Mid-Term Evaluation

"Increasing Early Opportunities for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina”

Final Evaluation Report

December 2014

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The contents of this evaluation report is the sole responsibility of the evaluation team and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of UNICEF or Dubai Cares Foundation.
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**Timeframe of the evaluation:** September – December 2014

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**Country of project:** Bosnia and Herzegovina

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<tr>
<td>BAM</td>
<td>Bosnian Convertible Mark</td>
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<tr>
<td>BD</td>
<td>Brčko District</td>
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<tr>
<td>BiH</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<td>CPAP</td>
<td>Country Programme Action Plan</td>
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<td>CPD</td>
<td>Country Programme Document</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
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<td>CSW</td>
<td>Centre for Social Work</td>
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<td>CwD</td>
<td>Children with Developmental Delays and Disabilities</td>
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<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee (of OECD)</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
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<td>ECI</td>
<td>Early Childhood Detection and Intervention</td>
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<td>EQ</td>
<td>Evaluation Question</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FBiH</td>
<td>Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>HRBA</td>
<td>Human Rights-Based Approach</td>
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<td>KAP</td>
<td>Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multi Indicator Cluster Surveys</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NTC</td>
<td>Nikola Tesla Centre</td>
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<td>NYHQ</td>
<td>New York Headquarters</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<td>PD</td>
<td>Project Document</td>
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<td>RS</td>
<td>Republika Srpska</td>
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<td>Social Protection and Inclusion System</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNEG</td>
<td>United Nations Evaluation Group</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>USD</td>
<td>United States Dollar</td>
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<td>Working Group</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document represents the Mid-Term Evaluation Report of the Project “Increasing Early Learning Opportunities for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (hereinafter called “the Project”).

Project description

The goal of the Project is to increase access to organized early learning programmes and improve the physical, socio-emotional, cognitive and language development of children aged 4 to 6 in 46 municipalities across Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), with special attention on vulnerable children such as Roma children and children with developmental delays and disabilities (CwD). It planned to achieve three outcomes: 1) Increased pre-school education enrolment rate in 46 municipalities, for all children aged 4-6, including Roma children, and CwD; 2) Enhanced quality of early childhood education (ECE) in BiH for children aged 4 to 6, including Roma children and CwD; 3) Evidence-based advocacy, adoption of legislation, policy development and budgeting supported to expand ECE in BiH. Project activities include capacity building initiatives; development of new working tools, instruments, materials and guides; provision of grants to education authorities at entity, district and cantonal levels for implementation of preschool education programmes in selected preschools and schools from target municipalities; procurement of furniture and didactical materials; carrying out of surveys and studies to document the results of the Project; behavioural change campaign; advocacy. The target groups of the Project are teachers and professionals working in education, health, social welfare and early childhood detection and intervention (ECI) services; preschool institutions; primary schools delivering preschool education; ECI resource rooms; parents; Roma leaders and mediators; policy makers. The final beneficiaries of the Project are 7,000 children aged 4-6 and their parents from 46 municipalities, out of whom 400 Roma children and 350 CwD. The total budget of the Project is 1,701,300 USD, provided by Dubai Cares from United Arab Emirates. The implementation period of the Project began in January 2013 and was planned to last until December 2014. Following discussions with the donor, a no-cost extension until March 2015 has been granted. The Project is implemented by UNICEF BiH under the steering of a multi-stakeholder Project Management Board (PMB) and with the technical support of two working groups on ECE, respectively ECI.

Context of the Project

BiH is a transition country severely affected by the global economic crisis. The country is facing high and constantly rising unemployment and poverty. Children are disproportionally hit by poverty and deprivation: the absolute poverty rate is 30.5%¹ compared to 23.4% for the overall population. Preschool education in BiH is a major weakness of the education system, having the lowest preschool participation rate in the region: 14.2% in 2012/2013². The worst situation was registered in Brčko District (6.6% compared to 14.4% in the Federation of BiH and in rural areas (7.9% compared to 22.8% in urban areas)³. The main reasons for low coverage of children in preschool education have been insufficient preschool physical capacities to cover the children left out from the preschool education; uneven distribution of the network of preschool institutions across the country, lacking primarily in small towns and rural areas and being overcrowded in urban areas; limited number of qualified staff, primarily kindergarten teachers and professionals to work with CwD; insufficient funds allocated to ECE on the background of insufficient preparedness of education authorities to implement the laws at local level; over-reliance on municipality and parents’ contribution for non-compulsory preschool education funding; prejudices against Roma children and limited awareness amongst Roma parents of the importance of early learning; poor development of inclusive education to ensure access of CwD to early learning programmes.

The preschool education system is governed by the Framework Law on Preschool Upbringing and Education which contains provisions on mandatory early childhood education one year prior to entering primary school. In practice, the number of hours of preschool education provided by the authorities in the preparatory year is 150 in the Federation and Brčko District (BD) and 190 hours in Republika Srpska (RS), too limited to ensure school readiness. There are preschool education laws adopted by 7 out of 10 cantons, RS and BD. However, BiH has a complex public administration

² TransMonEE 2014
³ MICS 2011/12
The team applied the standard evaluation criteria analysis (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability) in combination with Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and Results-Based Management in order to assess the achievement of planned results until the cut-off date of the evaluation, draw informed conclusions and provide recommendations.

Main Findings and Conclusions

The Project is relevant for BiH’s policies aimed at improving the early childhood education and development, as it addressed important gaps and challenges of the current preschool system. The Project is in line with BiH’s Strategic Directions for Education Development and Implementation Plan 2008-2015 while its primary objectives are tied to the implementation of the Framework Law on preschool upbringing and education. The Project addressed the needs of vulnerable children, in particular CWD, but it faced challenges in overcoming the systemic barriers of low participation of Roma children in preschool education. Children living in rural areas who are severely deprived of access to preschool education were not explicitly targeted by the Project. Priority was given to delivery of preparatory programmes for children aged over 5, while programmes for smaller children (4-5 years old) were almost neglected. The Project was highly relevant for the needs of professionals and municipalities to implement quality and inclusive preschool education programmes. Further investment architecture which makes the harmonization of any sector policy (including education) across the country the greatest challenge. The strategic framework is formed by several key strategic documents, notably the Strategic Directions for Education Development in BiH 2008-2015. The key policy decision making are the ministries of education, health and social protection, functioning in each entity, canton and BD. At the state level there is the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education which is responsible for establishing learning standards and evaluation of learning achievements, quality of education and common core curriculum. There are 258 registered preschool institutions, both public and private (2013/2014), attended by 19,880 children and 3,019 children left out because of full occupancy4.

