, professionals in many countries are working to develop more seamless provision for all, rather than the proliferation of separate special forms of provision. Thus, the adoption of whole school approaches will be vital to future success after the project has ended. This is more likely to occur if there is commitment from the relevant ministries and authorities in the area of curriculum reform and new legislation on categorisation. In addition, the universities, pedagogical academies and institutes need to find ways to incorporate special needs education in the initial training of teachers and to establish of new award bearing courses at diploma and masters' degree level for experienced teachers .

The schools value their association with UNICEF, Mdm and the Kennedy Foundation and this sense of belonging to the project needs to be built upon. It is vital that the schools do not feel abandoned as the project evolves and support is reduced. Given the considerable financial plight of many of the governmental educational agencies, there will be a continued need for some external funding in the near future to ensure the project is sustained. There is a need to investigate ways in which relevant ministries and authorities might be encouraged to include special needs issues as an integral part of any new legislation, policy or curriculum reform.

This evaluation found sufficient evidence to demonstrate that this is an important project that has made a successful start in addressing the needs of children with

disabilities and their families from all national groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These achievements are likely to provide a sound basis for future developments as the project evolves into a new and sustainable phase with more schools in other parts of the country becoming involved.

Recommendations

- The project should continue to be supported so that it can evolve into a new, sustainable phase.
- UNICEF, MdM and the Kennedy Foundation should support this process of transition.
- A local NGO could be formed to support the development of the project.
- Schools coming to the end of their supervision should not be ‘abandoned’.
- Some support through the provision of materials should be maintained.
- Efforts should continue to locate children who are not attending school.
- Current identification and classification procedures need to be reviewed to make them more educationally relevant.
- Staff development opportunities through seminars, workshops and networks should be maintained and extended.
- There is a need to have a balance between local and foreign input to the seminars.
- New professional development opportunities for teachers and supervisors leading to certification should be provided.
- Links should be made to other professional development initiatives.
- The role of supervisors (defectologists and logopeds) in supporting schools will need to change as the study of defectology evolves and teachers’ skills develop.
- There needs to be more development work on different models of parent-professional relationships
- Parents need further support in establishing and maintaining their associations.
- Ministries should be encouraged to ensure that special needs issues are included in all proposed reforms.
- Reform of the current inflexible curricula is required.
- Closer links with mainstream would be helped by the adoption of interactive teaching approaches.
- UNICEF should consider how this project could have closer links with other related projects.

2.Introduction

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the external evaluation of the project, 'Special Classrooms for Children with Disabilities' 1997-2000 in relation to the project objectives. The findings are discussed in terms of four themes (sustainability, impact, methods and future development) identified by the project evaluation steering committee. The discussion draws upon an assessment of the project against country needs, country policy, educational practice and the existing curriculum with reference to emerging world and European trends in the area of special needs education.

Bosnia and Herzegovina inherited the structure of its educational system from the former Yugoslavia, which had a well developed system of separate special institutions, schools and classes particularly in urban areas. In rural areas, disability was associated with stigma and many children were kept at home partly because of a lack of provision and partly because of the shame that parents felt at having a disabled child.

As in many other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, approaches to special education in the former Yugoslavia were based on a theory known as 'defectology' a unified approach to the study and treatment of people with disabilities. This theory was originally developed by Vygotsky, a Russian scholar who is well known internationally for his work on learning theory and linguistics. Within this approach, children with disabilities are viewed as bio-psychosocial beings governed by the same laws of development as other children but with complications resulting from an impairment of some kind (Ajdinski & Florian, 1997). Defectology is a multi-disciplinary approach that brings together psychology, medicine, philosophy, sociology and political theory in order to diagnose, educate and rehabilitate people with mental and physical handicaps.

Prior to the break up of Yugoslavia, most defectologists were trained in university institutes of defectology in Belgrade or Zagreb. Recently, a new institute of defectology has been established in Tuzla in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is important to understand the status and knowledge of defectologists and to recognise how influential the thinking and practice associated with this approach continues to be in the former Yugoslavia. There is the potential for outsiders to react to the word 'defectology' in a negative way. It is a term and a concept that does not translate well. However, we believe that it would be a mistake to exclude or alienate defectologists merely because the English speaking world is uncomfortable with the term. Potentially, defectologists have an important role to play in the development of an inclusive educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. If this is to be a reality, then current training, roles and responsibilities will need to be reviewed. This project provides a basis for these new ways of working. For further details of the role of defectology in the development of policy and practice in the former Yugoslavia, see Ajdinski and Florian, (1997) or Ainscow and Haile-Giorgis (1998).

3. Current Context and Project Objectives

Gorazde

In 1995, Vasilja Veljkovic, a well known defectologist in the former Yugoslavia, received a letter from a disabled ex-pupil. He explained that his old school in Gorazde needed help and support to deal with an increasing number of disabled and traumatised children. At this time communication with the outside world was difficult and all supplies including food and water were scarce. Although the town was virtually cut off, Vasilja went to considerable lengths to get advice and resources to the school. For instance, she convinced the military forces that it was essential to deliver educational resources to the school and several times she travelled with a colleague over the war-torn road from Sarajevo to Gorazde. Subsequently she was instrumental in attracting the attention of the international community to the work in Gorazde. Later she was appointed as project co-ordinator and the school in Gorazde served as the pilot for the project and a model for the developments in other schools.

