



External Evaluation of the project “Special Classrooms for Children with Disabilities” 1997- 2000

UNICEF, Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Office

In cooperation with:

Federal Ministry of Education Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Republic Pedagogical Institute Republika Srpska

French NGO Medecins du Monde

German National Committee for UNICEF

Kennedy Foundation

University of Maryland

A. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Note

This paper outlines the terms of reference for the planned external evaluation of the above project. It has been drafted with contributions from all of the partners involved and will be further modified in consultation with the selected consultants.

Problem addressed

Children with disabilities and their families tend to be overlooked and stigmatised in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Often their only life options are to be put in long stay residential institutions or to be hidden at home. In a few bigger cities, there were limited opportunities and services for them within the general schooling system, however in small towns and rural areas there was nothing. Also the professional capacity of teachers and other professionals to deal with them was limited. It was therefore decided to develop a project to allow educative and community integration of children with disabilities and their families.

Comments: Today, there are “special schools” in Bosnia and Herzegovina for children with disabilities (in Sarajevo, Mostar, Zenica and Banja Luka). The other institutions for mentally disabled children are medical institutions where the children are living all year long (in Fojnica, Pazaric, Prijedor and Jakes Modrica). Some of them provide educational services.

Objectives

- These are the objectives identified at the beginning of the project in 1997 and which have been followed to date.

The University of Maryland submitted to UNICEF one project proposal (for 1998/99), which was extended for 1999/2000. The objectives were the following:

1. To provide information on current effective practices [in the special education field] to the professionals involved in the project
2. To provide direct on-site assistance to individual teachers in their classrooms
3. To provide assistance in developing national policies and practices
4. To provide training to parents and family members in how to support and educate their children
5. To provide specialized training to certain specialists (speech therapists and psychologists) in areas related to communication disorders and assessment of developmental delay.

Médecins du Monde submitted to UNICEF three project proposals (for 1997/98; 1998/99 and 1999/2000). In general, the objectives set by the University of Maryland have been integrated in the program, but with fewer details. One objective has not been included in Médecins du Monde proposal. It concerns the assistance in developing national policies and practices, and it is important adding this one.

The objectives are identical since the beginning of the program but they tend to be increasingly precise.

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The following list would include the objectives of all the partners:

Objective 1

- To provide children with disabilities with adequate psycho-pedagogical care in special classes organized in regular schools, allowing them to live with their families and to improve their integration into their communities (since 1997).

This would be based on individual assessment and care strategy in the following domains:

- speech and general cognitive improvement
- academics
- communication
- social skills
- recreation/leisure
- self-management / self care
- vocational / work adjustment

In this objective is including the rehabilitation of the classrooms and the delivery of educational material and equipment.

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 (since the beginning of the project).

An important point is to create parents' associations. A first step would be to bring the parents' together and give them enough confidence and help them to meet each other. Therefore, an official organization could be created. A similar initiative should be done in the new schools included in the project (from 1998).

A second step should lead to a parent network throughout the country that empowers them to advocate for services for their children (from 1998).

Objective 3

- To train the teachers of the special classes.

In each school, the two teachers daily in charge of the special classes will get direct support and training from local professionals (special pedagogue and speech therapist) coming to work with the children twice a week. They will teach them the basic knowledge for assessment and care as well as the necessary skills to work with these children (since 1997). The University of Maryland will organize seminars in Bosnia Herzegovina with international experts during the school year, for all the teachers and the professionals included in the project. This will give the opportunity to the teachers and the supervisors to meet each other, to share their experience and to get training on specific subjects (for 1998/ 1999 and 1999/2000).

This project will also provide the necessary conditions to create a national network of professionals in education for children with disabilities (since 1998). This was not set out as an objective as such, but integrated in the objective of “training teachers”.

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. The possibility to offer them support (and not only to identify them) was integrated as an objective from 1998/1999.

Objective 5

- To provide assistance in developing national policies and practices, including finance schemes, national personnel training and certification programs (specific objective of the University of Maryland from 1998).