BiH has ratified the Convention on Rights of Children (CRC) in 1993. In its Concluding Observations (October 2012), the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern on the low attendance rate of preschool education, in particular of Roma and children with disability and of the limited progress on inclusive education. The country is supported in its efforts to address preschool education issues by international partners, notably UNICEF, EU and Save the Children.

Objective, purpose and scope of the evaluation

The objective of the evaluation is to conduct a formative Mid-Term Evaluation of the Project "Increasing Early Opportunities for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina", showing the increased participation of children aged 4-6 in early learning programmes and documenting system changes initiated by the Programme and the contribution of UNICEF to these changes. The purpose of the evaluation is two-fold: a) to inform the amendment or better adaptation of the activities of the Project to the needs of its beneficiaries during the remaining implementation period i.e. December 2014-March 2015; b) to provide recommendations for future programming of support in the area of preschool education and early learning opportunities for vulnerable groups of children. The evaluation covers the implementation period January 2013 – May 2014 and 46 participating municipalities across the country, following the way the Project has been conceptualized in the Project Document (PD) and Theory of Change (ToC). The evaluation was carried out by a team composed of an international consultant and a national consultant, selected by UNICEF following a vacancy notice.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was carried out in three phases. In the Inception/Desk Phase, the team reviewed the project documentation and all relevant literature and reference documents. Following the evaluability check, several primary data collection methods and evaluation tools were developed. The Field Phase was devoted to the collection of data from key stakeholders at entity, district, cantonal and municipality levels via a survey in sample and control groups, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, discussion groups and site visits to a representative sample of municipalities. In the Synthesis Phase, the team applied the standard evaluation criteria analysis (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability) in combination with Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and Results-Based Management in order to assess the achievement of planned results until the cut-off date of the evaluation, draw informed conclusions and provide recommendations.

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4 Sources accessed on 12 December 2014: http://www.bhas.ba/saopstenja/2014/EDU_2014_001_02_bos.pdf
http://www.bhas.ba/saopstenja/2014/EDU_2014_001_02_bos.pdf,
http://www2.rzs.rs.ba/static/uploads/bilteni/obrazovanje/predskolsko_obrazovanje/Predskolsko_Obrazovanje_br7.pdf

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is still needed to reach a critical mass of qualified staff in the system and better coverage of communities with lagging behind enrolment rates as well as to better respond to parents’ needs for empowerment and meaningful participation in the reforms of preschool education. The multi-pronged approach (including working on policies, developing methodologies and tools, endowment of space, capacity building) and highly-participatory approaches used by UNICEF and its partners to implement the project were appropriate in view of the underlying ToC and its key assumptions.

As far as human rights and cross-cutting issues are concerned, the Project is highly relevant for BiH’s international commitments deriving from the ratification of CRC and its status of EU potential candidate country. It had a major contribution to the promotion and realisation of child rights through opening access to pre-school education services and early learning development to children who are left out of the system. The Project had a positive contribution to the strengthening of the capacity of a wide range of Bosnian duty-bearers to protect and fulfil the child right to early childhood education and development. The Project contributed to women empowerment, but without necessarily having a gender mainstreaming approach. It managed to ensure an equity focus by orienting investment to vulnerable children.

Based on the assessment of mid-term results, the Project was effective in improving the ECE and ECI provision for the most vulnerable children. It did so by contributing to the reduction of the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination, increasing parents’ awareness on the importance of early education and opening access of vulnerable children to inclusive and generally well staffed and equipped ECE and ECI services. Adaptation of preschool facilities and capacity building actions prepared the service providers and education authorities for better fulfillment of their statutory roles in preschool education provision. Due to the Project, an operational system to monitor progress in children’s learning achievements and school readiness is going to be in place soon. Evidence-based, budgeted policy options submitted to BiH authorities are expected to inform future policies and reallocation of resources in support of ECE. UNICEF’s partnership to date with key stakeholders allowed for effective and coordinated implementation of the Project at municipality level and connection with legal and policy developments at state level. Effectiveness would have been higher in case the capacity building activities were based on thorough training needs assessment to ensure a critical mass of trained professionals throughout the country and a better adapted curriculum to learning groups. More effective quality safeguards would have been needed to ensure observance of quality standards across the beneficiary municipalities.

The implementation of the Project until the cut-off date of the evaluation is assessed as moderately efficient. The Project has been managed in an inclusive and culturally-sensitive manner. The participatory strategy used by the Project worked well for ownership, but affected efficiency of support on short term. At municipality level, the performance of the Project was unequal, depending on the commitment of project coordinators and principals of participating schools and preschool institutions as well as engagement of local communities. There have been many delays in the implementation of activities, some of them outside the control of the Project. A risk mitigation strategy was missing. Although planned targets were not achieved by some grant users, grants were paid in full. The average cost/child of preschool education supported by the Project was lower compared to the country benchmark, but the additionality principle of donor funding has been only marginally considered. Nevertheless, the efficiency of the Project is ingrained in its very nature, as early childhood education and development returns in the future will exceed by far the initial investment. Results-oriented monitoring would have been facilitated by a clearer and updated monitoring and evaluation framework, with reporting based on prior defined targets in the ToC.