Much of the educational infrastructure in Bosnia and Herzegovina was damaged or destroyed during the war and many key professionals were killed or left the country. In addition the massive relocation of populations has added to the complexity of reconstructing the system of schooling. Furthermore, large numbers of children were injured or traumatised placing an additional burden on the school system and increasing the numbers of disabled children. According to UNICEF (1999:3),

‘Priorities in the coming period will be services for children with special needs...This target population is often not included in the regular educational services, but the Government’s policy is to offer educational and other services to children in their communities, which differs from the centralised institutional approach in pre-war Bosnia and Herzegovina.’

This project was established as part of this priority by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Office of UNICEF, with the French NGO Medecins du Monde (MdM) as its implementing partner in association with the Kennedy Foundation and University of Maryland, USA. Funding for the project in its pilot year came from the Canadian National Committee of UNICEF, subsequently funding has been provided by the German National Committee of UNICEF. Co-operating partners are: the Federal Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Republic Pedagogical Institute (Republika Srpska). These partners agreed a set of objectives and strategies for the project detailed below.

Objective 1: *To provide children with disabilities with adequate psycho-pedagogical care in special classes organised in regular schools, allowing them to live with their families and to improve their integration into their communities.*

Objective 2: *To offer special support, counselling and education for the parents of children with disabilities. Teachers and parents would learn together how to share information about the children's specific individual goals and how to strengthen what was accomplished in school.*

Objective 3: *To train the teachers of the special classes.*

Objective 4: *To identify other children with disabilities outside of the special classes and refer them to local experts and to offer them some support when necessary.*

Objective 5: *To provide assistance in developing national policies and practices, including finance schemes, national personnel training and certification programs*



4. The Evaluation Process

The external evaluation team from the School of Education at the University of Cambridge, consisted of three members, two of whom were in country at any one time. In accordance with the evaluation brief, a range of data sources informed the study. Six project schools (Gorazde, Visegrad, Banovici, Dobo, Cazin and Siroki Brijeg) selected in advance as a representative sample of schools in the project, were visited during September 2000. The evaluators spent one day in each school. Observations of classroom practice took place and individual and group semi-structured interviews with directors, supervisors, teachers and parents were carried out. There were also interviews with a representative from the Federal Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, members of the Pedagogical Academy in Sarajevo and the Pedagogical Institute from the Republika Srpska. In addition, key staff from UNICEF and MDM, including the Project Co-ordinator and Project Administrator, were also interviewed. Documentary evidence relating to the project was reviewed, and the lead evaluator attended the training seminar held in Teslic in August 2000.

It was our intention to tape record all the interviews for later analysis, but the early recordings were of poor quality because of the technical difficulties when interviewing with the help of interpreters. Therefore it was decided to take field notes to record the results of observations and interviews. These field notes were shared among the evaluation team, each member reviewing them independently to identify issues relating to the project objectives. This procedure was then repeated during a series of collaborative analysis meetings at which each evaluator presented their findings for discussion, confirmation and analysis by other members of the team in order to enhance the validity of the findings of the evaluation process.

In the following section we present the findings for each objective in relation to the implementation strategies as outlined in the evaluation brief.



5. Findings

Overall, the project has made very good progress in meeting its objectives. Inevitably, the extent to which all of the objectives have been met is variable both across the project objectives as well as within specific sites. However, there is a basic consistency to many of the achievements across school sites which are highlighted below.

Objective 1: To provide children with disabilities with adequate psycho-pedagogical care in special classes organised in regular schools, allowing them to live with their families and to improve their integration into their communities.

The project has made substantial progress in meeting this objective through the establishment of new special classes in elementary schools and the re-establishment of pre-war models of special classes in certain other schools. Potential project schools were jointly identified by MDM and UNICEF. Agreement was then obtained from the relevant authorities and school directors to allocate classrooms and teaching staff for the special classes. The Project Co-ordinator, Vasilja Veljkovic, who is well known and highly respected in the field of defectology in Bosnia-Herzegovina, was a significant factor in this process.

Identification of pupils with disabilities who were not attending school at all or were failing in their mainstream classes was undertaken in the project school areas. By the end of the academic year, 1999-2000, 254 children (62% of whom have mild and 38% moderate learning disability) were involved in 36 special classes in 16 primary schools. During the academic year 2000-2001, a further seven schools joined the project bringing the total number of children to 386. Five of the original project schools are now considered to be capable of working successfully without supervision.

Supervisory teams consisting of a defectologist and a logoped (speech therapist), who all had teaching experience, were recruited by the Project Co-ordinator to support the work of the special classes in each of the project schools. As of September 2000, 14 defectologists and 13 logopeds were working with the project. Most of them were undertaking this role in addition to their normal duties and are paid a fee from project funds.

The special classrooms were refurbished and equipped prior to their opening. MDM as implementing partner has done a good job in ensuring that this work has been carried out. In many cases the special classrooms are in stark contrast to the rest of the school.

Evidence from this evaluation indicates that exchanges of ideas are taking place between mainstream and special class teaching staff in many schools. In some cases children from special classes join their mainstream peers for certain activities and mainstream pupils were reported in most schools to be using the special class facilities and sharing lessons with the special class pupils.