Strategy

We note below the strategies developed for each of the objective given above. These were decided in consultation with all partners and after looking at various options:

Objective 1

- To support the development of classrooms for children with disabilities within regular schools i.e. not to go for a strategy of complete segregation into institutions.
- To create “special classes” in regular school rather than integrating immediately children in general education classes because of the general situation in the Bosnian educational system (difficult material conditions, lack of teachers) and the children characteristics (number of children, type of disabilities).
- To integrate the special classes in the regular education system (by asking the local authorities to support the special classes teachers vs. having teachers paid by UNICEF).

Objective 2:

- Teachers were supported via through different techniques:
- Three days training seminars with experts in Special Education were provided by the University of Maryland, including all the personnel involved in the project.
- On site trainings and on site seminars with experts provided by the University of Maryland, following up the three days seminar on specific issues.
- Regular supervision on the field by a team of local professionals composed of a defectologist and a speech therapist (twice a week)
- Workshops meetings in the area of special need education including all the professionals working on the project (i.e. special class teachers; speech therapists and defectologists¹ (i.e. the supervision team); school directors; pedagogues; Médecins du Monde project coordinator). This has been developed since September 1999.
- Regular supervision meetings with Médecins du Monde project coordinator
- The network was also enhanced by exchange visits for teachers between locations

¹ A defectologist is educational specialist dealing with children with disabilities; in the project defectologist has a role of supervising teachers in the classrooms.

Objective 3

- For parents and families we opted to provide regular counselling and education to parents through regular meetings with teachers and with supervision team to support the development of a Parent's Association at each location;

Objective 4

- Further referral of children was done in close cooperation with school professionals, principals, local authorities, and professionals from local Centres for Social Work².
- The defectologist and the speech therapist are offering support to children with school difficulties so they can continue to attend the general education classes rather than being integrated in the special classes.

Objective 5

- Presented information through UNICEF

Funding*

Funding is given in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Funding and sources per year of program

Academic Year**	Donor	Amount USD
1997/1998	Canadian National Committee for UNICEF UNICEF B&H Regular Resources	20,000.00
1998/1999	German National Committee for UNICEF UNICEF B&H Regular Resources	250,000.00
1999/2000	German National Committee for UNICEF UNICEF B&H Regular Resources	250,000.00

* A commitment to fund this programme for 1998/1999 to 2000/2001 subject to successful fundraising has been made by German National Committee for UNICEF

**Per academic year i.e. September 1 to June 30

² Centres for Social Work exist in each municipality and are responsible for social services in that area including categorization of children, payment of social benefits, taking children into care/custody and other issues

History and accomplishments

These are summarized in table 2 below:

Table 2 Beneficiary data by year

School-year	No of geographical locations / schools	No of / Classrooms*	No of special classes teachers	No of supervision team members**	No of children
1997-1998	1	2	2	2	28
1998-1999	10	20	20	18	150
1999-2000	16	36	36	27	254

- In each location there are two classrooms, this is to keep the numbers in each group to a manageable size and to allow grouping by age
- ** The supervision team is including a special education teacher / defectologist and a speech therapist. There is a supervision team for each project location except in Trebinje.

History

The project started in Gorazde (south east of Sarajevo) during the school year 1997-1998. The primary school “Fahro Bascelija” was welcoming some students with mental disabilities since 1995. The director and the teachers were asking for some support. The material conditions were appalling and the teachers had no special education to work with children with special needs. From the beginning, the Federal Ministry of Education, UNICEF, the Kennedy Foundation and Médecins du Monde collaborated to support the pilot project. Médecins du Monde, with the support of UNICEF, has done assessment. The supervisors’ team was sent to support the teachers and train them as well as to work with the children on specific issues.

In **September 1998**, the project was extended to nine additional schools, including one in Republika Srpska thanks to the collaboration with the Pedagogical Institute in Banja Luka. The Ministry of Education, UNICEF and Médecins du Monde selected the locations according to the needs.

The **children** came either from regular schools where they were inappropriately registered or were previously without education. According to the law, each of them had to go through a commission of “categorization” before being admitted in the special class. At the end of the school year, 150 children were included in 20 special classes. The pathologies were very diverse. According to the local “categorization”, there was 57% of children with “mild mental disabilities” and 43% with “moderate mental disabilities”.