Considering its rather limited resources, the Project is likely to have a good impact level, making an important contribution to increasing the coverage and participation of vulnerable children in preschool education. Around 98% of parents would have not enrolled their children without the Project support, given the inability to cover the associated costs and lack of awareness on the benefits of preschool education. Impact on children’s school readiness has been assessed by parents, preschool principals and teachers and primary school teachers as very high. Significant improvement in children competences and learning capabilities has been reported as a result of participation in the preschool education programme. The enrolment rate considerably increased in the municipalities where the Project has been active and had a negative trend in the municipalities outside of Project influence. Enrolment of Roma children was however challenging, given insufficient engagement of Roma community leaders and centres for social work in outreach activities and low awareness level of Roma

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Based on achievements until May 2014, effects and outcomes of the Project are less likely sustainable. Although the current legal framework governing the preschool education system in BiH is supportive for the further development and expansion of early childhood education programmes and approaches put in place by the Project, the severe financial constraints at the level of government (especially in poor cantons and municipalities) and scarce resources of parents make the continuation of reform dependent on external funding. Except one canton, the 300-hour programme (financed by the Project last school year) is not functioning at the moment in the target municipalities, apart from the standard 150-hour (190-hour in RS) preparatory programme. There is a low level of additionality of donor funding. External support is crucial for increasing access and coverage of vulnerable children in preschool education until solid rights-based foundations of practices and procedures are built and capacities are in place to ensure that laws and systems run effectively. Increased demand for preschool education and early detection and referral of children to specialised ECI services is expected to act as a lever for resource mobilisation in the future. The manuals, toolkits, curricula, guides and assessment instruments developed by the Project provide a good basis for further capacity building and quality assurance activities.

**Operational Recommendations (O) – relevant for the implementation of the current Project:**

- **O1:** Document good practices and lessons learnt to inform future policy measures and projects
  ([Addressed to: UNICEF country office](#))
- **O2:** Organise a quality assurance workshop
  ([Addressed to: UNICEF in cooperation with the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education](#))
- **O3:** Develop a sustainability plan for project results
  ([Addressed to: PMB and WG on ECE and ECI with the assistance of UNICEF country office](#))

**Strategic and Programming Recommendations (SP) – aimed to inform policy making, prioritising and programming of further support:**

- **SP1:** Further invest in the country-wide expansion of early learning programmes, with focus on children aged 3-5 years living in under-developed municipalities, to ensure higher and more inclusive coverage of vulnerable children in preschool education
  ([Addressed to: Municipalities, preschool institutions and NGOs with the support of UNICEF, Dubai Cares and other donors](#))
- **SP2:** Develop the framework for securing the financial sustainability on long-run of ECE programmes in least developed municipalities, based on the principles of equity, cohesion and social solidarity
  ([Addressed to: Government (education, health, social welfare, labour, public finance authorities) in partnership with municipalities, UNICEF and international donors](#))
- **SP3:** Prioritise the participation of Roma children in early childhood development projects, based on inclusive and sustainable approaches
  ([Addressed to: Canton, entity and local governments with the support of UNICEF](#))
- **SP4:** Improve the design and evaluability of future projects
  ([Addressed to: UNICEF Country office](#))

**Lessons Leant**

1. Expansion of early learning opportunities requires both hard and soft investment.
2. Securing ownership and empowerment of national counterparts may decrease efficiency of support on short-term, but yield important investment returns on long-term
1. CONTEXT AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1 Project Context

Constitutional and Administrative Framework

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a quite unique country in view of its constitutional framework, which includes several constitutions at different administrative levels with a number of policies in the social sector relevant for early school readiness.

In the first instance, it is the Constitution of BiH at the State level, which is an integral part of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. Annex 4 of the Dayton Peace Agreement commonly known as Dayton Constitution, according to which the country consists of two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBIH) and the Republika Srpska (RS)\(^5\).

Further division in ten cantons in the entity of the FBIH is embedded in the Constitution of the FBIH according to which the legal and executive powers for a number of social policies and their implementation are vested to cantons\(^6\). The Constitution of RS provides that this entity may act quite independently in terms of design and implementation of sector policies, reflected in a centralized governance. Brčko District (BD) is yet another administrative unit which in line with the Statute of Brčko District\(^7\). It has full authority over the education development within the District. Functions and roles of municipalities as the local governance level of early school readiness are regulated by municipal statutes. There are 141 municipalities within the entities, of which 79 are in the FBIH cantons and 62 in the RS\(^8\).

Administrative role and functions of the State of BiH in a number of social sectors are not foreseen in the Dayton Constitution. It is the Law on ministries and other administrative bodies\(^9\) according to which the BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs has been given the mandate to define basic principles and coordinate entity policies concerning inter alia the areas of health, social security and education which are pillars of early school readiness concept.

As a result of the constitutional framework, BiH has a very complex public administration architecture which makes the harmonization of sector policies (including education) across the country the greatest challenge.

Demography

According to the preliminary data of 2013 census, BiH has population of the 3,791,622 people, out of which: 2,371,603 persons in the FBIH; 1,326,991 persons in the RS, and 93,028 persons in BD\(^10\). UNICEF’s working paper “Situation Analysis of Children’s and Women’s Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina” reports that the proportion of children aged 0-14 in the total population is almost two times higher than the proportion of persons aged 65 and above (19% vs. 11%), which indicates a

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\(^6\) There are ten cantons in the FBIH: Una-Sana, Posavina, Tuzla, Zenica-Doboj, Bosnia-Podrinje, Central-Bosnia, Herzegovina-Neretva, Western-Herzegovina, Sarajevo, Canton 10.
\(^9\) BiH Official Gazette No 5, 07.03.2003
relatively young population. However, the average number of household members and the low proportion of children under 5 years of age show a rather negative population trend.

In view of urban-rural ratio, BiH is considered to be one of the most rural countries in Europe with 61% of population living in rural areas. Internal migration at the level of whole country in 2013 included a population of 33,644 people, most of them between 20-39 years of age which represents 49.3% of the total population.

Socio-economic trends

BiH is a transition country which encounters various challenges brought about by liberal market and highly competitive regional and global economy. It is a country with high level of public expenditures on one side and weak industrial output on the other side, severely affected by the global economic crisis. At the end of 2013, BiH recorded a public debt of around 10,423 billion BAM (1 BAM equals 0.51 EUR), out of which 71.04% was external and 28.96% was internal debt.