In some schools, there was a degree of initial scepticism on the part of supervisors (defectologists and logopeds), teachers and parents, at the introduction of special

classes. These worries have largely been dispelled and the degree of community awareness about people with disability has been heightened.

In schools where the pedagogues are working closely with the project there was evidence of a whole school approach to the teacher development and meeting the needs of all pupils. This is further enhanced where the supervisors work with teachers across the school. However, the existence of highly prescriptive curricula in both mainstream and special provision poses difficulties for teachers in adapting their teaching styles to meet the educational needs of all pupils. Furthermore, the separate curricula for special and mainstream provision means that pupils trying to reintegrate to mainstream classes are faced with considerable difficulties.

Objective 2: To offer special support, counselling and education for the parents of children with disabilities. Teachers and parents would learn together how to share information about the children's specific individual goals and how to strengthen what was accomplished in school.

The evaluators met with groups of parents in five of the six sites visited. The parents views can be summarised into four main points.

First, they are overwhelmingly in support of the project and they expressed high levels of satisfaction with the opportunities that have been provided for their children to attend mainstream schools and with the overall progress that the children were making especially in language development and social behaviour. The parents' main concern was about the continuation of the project. They were reluctant to articulate any views that might be construed as critical of a project that has given so much to them and had restored their hopes for a decent life for their children. However, as the focus group interviews with the parents proceeded and they were reassured about the purpose of the evaluation, several concerns emerged.

Transportation was identified by all of the parent groups as especially problematic. Many families cannot afford or do not have access to public transport. Others spend many hours of the day escorting their children to and from school, waiting for their child until the end of the school day. Although transport is also a problem for other families, it is particularly acute for parents of children with disabilities because of the greater distances that they may have to travel when local schools do not offer provision. In addition, the vulnerable nature of some children with physical and/or intellectual difficulties requires that they be accompanied to school. The problem of transportation for the children attending special classes should be seen as part of the wider need for transportation for all children living beyond walking distance to school. Perhaps a parent association might become involved in fundraising and advocating for transportation for all children. Such activities may be helpful in forging community-canton partnerships.

Visegrad – Republika Srpska

Visegrad, the town featured in Nobel Prize winning author Ivo Andric's '*The Bridge Over the Drina*' has an air of despondency about it. Like other parts of Republika Srpska it has received little reconstruction aid. More than three quarters of the population are unemployed and many of them are displaced people who were who were expelled from their homes. The school has to share its buildings with a refugee centre and it is forced, because of shortage of space, to operate three shifts a day to accommodate all the children.

The project was established in this school nearly two years ago and provides opportunities for some children who had previously been excluded from education. In this school, one father travels 50km by bus everyday to bring his disabled child to school and waits for him to complete his lessons before taking him home again.

Many parents are worried about what might come next, especially if the funding for the project ends. They see the resources and materials that the project provides as essential. The parents of older children expressed a wish for more age appropriate material for their children but also a concern for additional community based educational and/or vocational opportunities for them when they are beyond primary school age. Some parents would like the length of the school day to be extended.

Some parents are encountering difficulties in forming associations. They expressed a desire to meet other parents and children but felt they needed more support in forming associations as well as in finding suitable locations to meet. Parents in Banovici have not been able to raise the 400 marks required to register their association as an official organisation.

Teachers and supervisors have been supported in their work with parents through the training seminars. In a positive development, parents were also invited to the August 2000 three day UNICEF/Kennedy Foundation supported seminar held in Teslic together with teachers and supervisors. At least ten parents attended and participated in the activities of the seminar, one theme of which was parental partnership. It was also recognised at the meeting that most of the professionals themselves are parents, something that is often forgotten. However, classroom observations and interviews with professionals suggested that they have little time to work directly with families. Moreover, the strategies they have for doing so tend to rely on an 'expert model' of parent-professional partnership where the professional is the expert about the child and any exchange of information between the parties tends to be one way rather than reciprocal.

The positive effect the project has had in empowering and building confidence in parents will inevitably lead to tensions between parents and professionals as parents become more adept advocates. The emergence of such tensions is an inevitable (and

positive) outcome as it demonstrates the willingness of parents to advocate for their children. Furthermore it underscores the need for a more reciprocal model of parent-professional partnership to replace the 'expert' model in which parents tend to be passive recipients of professional wisdom.

Objective 3: To train the teachers of the special classes.

The three residential seminars have received widespread support from those who have participated in them. Evidence from a random sample of translated evaluation forms from the most recent seminar indicates that it was helpful in many ways. The input from the various experts from the United States was appreciated for its professionalism and challenge. The sessions that were able to build on local traditions and pre-existing knowledge were especially valued, particularly the sessions on language and communication. Many participants stated that they would welcome the chance to meet others who work on the project more regularly. Several people mentioned they would like to see videos of classroom practice from project schools in future seminars.



All teachers found the support from the regular visits from the supervisors to be of value. The extent to which the supervisors spent their time working with children, rather than with teachers, varies. For several supervisors, the project has provided opportunities for them to develop new skills through new ways of working. The evaluators observed many good examples of professional mentoring that is enabling the

teachers to develop the necessary skills and confidence to sustain the project once the support is withdrawn.

Although teachers state that they have learned a great deal about teaching children with special needs, they need more help in working with parents and on the development of more flexible teaching and learning approaches, including individualisation, collaborative group work and peer tutoring. Virtually all teachers find the existing curriculum to be inflexible. This may explain why there still tends to be much didactic teaching.