The **special classes teachers** were appointed and paid by the Cantonal Ministries of Education in Federation and the Ministry of Education in Republika Srpska. None of them had either formal training or experience working with children with special needs. In order to give them regular support, local experts in the field of special education were recruited. A supervision team

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composed of a “defectologist” i.e. special education specialist and a speech therapist was set up for each project. However, there was a need to update the teaching methods and the curriculum. In this perspective, the University of Maryland establishes a training program with seminars and on-site visits.

The **parents** were very reluctant at the beginning, as children with special needs are still facing social isolation and discrimination. It took a lot of meetings and discussions with the teachers and the supervision team to convince them. In the end, they saw their child progressing and accepted the project much better.

In **September 1999**, the program was extended to 6 new schools, including 254 children in 35 classrooms.

Few new developments:

- The supervision team extended its activities to children from the mainstream school. Teachers are referring some children with learning disabilities or communication problems who need to be supported to attend the classes.
- In a few locations, parents started to get together and to create associations.

Main achievements

- The project is providing adequate education for 254 children with disabilities. Without the special classes, these children would be in an institution, at home with no access to education or in regular school. The project integrates the children with disabilities in the mainstream schools
- The project allows the children to stay in their community with their families.
- The project supports children with learning difficulties or communication problems attending regular classes (approx. 100)
- The project provides adequate training to the teachers and the supervision teams, by increasing their level of knowledge and updating their teaching methods. The University of Maryland in cooperation with the University of Utah sent experts in special education to Bosnia and Herzegovina:
 - Two three days seminars (August 1998 and August 1999)
 - Three on-site trainings and technical assistance (December 1998, December 1999 and May 2000)
- The UM has provided instructional materials for teachers that have been translated for use in the classrooms.
- Through workshops on the field, exchange visits between projects, seminars and on-site visits, special classes teachers and supervisors regularly meet each other. This is a first step to have a network of special education professionals.
- The project offers a concrete and daily support for the parents and the relatives of the children with disabilities.
- The project has the conditions for the development of parents associations: to his date, five associations were created (in Fojnica, Banovici, Visegrad, Maglaj and Gorazde). A general meeting was organized in March 2000 with all the associations including two

- other parents' organizations not directly linked with our project (Banja Luka and Sarajevo).
- In general, the project contributes to the general acceptance of disabilities in the community.

Purpose of the evaluation

The four main areas we would like the evaluation to focus on are:

1. Sustainability – How can the programme be sustained without external support?
Can the oldest special classes function without any support from the project?
2. Impact – what has it achieved?
3. Methodology – what is happening in line with best practice?
The general strategy of “special classes”
The contents of the training given to special class teachers and supervision team:
How it is line with the general tendencies in special education.
The methods used to train the personnel through seminars and on-site visits
The methods used by the teachers and the supervision teams:
Are they integrating the methods and techniques they learnt in the project?
To which extend?
4. Future development, including overcoming constraints, defining the priorities

The evaluation report will be used by:

- UNICEF (for future planning of the project, advocacy and for fundraising)
- Government (to advise overall country policy on special needs education, for planning of services including possible expansion of the project and sustainability of existing sites and for advocacy purposes)
- MDM (for project planning, advocacy and fundraising)
- Donors (for feedback about project activities, advocacy and fundraising)
- Parents' Association (for information and awareness raising)
- Future efforts at providing long distance teacher training and support.

Scope:

The evaluation should assess the existing project against country needs; country policy and educational practice and the existing curriculum. Reference should be made to emerging world and European trends in the area of special needs education with particular reference to the issue of integration of educational services.

Médecins du Monde has the existing curriculum for the Federation, and should have the one for RS soon. To be given to UNICEF for translation.

The evaluation should focus on the extent to which teachers have been provided with adequate information to enable them to design effective special education programs.

Timing

Autumn 2000, 1 week preparation, 3 weeks in country, 1 week write up

Who will conduct the evaluation?