The country is facing high and constantly rising unemployment and subsequently increased risk of poverty with recorded 24.3% poverty rate among unemployed population and 13.9% of so-called working poverty. Most unemployed people are those with lower levels of education. The highest percentage (92.8%) of long-term unemployed persons have only primary education or less. Low education levels are associated with higher risk of poverty and material deprivation as well.

Social exclusion, inequality, poverty and unemployment remain significant challenge for BiH, where among the most vulnerable are children, persons with disabilities, displaced persons, Roma, families with two or more children, the elderly, unemployed and unskilled. People in rural areas are at greater risk of social exclusion and denied equal access to services, including education. Children are disproportionally hit by poverty and deprivation: the absolute poverty rate is 30.5% compared to 23.4% for the overall population.

Preschool education

Enrolment rates

Data on education level in the macroeconomic context are a strong argument for advocating for better and stronger support to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Early Childhood Education (ECE) as several recent studies confirm that investment in early development and education is the best investment for society and individual. The literature makes reference to research and findings of Nobel...
Prize for Economics James Hackman: "For each dollar spent on quality programmes for children in early age there is return of 17.07% out of which 12.90 to public budget and 4.17% to individual."\(^{19}\)

Preschool education in BiH seems to be a major weakness of the overall education system. It has not managed so far to enable equal access and quality service to all children. BiH has one of the lowest preschool participation rate in the European and Central Asian region\(^{20}\). According to TransMonEE\(^{21}\) (2014), only 12.9% of boys and girls were enrolled in preschool education in the school year 2011/2012. The rate increased in the following year to 14.2%, still very low compared to the rates of other countries in the region\(^{22}\). The lowest attendance rate in 2011/2012 was registered in BD (6.6%), less than half compared to FBiH (14.4%) – see table below.

**Table 1. Percentage of Children aged 36-59 months attending an organised ECE programme (2011–2012)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>12.2</th>
<th>456</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative unit</td>
<td>FBiH</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RS</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BD</td>
<td>(6.6)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of child (months)</td>
<td>36-47</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48-59</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s education*</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(\(^{1}\) Figures are based on 25-49 unweighted cases:
\(^{2}\) Figures for the education category ‘none’ are based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases and are not shown in the table

Source: MICS 2011/12

In urban areas, 22.8% of children attend preschool, while in rural area the percentage drops to 7.9%, the lowest attendance rates being registered among girls (5% compared to 10% for boys). Only 1.5% of Roma children and 2% of children from poor families (5th quintile) attend preschool education in BiH. The rate of return on preschool investment in BiH is thus low due to the limited impact on the predominantly advantaged children and the high costs of the full day care program.

The main reasons for low coverage of children in preschool education are the following:

- **a) Insufficient preschool physical capacities** (space, furniture, equipment, didactical materials) to cover the total number of children left out from the preschool education (see Figure 1). The network of preschool institutions is unevenly distributed across the country, lacking primarily in

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\(^{20}\) In the school year 2012/2013, only Tajikistan had a lower enrolment rate (7.5%) in preschool education than BiH

\(^{21}\) Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity (TransMonEE) Database, established in 1992 by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

\(^{22}\) Croatia: 59.7%, Serbia: 58.2%, Montenegro: 36.3%, Macedonia: 23.1% (Source: TransMonEE, 2014)
small towns and rural areas, while the ones in urban areas are overcrowded, most notably in Banja Luka23.

Figure 1. Percentage of children not enrolled in preschool education due to lack of capacities (2011/12, by type of ownership and geographical area)

b) Limited number of qualified/trained staff, primarily kindergarten teachers and professionals to work with children with disability;

c) Inadequate resources and funds allocated to ECE on the background of insufficient preparedness of several education authorities to implement the laws at local level (especially the preparatory preschool programme for children over 5 years); over-reliance of non-compulsory preschool education funding (for children aged 3-5) on municipalities and parents, raising particular challenges in poor municipalities;

d) Limited financial capacity of parents – although the preschool programme is partially subsidized by the government, it is still too expensive especially for the socially excluded and vulnerable families and children; on average, 40% of the costs are covered by the parents themselves24 which is relatively high compared to other countries in the region. The household wealth has an important influence on the attendance of early childhood education programmes in both rural and urban areas (see Figure 2).

e) Prejudices against Roma children, and limited awareness amongst Roma parents of the importance of early learning;

f) Poor development of inclusive education to ensure access of CwD to early learning programmes; lack of data on children with disabilities attending preschool education is another issue which makes difficult the planning of inclusive education policies.

23 In 2013/14, for instance, out of 3,019 children not enrolled due to the lack of capacity, a number of 2,240 children were from Banja Luka from RS, the second largest city in BiH (Sources: http://www.bhas.ba/saopstenja/2014/EDU_2014_001_02_bos.pdf, http://www2.rzs.rs.ba/static/uploads/bilteni/obrazovanje/predskolsko_obrazovanje/Predskolsko_Obrazovanje_br7.pdf)

Legal and strategic framework

Definition of the *early school readiness concept* refers to ready children, ready school, and ready families. All three dimensions are important and must work in tandem, as school readiness is a time of transition that requires the interface between individuals, families and systems. The latter in particular implies involvement and interventions of several public sectors (health, education, social protection) that by their respective mandates have influence on the early school readiness. The legal framework for early school readiness thus encompasses a set of laws primarily in these sectors which is in BiH, due to the specific constitutional order, multiplied at several levels of administrative units: both entities (FBiH, RS) and BD have their own laws on health care and social protection; and all cantons in the FBiH have their respective laws which stipulate principles and ways of organizing and implementation of health care and social protection.

Universal principles of human rights are built in the overall legal framework covering health, social protection and education in order to comply with the requirements and recommendations of international conventions and charters. From a child perspective, the international commitments of the country primarily derive from the ratification of the *Convention on Rights of Children* in 1993. In its Concluding Observations (October 2012), the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern on the low attendance rate of preschool education, in particular of Roma and children with disability and of the limited progress as far as inclusive education is concerned: “In particular, the Committee is concerned about: (a) Inclusive education remaining severely limited, with the majority of children with disabilities staying at home or being segregated in special institutions/schools, resulting in stigmatisation and compromised access to employment opportunities and social services” (pg.14).