The evaluation team were extremely impressed with the high quality of the relationships that have been developed between adults and children. Most teachers have well developed classroom management skills. The children enjoy attending the special classes and although we were unable to assess learning outcomes, it is clear that many of the conditions for successful learning are in place. Although the project has made a significant contribution to the development of teachers' skills and knowledge, there is a wider need to implement new approaches to teacher preparation, continuing professional development and award bearing courses. Most teachers want to continue meeting with others in the project through a series of networks.

Objective 4: To identify other children with disabilities outside of the special classes and refer them to local experts and to offer them some support when necessary.

All of the professionals interviewed were aware of children with disabilities who are not attending school. The reasons for this are complex; many of these children are unknown to the authorities, partly because of the relocation of populations as a result of the war and partly because some families are so ashamed because of the stigma of disability that the child is hidden away at home. Some parents do not want their child to be categorised by the commission. Others do not know that there is appropriate provision available.

An important aspect of this project has been the way in which it has enabled a number of defectologists to redefine their role. In the past, because many of them were employed in special schools or institutions, they dealt directly with relatively small numbers of children and had few opportunities to work with children or colleagues in mainstream settings. In this project they have worked as supervisors of the special class teachers in a consultative role. Some of them have found this new way of working difficult, but most of the defectologists can see that developing their role as supporters of teachers in mainstream schools is an important aspect of capacity building that is necessary if there is to be an expansion of community-based provision for children with special needs.

In schools where a supervisor is also a member of the school staff (rather than being employed in a special school or institution) and/or where good working relationships have been formed with school staff they are beginning to address the special needs of a wider group of children in mainstream classes. In many schools visited by the

evaluators, the defectologists and speech therapists were seen to work in support of children in the mainstream classes thus helping to keep them in the mainstream. The extent to which this support will be maintained once the supervisors cease supporting the schools in future is uncertain. Clearly it will be easier in schools that are able directly to employ defectologists and speech therapists.

The assessment of special needs is a problematic issue that is currently under review in many countries. In Bosnia and Herzegovina assessment of special educational needs is carried out by a categorisation commission based on the principles of medicine and psychology and results in children being seen either, as disabled, or not disabled. A consequence of categorisation is that the labels that are given to children tend to stay with them for ever and may limit the views of adults about their potential for learning. The assumptions that surround this process can prevent the kind of innovations in teaching and learning that the project must support if it is to achieve greater inclusion and long-term sustainability.

Objective 5: To provide assistance in developing national policies and practices, including finance schemes, national personnel training and certification programs

Although the Project is seen as having made an important contribution by many key figures in the various ministries, there is still work to be done if the lessons from the project are to be incorporated into legislation and policy at the national level. Clearly, there is an important role for the Project Co-ordinator to play in this regard. The fact that she is so well respected in both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska provides further scope to influence future policy direction.

The newly created post in MDM of curriculum developer gives a key role to a local person in building up a body of materials and getting information from abroad. This is another example of an activity which helps to build local capacity and will help to sustain the project achievements after the financial aid is withdrawn. However, there is a continuing role for international agencies in supporting the ministries to locate the lessons learned from this Project within broader world and European developments in special needs education.

One aspect of this will be to review the current funding arrangement for special education in Bosnia and Herzegovina which are currently fragile and unclear. Given the vulnerability of current funding flows, international humanitarian aid plays an important role in enabling schools to provide education for children with disabilities. At a cost of approximately half a million dollars over three years since 1997, the project has made a significant contribution to the building of capacity and infrastructure within the country's education system. This is likely to be a lasting achievement which will pay dividends beyond the project funding period.

The Project has revealed a huge demand for new professional development opportunities and certification schemes for teachers and other professionals in the area of special needs education.

6. Discussion

The following discussion draws upon the findings presented above in order to answer pre-set questions on four main topics. Each topic and the corresponding questions are answered separately.

1. **Impact** - What has the project achieved?

The evaluators believe that there is evidence to demonstrate that this is an important project that has made a significant contribution to addressing the needs of children with disabilities and their families from all national groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Previously, children with disabilities had few options for participation in community life. Although a few special schools and long stay residential institutions provide some services, they usually meant that the child had to leave home. Before the war there were some opportunities and services for these children within the general schooling system through a limited number of special classes, however in small towns and rural areas there was no appropriate provision. Many children with mild or moderate learning difficulties either remained at home or were placed without support in the mainstream classes. This project was established in response to the need to develop community based education programmes in order to meet the needs of children who were not attending school as well as those who were inadequately served in mainstream schools. It has also established an alternative to placement in a special school or residential institutions. As a result, more children are attending school and receiving an education that is more appropriate to their needs. Moreover, the children are being taught in an environment that allows a degree of social integration with mainstream peers. This social integration is an important step towards heightening community awareness around disability issues.

Teachers of the special classes are receiving support from supervisory teams as well as in-service training in the form of seminars and workshops. The main impact of this cross-professional exchange has been to build internal capacity for meeting special educational needs. As a result, multi-professional teams are beginning to work together to address the needs of all pupils. Furthermore, because this is happening in a mainstream setting, the teachers and teams are beginning to share their expertise with

other school staff. The project appears to be encouraging a sense of community solidarity and varying degrees of community and school ownership. This is an important achievement that will need continuing support for future development.