A team will be made up of 2 – 4 people who will be recruited by UNICEF in consultation with a steering group made up of the various partners in the project as follows.

Table 3 Composition of evaluation team

	Position	Background	Comments
1	Team leader	Special needs Education and/or policy	
2	Consultant	Special needs Education and /or policy	
3	Local expert	To be agreed. Special Education (Optional?)	It is very important that somebody from Bosnia can explain the general context and answer all the questions.

At least one interpreter would be necessary for the 3 weeks in country.
An additional driver may be necessary if the entire team goes on the field every time.

B. EVALUATION QUESTIONS OR OBJECTIVES

Major questions:

- What are the achievements and impact of the programme to date?

To see all the levels:

- The functioning of the classrooms: rehabilitation, equipment, educational material, organization of the classrooms
- The characteristics of the children served
- The education offered to the children: characteristics of educational programs provided, including models of service delivery, curriculum, materials and instructional approach
- Educational progress of the children: evaluation methods.
- The quality and quantity of the training given to the teachers and the supervisors (seminars and on-site visits).
- Quality and quantity of support given by the supervision team to the special classes teachers and to the children.

- The support given to the parents: evidence of parental satisfaction and involvement including the strategies of parents associations.

Comments: to evaluate elements that were set up as initial objectives. Other elements of information may be interesting to describe the project, but should not be considered as elements of evaluation.

- How well has the education of children with disabilities been integrated into the regular schooling system?
- Is the project sustainable and if not how could it be made so?

Two different aspects:

1. Educational level:

- 1.1. Are the teachers capable of working without the support of the supervision team?
- 1.2. Are the services provided by the supervision team?

2. Material support:

- 2.1. Can the school provide enough material help to support the special classes (pens, notebooks, cartridges for printers etc)?
- 2.2. Can the local authorities continue to support the salaries of the special classes teachers?

- In what directions should the project develop in future?

Target Population for the evaluation:

- Within Bosnia and Herzegovina - children with disability, parents, teachers and other professionals, communities. 4-6 representative locations across both entities will be selected for in depth study

Supervision, evaluation and reporting

The central expert team will supervise the work of the supervisors, speech therapists and teachers regularly. Consequently, an evaluation report will be written for each teacher at the end of the school year, according to the criteria proposed by the Foundation Kennedy.

Each local expert team (supervisor and speech therapist) will write a monthly activity report for Médecins du Monde, containing quantitative and qualitative data about each project. Médecins du Monde will send to UNICEF a report every three months.

Evaluation of the achievements according to the objectives

The project co-ordinator is responsible for the regular evaluation of the activities, through regular visit to each project and collection of monthly reports prepared by the supervisors. The evaluation is based on quantitative as well as qualitative criteria, and the data are collected each month. The evaluation of the teachers and the supervisors will be done twice a year.

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Psycho-pedagogical care for the children with disabilities

- Number of classrooms opened compared with number planned, working conditions
- Access for the children to the project (vs. possible obstacles)

Evaluation of children services and opportunities

- Individual programs for each child according to his needs, including individual services such as speech and language therapy.
- Educational program including not only academics but functional skills, activities and routines that focus on participation in family life, school and community
- Evidence of children's learning

Evaluation of children with special needs integration in the regular school

- Participation to common extra-curricular activities with their non-disabled peers

Involvement in some lessons in the regular school

- Number of children who went back to regular classes
- Acceptance by their peers

Support to parents / Evaluation of support given to the parents

- Organization of monthly parents meeting (number of parents attending, participation)
- Number of individual consultations between teachers and parents

Evaluation of parents input in the project

- Parents participation in the classroom to assist the teachers
- Parents initiative to support their children (organization of transport to attend the classes, excursions and picnics)
- Existence of a parents association (objectives, activities already implemented, future goals), an organized group or an informal network.

Teachers training

To assess the efficiency of the training provided to teachers

- Number of seminars and workshops organized compared with number planned, number of teachers, supervisors and speech therapist attending.