Legal and executive powers for sectors of education, health and social protection as defined by the constitutions are given to assemblies and governments in 10 cantons in the FBiH, entity RS and BD. The Parliamentary Assembly of BiH adopts framework laws at the state level which need to be agreed among all governments that have executive powers over education. Framework laws are not obligatory for the lower administrative levels. According to the situational analysis from 2011 published by the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education in BiH, there were still three cantons (Middle Bosnia, Western Herzegovina, Herzegovina Neretva) that have not passed the laws on preschool education in compliance with the Framework law which came into force in 2007. RS and BD have laws on preschool education harmonized with the Framework law.

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The Framework Law on Preschool Upbringing and Education contains provisions on mandatory early childhood education one year prior to entering primary school. In practice, the number of hours of preschool education provided by the authorities in the preparatory year is 150 in FBiH and BD and 190 hours in RS, too limited to ensure school readiness. The law has also introduced standards for the level of education of preschool teachers and principals and prepared the ground for the adoption of the common core curriculum on preschool education.

The strategic framework for ECD in BiH is formed by several key strategic documents:

- Strategic Directions for Development of Preschool Upbringing and Education in BiH (2004)
- Strategic Directions for Education Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina with Implementation Plan 2008-2015
- Action Plan for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011-2014
- Strategic Plan for Improvement of Early Childhood Development in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013-2017
- Quality Standards for Work of Preschool Teachers, Pedagogues and Principals in the Preschool Care and Education (2011)
- Protocol of Cooperation in the Field of Improvement of Early Development of Children in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, signed by three Federal ministers of education and science, health, and labour and social policy (2012)

The goal of the preschool care and education, as integral part of the overall system of care and education in BiH, is to ensure optimal and equal conditions that every child from birth until enrolment into school develops and achieve own intellectual and physical capabilities, as well as competences through different models of quality and professionally autonomous, formal or non-formal preschool care and education.

Institutional Framework

The key policy decision making are the ministries of education, health and social protection, functioning in each entity, canton and BD. The same pattern applies for institutions and organizations responsible for policy implementation and professional support such as the institutes for public health and pedagogical institutes. In the FBiH, there are 72 centres for social work located within ten cantons; in RS there are 46 such centres and 9 additional social welfare services. BD has within its Government a department responsible for social welfare.

At the state level there is the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education which is responsible for establishing learning standards and evaluation of learning achievements, quality of education and common core curriculum at all levels of education (except higher education). The headquarters is in Mostar where curriculum development is based; the field office in Banja Luka is responsible for secondary vocational education, adult learning and lifelong learning, and the field office in Sarajevo is responsible for standards and assessment in education.

As far as education service providers are concerned, there are 258 registered preschool institutions, both public and private (2013/2014), attended by 19,880 children and 3,019 children.

26 According to various UNICEF studies, minimum 600 hours are needed for ensuring school readiness.
27 Strateški pravci razvoja predškolskog odgoja i obrazovanja u Bosni i Hrecegovini (2004)
left out because of full occupancy. They implement comprehensive programmes for preschool education based on common core curricula agreed among all ministries of education in BiH. In addition, there are minimum package programmes such as school preparatory programmes for children not covered by preschool institutions. As an outcome of UNICEF work in improving ECD in cooperation with local communities, 13 ECD centres are opened in BiH which provide social, health, and education services to children from vulnerable groups.

Role of international organisations

BiH has a status of potential candidate country to European Union (EU) membership. That status has entitled the country to financial support through various EU external aid instruments, most notably IPA, Erasmus+, Tempus, TAIEX. The EU support aims to contribute to improvement of country's capacities and to adjust them with European standards in various domains.

In the area of child protection, ECD and early school readiness, UNICEF plays a leading role in providing financial support and technical assistance across the country. Together with partners at policy level and local community level, including civil society, UNICEF has implemented a number of programmes focused on inclusion of marginalized groups, aimed to reduce the inequalities and provide equal opportunities for all. The contribution of UNICEF at system level is acknowledged in few strategic documents adopted by BiH authorities, most notably the "Strategic Directions for Education Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina with Implementation Plan 2008-2015", the "Strategic Plan for Improvement of Early Childhood Development in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013-2017" and the "Action Plan for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011-2014". Implementation of the Framework Law on Preschool Education (2007) has been also strongly supported by UNICEF and records show that "through strong UNICEF advocacy and technical support there is now strong political willingness to expand ECE services across the country….the total access for the minimum package preschool programmes for children aged 5 to 6 in BiH increased from 31 to 46%". Since 2008, UNICEF together with authorities at all levels has been implementing the EU-funded programme “Strengthening the System of Social Protection and Inclusion of Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (SPIS 1 and 2). An important output of the SPIS programme is a set of guidelines to help professionals in the identification of socially-excluded categories of children in BiH based on a list of indicators relevant for the multidimensional concept of children inclusion.

Save the Children also provides support for the improvement of preschool education in BiH. There are other international agencies and donors that provide financial support and technical assistance to the overall country development in accordance with their specific mandates, such as the Council of Europe, OSCE, UNESCO, UNDP, World Bank, WHO.

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30 Institucija Ombudsmana za ljudska prava Bosne i Hercegovine (2011), "Analiza stanja prava djece I njihovog provođenja u predškolskom obrazovanju"
32 BiH Official Gazette No. 63/08
35 Case study "Efficiency of the early childhood education programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina", Report Summary
1.2 Project Description

The Project “Increasing Early Learning Opportunities for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina” has aimed to address an important number of challenges and gaps detailed in the former section of the report, mainly by supporting the modernization of the legal and strategic framework across the country, expansion of early childhood provision, access and coverage of vulnerable children, capacity building of professionals working in ECE and ECI and evidence-based advocacy for free, universal preschool education programme to ensure effective school readiness.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) (Annex 1), the Project Document (PD) and the Theory of Change (ToC) (Annex 2) provide a comprehensive picture of the main features of the Project to be evaluated, its logic and changes foreseen to be brought about it. Figure 3 presents a visual overview of the Project’s purpose, planned outcomes, outputs and activities, as developed by the evaluation team.