A third achievement of the project is that it has recognised the importance of the role of parents. As a result, the parents of the pupils in the special classes are increasingly empowered and are beginning to organise and form associations to advocate for their children. This is a considerable achievement but it will require further support before it is sustainable.

2. Methodology – What is happening in line with best practice?

The general strategy of special classes . Although the trend in special education has been to move away from models of provision that rely on forms of separate education, the establishment of special classes in mainstream schools as an alternative to residential or special school placement for children with disabilities is consistent with current practice. In this project, special classes are being used as an entry route to the school environment for children who previously were denied such opportunity. In a few cases pupils have then re-entered their mainstream classes. The project teams appear to share the ultimate aim of including children in a mainstream setting where possible, but have some reservations about the reality of inclusion of all children in mainstream classes.

Increasingly in other countries, children with mild and moderate disabilities are catered for in mainstream classes with special education support, while children with more severe disabilities are 'pulled out' for part of the time. The degree of integration of the special class pupils within the mainstream classes in the project schools is variable. Some schools have made significant progress in this regard, in other schools it is minimal. Developments in inclusive practice will take time and will need to be built into the wider school ethos. Such developments will require a more flexible approach to the curriculum and the adoption of more active teaching and learning methods. Without such developments there is the danger that the special classes might become no more than segregated provision in an mainstream location.

Links with mainstream

When the project began, two girls were overheard referring to the special class pupils as 'idiots' asking, 'what are they doing here?' The teacher invited them into the class and showed them that all pupils could learn. Such sharing is now common. Mainstream staff come to the special class teachers for advice on how to meet the needs of pupils in their classes. Co-operation between the project teachers and mainstream school staff has already resulted in the successful inclusion of one pupil with learning difficulties into a mainstream class.

Some of the practice in the project schools is consistent with, and in some cases exceeds, what is available in mainstream schools in western countries. This is particularly apparent in the excellent relationships that have developed between adults and children and the classroom management strategies demonstrated by the teachers and supervisors. However, in some cases there was the unfortunate tendency to talk about children's difficulties in their presence as though they could not understand what was being said about them. This practice stood in stark contrast to the otherwise supportive atmosphere in all classrooms.

Though the project schools vary in how well integrated the special classes are within the mainstream school community, some supervisors have developed very close

partnerships with mainstream colleagues (e.g. teachers and pedagogues) and are developing innovative ways of working to promote inclusive practice and to prevent school failure of other children who are struggling because of the inflexible curriculum and didactic teaching methods. Such ways of working are at the cutting edge of practice in special education and should be encouraged.

Experience in other countries suggests that one of the main difficulties in developing this method of working is the assessment and identification procedures used to categorise children's eligibility for special education that have been referred to earlier. The labels that are then given to children tend to stay with them for ever and often limit the views of adults about their potential for learning. In addition, such assumptions can prevent the kind of innovations in teaching and learning that the project must support if it is to achieve greater inclusion and long-term sustainability.

The contents of the training given to special class teachers and supervision team:

The seminars and workshops are widely appreciated. All training opportunities provided by the project have been valued and there is demand for more. Where training during seminars has included practical suggestions, the teachers have found them particularly useful. Observations and interviews with teachers and supervisors suggest that they are using the information from the seminars to inform their practice. The extent to which this is happening varies depending on the prior knowledge and skill of the team but every team made reference to the value of the seminars. Peer tutoring was identified as a teaching method many teams would like more information on.



There is a widespread acknowledgement that all teachers would benefit from training to meet children's special educational needs as part of their initial teacher training. Furthermore, there is considerable demand from all those who were interviewed for this evaluation for the continuation and extension of professional development opportunities for teachers leading to an recognised award. Teachers in the project are already a valuable resource to their schools and are sharing skills with their mainstream colleagues, parents and others involved in the field. The evaluators believe that providing further professional development opportunities are an important aspect of building sustainability.

One constraint is the prescriptive nature of the various curricula in Bosnia-Herzegovina which is associated with the didactic style of teaching adopted by many teachers. Whether the presence of the project supervisory teams affect the amount of flexibility allowed to the special class teachers or not is debatable. If greater flexibility is to be achieved, the support of the school directors, pedagogues, teacher educators, local and governmental authorities will be crucial in future.

Changes in provision and practice, such as those introduced by this project, also have implications for the role and professional responsibilities of defectologists and speech therapists because they involve new ways of working. If these professionals are to continue to make a major contribution to this work, then their professional development needs must also be addressed.

How it is line with the general tendencies in special education.

In many ways the project is consistent with general trends in special education but it is also at the crossroads. Once access to schooling has been achieved, educators face choices about the content of the curriculum and how it will be delivered. The progressive trend within special education is to focus on the development of whole school approaches to teaching and learning and to re-structure schools so that they can accommodate increasingly diverse groups of pupils. Many developments in mainstream education have applicability to all pupils and educators in many countries are experimenting with ways to blur the distinction between general and special education. Although this is often constrained by legal requirements, creative professionals are working to develop more seamless provision for all, rather than the proliferation of many separate special forms of provision.

One possibility in Bosnia-Herzegovina would be to link this project with the UNICEF Interactive Learning Project which focuses on developing the skills of mainstream teachers. Teachers who adopt interactive learning methods are more likely to create the classroom conditions necessary for the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs as well as reducing the levels of failure that are apparent in existing mainstream classrooms.