Evaluation of the teachers

- Implementation of individualized program for each child and follow up on children gains according to recommendations given in training seminars
- Degree of implementation of peer tutoring and parents involvement.
- Atmosphere in the classroom (positive statements...)
- Motivation

Evaluation of the supervisors

- Support given to the teachers (number of meetings, attending and conducting classes)
- Individual treatments with the children (number of consultations)
- Relations with the school administration

C. EVALUATION METHODS

Overall approach

The following will be used:

- Review of existing documents including background material, UNICEF policy documents, project documents and reports, teaching materials and internal evaluation results;
- Semi-structured questioned interviews with key informants:

Individual interviews:

- special classes teachers (15)
- supervisors (5)
- School directors and teachers (15)
- responsible/members of parents' associations

Focus group:

- Parents
- Children

Observation and assessment of classroom activities: visit in 8 schools (**observation during the classes to analyse classroom practice; analyse of written documents such as formal assessments, tests, school work, notebooks, parent and teacher written evaluation performance**)

Sources of data

UNICEF, MDM and partners will prepare a package of materials for the evaluation team.

This will include:

1. Project documents

- Medecins du Monde Project proposals to UNICEF (years 1, 2 and 3 of project)
- University of Maryland Project proposal to UNICEF (year 2 and extension)
- UNICEF Reports to donors list them
- Publication on the seminar (August 1998)
- Material provided by the University of Maryland for the seminars
- Trip reports, University of Maryland
- MDM reports

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- Activities report 1998/1999
- Final report 1998/1999
- Review of locations
- Activities report 1999/2000

2. Internal evaluation

- MDM evaluation report, school year 1998/1999
- Minutes from monthly management meetings
- UNICEF's reports from monitoring visits

3. Background papers

- Macedonian report on children with disabilities
- UN Common Country Assessment 2000

4. UNICEF documents

- UNICEF Situation Analysis Federation of BIH 1999
- UNICEF Situation Analysis RS 2000
- Program Plan of Operation (UNICEF's country cycle 1999-2001)
- Any other UNICEF doc's on disabilities and education

D. COMPOSITION OF THE EVALUATION TEAM

The two/three international evaluators will have between them the following skills and experience:

- Experience in educational work with children with disabilities in the public school system
- Evaluation of educational methodology and systems
- Knowledge about Eastern European educational systems
- Excellent writing and communication skills

The local consultant(s) will have the following skills and experience:

- Profession related to the project and knowledge about the general situation of the Education system.
- Senior position within the Ministry
- Good knowledge of English

Role of others

Overall coordination will be via the steering committee. Additional input will be provided from a variety of sources to support the evaluation:

- Project Manager: Berina Arslanagic- Ibisevic. Coordination of evaluation process and selection and recruitment of consultants
- MDM: Logistic Support including arranging hotel accommodation, translation as required, transport.
- Kennedy Foundation: Margaret J. McLaughlin technical support.
- Government Officials (Cantonal Ministries and officials from Republic Pedagogical Institute of Republika Srpska) briefing, policy advice and interviews

Building of national capacity

An important component of the project will be to build and enhance national capacity in the area of children with disabilities and therefore the evaluation team will also be expected to:

- Present preliminary findings at round tables, at state and entity level
- Prepare a summary of the report suitable for parents and newspapers
- Conduct limited media interviews
- Edit the report subsequently for publication in a local or international professional journal(s) and local educational Bulletin
- Ensure report is suitable for the UNICEF Web site

E. SCHEDULE OF MAJOR TASKS

- Background review
- Field visits
- Report to round table(s)
- Media interviews
- Writing and submission of report and other deliverables

F. DELIVERABLES

- Project Report in English
- Summary for parents and newspaper in English
- Newsletter article in English
- Professional publication to be identified
- Media interviews

G. FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Salaries (lump sum)
- Per diems
- Travel
- Logistics (MDM)

H. STEERING COMMITTEE

Berina Arslanagic–Ibisevic, chair - UNICEF

Mary Black, UNICEF

Maggie McLaughlin, Kennedy Foundation

Claire Fromentin, MDM

Vasilija Veljkovic, MDM

2 representatives from Ministry of Education from both entities

3 representatives from Pedagogical Institutes