Goal

The Goal of the Project is to increase access to organized early learning programs and improve the physical, socio-emotional, cognitive and language development of children aged 4 to 6 in 46 municipalities across BiH, with special attention placed on vulnerable children such as Roma children and children with developmental delays and disabilities.

Outcomes

According to the PD and ToC, the Project is aimed to reach its goal by achieving three Outcomes:

- **O1.** Increased pre-school education enrolment rate in 46 municipalities, for all children aged 4-6, including Roma children, and children with developmental delays and disabilities.
- **O2.** Enhanced quality of early childhood education in BiH for children aged 4 to 6, including Roma children and children with developmental delays and disabilities.
- **O3.** Evidence-based advocacy, adoption of legislation, policy development and budgeting supported to expand early childhood education in BiH.

Outputs

In line with the intervention logic, the ToC further develops the overarching Outcomes into several expected Outputs, as follows:

**Related to Outcome 1**

1.1 Increased awareness of parents, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, on the importance of and need to enrol children in early education, in 46 municipalities.

1.2 Increased number of facilities in 46 municipalities where children can have access to inclusive Early Childhood Education services and Early Childhood Detection and Intervention services, which are adequately equipped.

1.3 Equal opportunities for poor children, children with developmental delays and disabilities and Roma children to have access to inclusive preschool education.

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37 The initial number of municipalities to be supported by the Project were 15, while the age limit of beneficiary children was 4-5. Following discussion with Government parties, the goal of the Project has been changed twice, from 15 to 32 to 46 municipalities and from 4-5 age limit to 4-6. Discussions and reached agreement are documented in the minutes of the Project Management Board and in the bi-annual progress reports.
### Figure 3. Overview of the Project Logic

**ACTIVITIES**

- Baseline survey to collect disaggregated data on the number of children having access to ECE in selected municipalities
- Knowledge Attitude and Practices (KAP) survey
- Communication for Development strategy
- Behavior Change and Communication campaign
- Social mobilization and advocacy activities
- Final survey/research to assess impact of campaign and project

- Calls for proposals to expand ECE in 46 municipalities
- PE programmes in 46 municipalities
- Furnish/Equip PE facilities and improve physical access for children with developmental delays and disabilities
- Support public kindergartens and IEC/C centres where PE is provided
- Provide education and didactic materials to promote quality inclusive ECE among parents and in schools

- Advocate one year free of charge PE for 5 year old children, one year prior to primary school
- Work with CSW and schools to support subsidies for vulnerable and poor children, and identify CwD
- Support outreach work, assessments and case management to identify CwD
- Support Roma communities, leaders and mediators to encourage Roma families to enroll their children in PE

- Working group meetings
  - Develop capacities of government officials at municipal level on ECE and ECI
  - Collaborate with responsible institutions in identifying pre-school teachers
  - Support relevant institutions in identifying Assistant teachers to support teachers in providing ECE to CwD
  - Identify Roma teachers / Assistant teachers or mediators

- Develop training modules on quality inclusive ECE, using the Common Core Curricula (CCC) and existing materials as a basis
  - Develop manuals, materials and guides on ECI
  - Develop the capacities of teachers and assistant teachers on ECE, through institutionalized training
  - Train teachers and assistant teachers on early detection and interventions
  - Train Roma mediators on ECE and ECI
  - Evaluate the training programmes and make adjustments as needed
  - Follow-up with on-the job support and capacity development
  - Support exchange of knowledge and experiences (e.g. networking, study tour)

- Promote and support CCC application in pre-schools, kindergartens, IEC/C centres in 46 municipalities (grants to municipalities / ministries)
  - Provide assistance to apply the four developmental areas described in Common Core Curricula for work at pre-school institutions
  - Support ECI services in the selected municipalities
  - Monitor the quality of ECE in 46 municipalities, including implementation of Common Core Curricula in four developmental areas

- Adapt a set of tools and instruments to assess children’s school readiness in BiH
  - Assess children’s school readiness at each of the project sites at three points of programme implementation (beginning/mid-term/end)
  - Establish system to systematically monitor progress in children’s learning achievements and school readiness, in 46 municipalities
  - Conduct evaluations

- Use findings of ECE financial analysis (UNICEF, 2012) to support the development of recommendations and policy options related to ECE
  - Working group meetings
  - Disseminate the policy options to inform future policies, strategies, programmes
  - Advocate the effective reallocation of resources in support of ECE in BiH
  - Support the development and adoption of by-laws and strategic plans on ECI

- Document progress and lessons learned
  - Share evidence collected in BiH with experts and institutes at regional/global level to inform ECE global research, policies and programs
  - Organize an International Conference on ECE at the end of the project to learn from BiH experience and best practices around the world
  - Ensure visibility for Dubai Cares throughout the project implementation

**OUTPUTS**

1. **1.1 Increased awareness of parents, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, on the importance of and need to enrol children in early education, in 46 municipalities**

2. **1.2 Increased number of facilities in 46 municipalities where children have access to inclusive ECI and ECI services, adequately equipped and staffed, with qualified teachers, assistant teachers, other ECI professionals.**

3. **1.3 Provided equal opportunities for vulnerable children (including Roma children and CwD) to have access to inclusive PE.**

**OUTCOMES**

1. **1. Increased PE enrolment rate in 46 BiH municipalities for children 4-6, including Roma children and CwD**

2. **2. Enhanced quality of early childhood education in BiH for children 4-6, including Roma children and CwD**

3. **3. Supported evidence-based advocacy, adoption of legislation, policy development and budgeting to expand early childhood education in BiH**

**GOAL**

Children 4-6, especially those vulnerable such as Roma children and children with developmental delays and disabilities (CwD), have increased access to organised early learning programmes and improved physical, socio-emotional and cognitive development.
Related to Outcome 2

2.1 Increased number of facilities in 46 municipalities where children have access to inclusive ECE and ECI services that are adequately staffed with qualified teachers and assistant teachers.