Banovici

On the day of our visit, teachers in Banovici had been on strike for a week as they had not been paid for three months because the local canton did not have the funds to pay them. The town had once been a vibrant coal mining community, but the mines had closed some time ago and the majority of the population is unemployed. Nevertheless, when the school staff heard that we planned to visit as part of the evaluation, they returned to school to show us what had been achieved. Not only did we see children who had profound and multiple learning difficulties, but we witnessed professional practice as good as we have seen anywhere in the world. We also met parents who told us stories about how, prior to the project, their children had to be kept at home, excluded from school. For these families the project has provided hope for a better future.

3. Sustainability – *How can the programme be sustained without external support?*

Resources in Bosnia-Herzegovina are likely to be scarce in the near future and the project has undoubtedly been welcome. The schools involved recognise that their greatest resource is the teachers and seemed confident that they would continue even without the additional material support offered by the project. Schools gain in many ways, some of them intangible, from being associated with high status organisations such as UNICEF and MdM. Therefore, it is important to stress that continued association with the project is important for schools even when supervisory support has ended.

The principal, special class teachers and supervisory teams in one school visited by the evaluation team were confident that they would continue with the provision without the project. The evidence collected seems to support this. It is important to note that this school was committed to the effective running of special provision for children with learning disability before the project started.



The presence of whole school approaches will be vital to the future success of the special classes after the project has ended. The commitment of the relevant ministries and authorities will also be vital in terms of curriculum legislation and development, initial training and in-service training via the universities, pedagogical academies and institutes.

Several problems were identified which will have a direct bearing on sustainability. Of these problems transportation is the most critical because children must be able to attend school in order to benefit from it. In the absence of municipal support, schools and families will have to find creative ways to ensure that children are able to attend school.

Much of the refurbishment of the classrooms involved important one-off capital expenditures which can be sustained with little additional expenditure. Consumable supplies will be difficult to maintain without external support until the Cantons become more financially viable. It may well be necessary to negotiate agreements with local authorities to ensure that sufficient levels of consumable supplies are provided in the future. It is acknowledged that given the general lack of funding for education in the country this is a problem facing all pupils. Equally it should be acknowledged that children with special needs have long been denied even basic access to education in part due to the inflexible nature of the present curriculum. The children in the special classes need additional resources in order for them to have access to the curriculum. In the past, parents often kept their disabled children at home because of stigma and the lack of resources and local provision. The allocation of additional resources has convinced many parents that the education of their children is important. In many countries there is an acknowledgement that children with special needs require extra resources because of the particular nature of their learning disabilities.

The additional resources provided by the project are an investment in the school and help to ensure successful practice. There are also advantages for other teachers and their mainstream pupils. Discussion with local education funding authorities could help to determine a modest level of consumable resources, which could be locally sustainable in the future. It is also likely that different schools will have variable levels of consumable resources depending on their location and access to avenues of foreign and local aid. This may be a factor in determining the amount provided by the Project in the future.

Can the oldest special classes function without any support from the project? As the special class teachers gain confidence in their abilities the need for contact with supervisors diminishes. While it should be possible for the classes to continue to progress without supervision, some kind of contact is desirable. This could take any number of forms, including less frequent visits from supervisors, periodic group meetings after school, networks or telephone contact.

Staff support networks established in association with the supervisory teams and workshops, could be supported by the relevant authorities. For example, cluster support groups might be established in which teachers could share adapted lesson plans

or contribute to a project newsletter. Other activities could include the translation and distribution of a variety of relevant literature; the training of pedagogues or teachers further in order to be able to support other project staff members. Opportunities for teachers to participate in research and writing articles about special needs issues as part of continuing professional development would raise the status of the work and the project. Such activities could be linked to further professional development as part of an award bearing course leading to a master's degree.

The development of policies and practice for special needs in many countries has come about as a direct result of involvement of parents who have organised themselves into groups to advocate on behalf of their children. Therefore, it is appropriate that the Project should have identified this as a priority area for development. However, parent associations will need further support before they are fully established in all locations. Once functioning, they may be able to apply pressure on the relevant authorities to continue provide appropriate educational opportunities for their children, as well as mobilising community support for the extension of opportunities for disabled people through the establishment of day facilities and supported employment opportunities.



4. Future development, including overcoming constraints, defining the priorities.

Future developments should build on the achievements of the project. The special class teachers have developed many teaching skills that will enable them to continue to support pupils in their classes. But they would benefit from opportunities for further professional development, both internally and externally to the school. Where the school environment is positive towards pupils with disabilities and committed to meeting the needs of all pupils, the success of the special classes will be greatest. Future development therefore should focus on developing a positive whole school approach to meeting special needs. With this in mind links should be made to the UNICEF 'Interactive Learning Project'

Initial training of teachers is under review in Bosnia and Herzegovina and it has been proposed in a recent report, that a special needs component should be incorporated for all teachers (Dizdar 1998). This is an encouraging development that is supported by the institutions that provide training for teachers. As detailed elsewhere the teachers and supervisors working on this project, will need further training opportunities through seminars, workshops and networks. In addition there is an urgent need to provide in-service training of teachers via the universities, pedagogical academies and institutes. In the short term, they may be a continued need for external support for this process. A further opportunity would be to make links with the proposed masters' degree in inclusive education that is to be supported by the Finnish Government and based at the University of Sarajevo.

There is a need to investigate ways in which relevant ministries and authorities might be encouraged to include special needs issues as an integral part of any new legislation, policy or curriculum reform. The existing overloaded, inflexible curricula and the existing special education identification (eligibility) procedures are a major constraint in the development of greater inclusive practice and also inhibit the development of more effective teaching and learning approaches.

Practical workshops for parent associations would enable them to gain organisational strength and might encourage increasingly effective advocacy. We understand that the Kennedy Foundation has offered to support the establishment of parent associations. As part of this process, professionals need help with the development of new ways of working with parents and the community that will enable them to move beyond the 'expert model' in which the professional are the only ones who have the answers. New ways of working will require professionals to let go of some of their power. This process can be difficult for both parents and professionals. Further support and training will be necessary if this is to occur.

The schools value their association with UNICEF, MDM and the Kennedy Foundation and this sense of belonging to this important project needs to be built upon. It is vital that the schools do not feel abandoned as the project evolves and support is reduced. The major partners in the project should consider how they might provide continued support to the project schools in the future at the same time as responsibility for its future is increasingly devolved to the local level. This might be achieved through the establishment of a local NGO that could take on some, or all, of the responsibilities and seek funding in its own right to continue to support and to develop the work of the project. Many of the key functions of this project are already carried out by highly skilled Bosnian people and there is a strong foundation for further development. We would see UNICEF, MDM and the Kennedy Foundation playing an important part in this transition process.

Given the considerable financial plight of many of the governmental educational agencies, there may be a continued need for some external funding in the future to ensure the project is sustained. If appropriate accountability procedures could be established, such funding could be delegated directly to schools. This would give them

greater flexibility in meeting their particular needs. Consideration should also be given to ways in which 'value for money' criteria might be built into the next phase of the project from the outset.

The achievement of greater inclusion for groups who were previously excluded is a long-term process. The establishment of these special classes has been an important first step in this process for those children with disabilities who were previously denied education in their local communities.



Recommendations

The schools value their association with UNICEF, MdM and the Kennedy Foundation and this sense of belonging to the project needs to be built upon. It is vital that the schools do not feel abandoned as the project evolves and support is reduced. Given the considerable financial plight of many of the governmental educational agencies, there will be a continued need for some external funding in the near future to ensure the project is sustained. There is a need to investigate ways in which relevant ministries and authorities might be encouraged to include special needs issues as an integral part of any new legislation, policy or curriculum reform.

- The project should continue to be supported so that it can evolve into a new, sustainable phase.
- UNICEF, MdM and the Kennedy Foundation should support this process of transition.

- A local NGO could be formed to support the development of the project.
- Schools coming to the end of their supervision should not be ‘abandoned’.
- Some support through the provision of materials should be maintained.
- Efforts should continue to locate children who are not attending school.
- Current identification and classification procedures need to be reviewed to make them more educationally relevant.
- Staff development opportunities through seminars, workshops and networks should be maintained and extended.
- There is a need to have a balance between local and foreign input to the seminars.
- New professional development opportunities for teachers and supervisors leading to certification should be provided.
- Links should be made to other professional development initiatives.
- The role of supervisors (defectologists and logopedes) in supporting schools will need to change as the study of defectology evolves and teachers’ skills develop.
- There needs to be more development work on different models of parent-professional relationships
- Parents need further support in establishing and maintaining their associations.
- Ministries should be encouraged to ensure that special needs issues are included in all proposed reforms.
- Reform of the current inflexible curricula is required.
- Closer links with mainstream would be helped by the adoption of interactive teaching approaches.
- UNICEF should consider how this project could have closer links with other related projects.

This evaluation found sufficient evidence to demonstrate that this is an important project that has made a successful start in addressing the needs of children with disabilities and their families from all national groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These achievements are likely to provide a sound basis for future developments as the project evolves into a new and sustainable phase with more schools in other parts of the country becoming involved.

8. Implementing the recommendations

Agency	Role	Short term (to end of school year 2001)	Medium term (Jan 2002 – Dec 2004)	Long term This decade
UNICEF	<p>- To advocate for the rights of children with disabilities and their families</p> <p>To support the development of the project into a new sustainable phase</p>	<p>- To work with MdM on the establishment of a local NGO to promote the project</p> <p>-</p> <p>- Establish better links with UNICEF Education section</p> <p>- To establish links with the interactive learning project.</p> <p>-</p>	<p>To support the development of a master's degree in special/inclusive education</p> <p>To lobby for and support the reform of mainstream curriculum and teaching approaches</p> <p>To work with government and cantonal agencies to review funding, assessment and categorisation procedures</p>	<p>To continue to support curriculum reform</p> <p>To work with government agencies on the development of inclusive education systems</p>
MdM	<p>To implement current project agreement</p> <p>To develop a sustainable project that will extend the work beyond the current project schools</p>	<p>To continue providing support for the project schools into a sustainable phase.</p> <p>To continue to support the training seminars</p> <p>To support the establishment of teacher/supervisor networks</p> <p>To provide support</p>	<p>To work with UNICEF to establish a local NGO to develop the project in its next phase</p> <p>To continue to support the local NGO seek funding to sustain the project</p>	<p>To monitor and support the local NGO</p>