2.2 Institutionalized capacity development initiatives for preschool teachers, taking into account the special needs of children with developmental delays and disabilities and Roma children.

2.3 Implementation of the one year preschool programme based on the common core curriculum and ensuring the stimulation of children through (a) physical development, (b) socio-emotional development, (c) cognitive development and (d) development of speech, communication and creativity, with a particular focus on Roma children and children with developmental delays and disabilities.

Related to Outcome 3

3.1 Operational system to monitor progress in children’s learning achievements and school readiness as a result of various formal and informal ECE programmes developed and used in 46 municipalities.

3.2 Evidence-based, budgeted policy options submitted to the BiH authorities to inform future policies and projects in the country as well as effective reallocation of resources in support of ECE.

3.3 Evidence collected in BiH through the Dubai Cares – UNICEF Project is informing global research, policies and projects related to early childhood education.

Project Activities

For the achievement of Project outputs and expected outcomes, a rich set of activities have been planned, which included capacity building initiatives, development of new working tools, instruments, materials and guides, provision of grants to education authorities at entity, district and cantonal levels for implementation of preschool education programmes in selected preschools and schools from target municipalities, procurement of furniture and didactical materials, carrying out of surveys and studies to document the results of the Project compared to the baseline situation, behavioural change campaign, advocacy, exchanges of experience, etc. A comprehensive list of activities grouped around each output is provided in Figure 3 above.

Target Groups and Final Beneficiaries

The PD mentions that the beneficiaries of the Project are “over 7,000 children aged 4-5 (400 to 500 children per location, in 15 locations), out of which around 400 Roma children and 350 children with developmental delays and disabilities” and “Pre-school teachers, Staff from Pedagogical institutes, Parents/caregivers in 15 municipalities of BiH” (page 5). The PD does not distinguish between the target groups and beneficiaries.

Following the review of the project documentation and having in view the revised goal of the Project, it is the understanding of the evaluation team that the Target Groups include: pre-school teachers, assistant teachers and professionals working in education, health and CSWs and in ECI services in the targeted municipalities; preschool institutions, primary schools delivering preschool education and ECI resource rooms; parents; Roma leaders and mediators; policy makers.

The Final Beneficiaries of the Project are 7,000 children aged 4-6 (rights-holders) and their parents from 46 municipalities (both duty-bearers and rights-holders), out of whom 400 Roma children and 350 CwD.
Strategic Approach

Review of the PD and progress reports indicates that the following strategies were planned to be used in order to implement the Project:

- **Capacity development**: through training programmes for government officials at all levels and for professionals in preschool education and the health sector, ensure that preschool programmes and ECI services are adequately staffed.

- **Partnership building**: networks of key stakeholders, from various locations, in preschool education and early childhood intervention, working on common issues to develop quality ECE programmes and ECI services as well as build networks and partnerships between municipal governance services and cantonal, entity and state authorities.

- **Advocacy and social mobilization**: through a campaign and social mobilization activities, reduce negative perceptions and attitudes towards vulnerable groups, particularly poor children, CwD and Roma children.

- **Participatory approach**: encourage education authorities at different levels to get directly involved in the selection of target municipalities against certain criteria (Annex 7), enrolment of children and implementation of preschool education programmes in the 46 target municipalities through the provision of grants and training (see Figure 4); encourage officially nominated representatives from local governments, academia and NGOs who work in the education, health and social welfare sectors to proactively participate in project implementation by serving as links at the local community level with the aim of developing ECE and ECI services in their communities.

- **Research-based approach**: based on the baseline research, the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey and the testing of the children’s readiness for school, a pool of evidence and research results will be collected with the aim to inform practice, both locally and globally, and influence policy makers.

- **Network development**: in order to strengthen cooperation between government authorities and service providers, as well as to enhance networking amongst service providers and interest groups, mechanisms for formal and informal exchange have been created via meetings, forums and electronic information exchange.

Financing, Duration and Implementation Status

The budget of the Project is 1,701,300 USD, provided by Dubai Cares from United Arab Emirates. In additional, a small financial contribution of 127,424 BAM (89,797 USD38) has been provided by the targeted cantons and municipalities (see Table 10). The implementation of the Project began in January 2013 and was planned to last until December 2014. Following agreement of the donor, a no-cost extension until March 2015 has been granted. At the time of release of the Evaluation Report (December 2014), the Project had still three more months of implementation until its end.

Implementation partners

The project is being implemented by UNICEF BiH under the steering of the Project Management Board and with the technical support of two working groups on ECE and ECI. Their membership and tasks are detailed in the section on management arrangements below.

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38 Exchange rate at 31 December 2013, source: [www.cbbh.ba](http://www.cbbh.ba)
At local level, the Project works with the following main partners which represent key duty-bearers:

- **Entity, cantonal and district education authorities** – through active participation in the selection of municipalities and management of grants for the endowment of preschools.

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**Implementing agencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MoE RS</th>
<th>2,000</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education Department BD</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoE Una-Sana Canton</td>
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</tr>
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<td>MoE Canton 10</td>
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<td>MoE Tuzla Canton</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality Vitez</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Planned no. of children**

1. Banja Luka
2. Bijeljina
3. Bratunac
4. East Sarajevo
5. Foca
6. Gradiska
7. Han Pijesak
8. Pelagusevo
9. Prizedor
10. Prnjavor
11. Sokolac
12. Sipovo
13. Rudo
14. Trebinje
15. Zvornik
16. Istočna Ilidža
17. Brčko
18. Bihac
19. Ćazin
20. Bosansko Grahovo
21. Drvar
22. Glamoc
23. Kupres
24. Livno
25. Tomislavgrad
26. Kakanj
27. Maglaj
28. Visoko
29. Zavidović
30. Capljina
31. Cittuč
32. Jablanica
33. Konjic
34. Mostar
35. Novi Grad Sarajevo
36. Ilidža
37. Vogosca
38. Novo Sarajevo
39. Centar
40. Stari Grad
41. Hadžići
42. Ilijaš
43. Tuzla
44. Gracanica
45. Živnice
46. Vitez

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15 grants provided for preschool education programmes (1 grant for around 500 children)
primary schools; coordination and supervision of implementation of Project-supported programmes of early learning in the targeted municipalities; employment of new teachers, as required by the implementation of new programmes covering more children of preschool age.