		<p>to schools through the sharing of curriculum materials and teaching approaches</p> <p>To write grant applications for the funding of the next phase of the project</p> <p>To consider ways in which project funding could be delegated directly to schools</p>		
Kennedy Foundation	<p>To support the establishment of parent associations</p> <p>To continue supporting professional development</p>	<p>Provide funding for the registration fee for the parent associations</p> <p>To continue to support the training seminars and workshops especially on inclusive practice and working with parents</p>	Continued support for parents and professionals	

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- Dizdar, S. (1998) *A Development and Perspectives of Teacher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- UNICEF (1999) *Progress Report to the German National Committee for UNICEF*. Sarajevo: Author

APPENDIX 1

Sites Visited and People Interviewed

<u>Name of School</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Entity</u>	<u>Person Interviewed</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date visited</u>
Fahro Bascelija	Gorazde	Federation	Korda Nermina Tabakovic Senada Borica Pavela Vasilija Veljkovic Camil Usanovic	Teacher Teacher Speech Therapist Defectolog Director	5 September 2000
Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic	Visegrad	Republika Srpska	Radovic Dobrica Lugonja Stoja Kojic Biljana Milosavljevic Olivera Slavco Sandev	Speech Therapist Defectolog Teacher Teacher Director	6 September 2000
Banovici	Banovici	Federation	Nevresa Bijedic Hamdija Osmic Kudumovic Erna Salihovic Ilijas Mujo Krekic	Speech Therapist Defectolog Teacher Teacher Director	7 September 2000
Vuk Karadzic	Doboj	Republika Srpska	Djukic Sanja Jankovic Radojka Popadic Gordana Slavljica Anda Milenko Filipovic	Teacher Teacher Speech Therapist Defectolog Director	8 September 2000
Cazin II	Cazin	Federation	Smajic Sabina Midzic Zejna Rosic Zarfija Topic Zemka Cazim Hadzic	Speech Therapist Defectolog Teacher Teacher Director	11 September 2000

August Senoa	Siroki Brijg	Federation	Kraljevic Marija Galic Ankica Lovric Dragica Zovko Tina Kutle Ivan	Teacher Teacher Speech Therapist Defectolog Director	12 September 2000
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N.B.: Groups of parents were interviewed at 5 of the six school sites visited. The names of the parents are not known to the evaluators.

<u>Name of Organisation</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Entity</u>	<u>Person Interviewed</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date visited</u>
UNICEF	Sarajevo		Mary Black Berina Arslanagic-Ibisevic	Director, UNICEF Sarajevo Office Assistant Project Officer	1 September 2000
Médecins du Monde	Sarajevo		Vasilja Veljkovic Davor Jerkovic Frédérique Benzoni	Project Co-ordinator Curriculum Co-ordinator Co-ordinator, Médecins du Monde	1 September 2000
Federal Ministry of Education	Sarajevo	Federation	Mira Merlo	Education Department	4 September 2000
Pedagogical Academy Sarajevo	Sarajevo	Federation	Ragib Lugovac Zehra Hubijar	Professor, Head of Academy Professor	4 September 2000
UNICEF	Sarajevo		Lynn Cohen	Consultant	9 September 2000
Pedagogical Institute	Doboj	Republika Srpska	Egon Sunkic and ?		

Appendix 2

Interview schedules for teachers and supervisors

Teachers

- How and why did you become involved in the Project?
- Where were you working before the Project?
- Did you have any concerns or fears before you started?
- How do you feel about these now?
- What support have you received?
- What do the other teachers in your school think about this work?
- What do the other teachers think about the children?
- How often and for how long do you have support from the supervisors?
- Who are they?
- How do you feel about the nature of the supervision?
- What do the supervisors do with the children?
- What do the supervisors do with other teachers?
- What are your greatest achievements? Can you give an example?
- What are the children's greatest achievements?
- What is the relationship between the special class and the rest of the school?
- What is the relationship between the special class teachers and the rest of the school?
- What is the relationship between the special class children?
- Who uses the special class facilities?
- How often do you meet the parents?
- In what context do you meet the parents?
- What specific strategies/activities do you use?
- How do the children get to school?
- How do you see the parents as a potential resource?
- Do you have any problems?
- Given that you will have less support from the supervisory team, do you have any suggestions for sustainability?

Defectolog/ Logoped.

- How did you become a defectolog/logoped?
- Have you ever worked as a teacher?
- Where is your permanent workplace?
- How do you travel to the special class?
- How much time do you spend in this school?
- How did you become involved in the Project?
- Did you have any fears/concerns before starting?
- How do you feel about it now?
- What support have you received in your role?

- What support have you given the teachers?
- What support have you given the children?
- Who else has been involved in the project?
- What response have you had from the school?
- What is the greatest achievement?
- How have the children gained from the project?
- What skills have the teachers gained/improved?
- How often do you meet the parents?
- In what context do you meet the parents?
- What specific strategies/activities do you use?
- Do you see parents as a potential resource?
- What constraints does the project face?
- Given less support in the future, have you any suggestions for sustainability?
- How do you see the future role of defectologists/logopedes?
- How would you describe your relationship with:
 - teachers (special class)?
 - principal?
 - other teachers?
 - children?
 - parents?