- **Preschool institutions and primary schools** – through the delivery of 300-hour programmes of early learning and participation of teachers, assistant teachers, educators and pedagogues in training activities, implementation of programmes and mobilization of parents and wider community.

- **Roma community leaders and mediators** - through encouragement of Roma families to enrol their children in preschool education; their involvement is however limited to few municipalities.

- **NGO(s)** – through the delivery of trainings and the design and testing of assessment and measurement tools of early childhood education upon development of children (EDUS, Association of Neurologists, Associations of Psychologists).

The role of **UNICEF Country office** in the Project is two-fold: to ensure the technical and financial management of the Project, while also bringing in the technical expertise and policy advocacy leverage for the attainment of envisaged outcomes. Based on its inter-sectoral partnership with key stakeholders at state and entity level, UNICEF facilitates the dialogue on how legislation, practices and training programmes can best meet the needs of vulnerable children and families.

The role of the **Dubai Cares** is to provide the funds for the implementation of the Project and monitor its implementation, based on reports provided by UNICEF BiH.

**Management and Implementation arrangements**

The Project management structure has three central pillars: the Project Management Board, the ECE Working Group and ECI Working Group, as illustrated in the Figure below.

The Project Management Board (PMB) is composed of high officials in the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, Ministry of Education and Culture of the RS, Federal Ministry of Education and Culture, Education Department of Brčko District Government, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the RS and Federal Ministry of Health. All key duty-bearers at central level are represented in the PMB. The main role and tasks of the PMB, as defined in the Rules of Procedure of the Board, are to facilitate communication with the Council of Ministers BiH, the Government of the RS, the Government of the FBiH and the Brčko District Government; to report on project progress, as needed, to the Council of Ministers BiH, the Governments of the RS, FBiH, and BD, and donor agencies and to assume an advisory role in the work process of Working Groups; to approve project decisions such as project locations and activity work plan; and to prepare and advocate project sustainability strategies.

The **Working Group for Early Childhood Education** (WG ECE) include representatives of the Ministry of Civil Affairs BiH, ministries of education at entity and cantonal level, Education Department of Brčko District Government, Pedagogical Institute of the RS; and the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education BiH. The main tasks of the WG ECE include meeting with municipality representatives and directors of selected schools/ kindergartens for the purpose of project presentation and development; the facilitation of research activities; the development of criteria for municipality selection; providing suggestions for location selection; the presentation of results to higher levels of government, the media, and the broader public; advocating and promoting early childhood upbringing, education and intervention in interaction with higher levels of government; and monitoring project implementation, among other duties.
The **Working Group for Early Childhood Detection and Intervention** (WG ECI) is composed of representatives of the Ministry of Civil Affairs BiH, line ministries of education, health and social welfare at entity level, Department for Health and Other Services Brčko District, Paediatric Clinic Sarajevo, Health Centres in Tuzla and Sarajevo, Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation Tuzla, Department for Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Federal Public Health Institute, Centres for Social Work (CSW) from three municipalities and NGO sector. The main tasks of the WG ECI are: meeting with municipality representatives and headmasters of selected health centres, kindergartens and centres for social work; developing criteria for municipality selection; providing suggestions for locations; regular attendance at meetings and delivering periodical reports to the PMB; advocating for and promoting early childhood development and education, focusing on early detection and intervention with families and CwD to the higher levels of government; providing suggestions for project sustainability and improvements; and monitoring project implementation, among other duties.

**Figure 5. The Project Management Structure**

A **Project Manager** was hired and a project team was established under the supervision of the UNICEF Head of Education and in close consultation with the UNICEF Deputy Representative, which are responsible for day-to-day management of the Project from a technical and financial point of view, monitoring and reporting to the donor, quality assurance of outputs and outcomes, advocacy and communication.
2. **EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT**

2.1 **Purpose, Objectives and Scope**

The **Purpose** of the evaluation of the Project "Increasing Early Opportunities for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (the Project), is two-fold:

1. to inform the amendment or better adaptation of the activities of the Project to the needs of its beneficiaries during the remaining implementation period i.e. December 2014-March 2015;
2. to provide recommendations for future programming of support in the area of preschool education and early learning opportunities for vulnerable groups of children.

According to the ToR, the evaluation is mid-term and of a formative nature (see Annex 1). It is to be mentioned that due to flooding which hit hard the country, the evaluation initially planned to start in May 2014 had to be postponed for September 2014. Given the fact that the evaluation results were made available in December 2014 and there are only three-four months left for Project implementation, the recommendations serving the first purpose of the evaluation (called “Operational Recommendations, see Table 13) have a rather limited utility and are formulated taking into consideration this time constraint.

The ToR state that the **Objective** of this assignment is to conduct a Mid-Term Evaluation of the Project "Increasing Early Opportunities for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (the Project), showing the increased participation of children aged 4-6 in early learning programmes and documenting system changes initiated by the Programme and the contribution of UNICEF to these changes. During the kick-off discussion, the following **specific objectives** were agreed with UNICEF country office:

- **Specific Objective 1**: Provide feedback to UNICEF BiH, its national counterparts and donor on the soundness (defined as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, likely sustainability) and impact to date of the Project approach in strengthening the preschool education and early learning opportunities for the most vulnerable and excluded children.

- **Specific Objective 2**: Based on the experience from the Project implementation to extract general lessons learned and recommendations aimed at further enhancement of early childhood education in BiH.

The ToR specify the main **beneficiaries of the evaluation** which are the Government key partners, UNICEF, Dubai Cares and relevant CSOs. In the understanding of the evaluation team, it is intended that the knowledge generated by the evaluation will be used by the ministries of education for improving the implementation of the legal and strategic framework on ECE at entity, district and canton levels as well as for informing coordinated education, health and social welfare policies and strategies addressing the most marginalised and multiply disadvantaged children and their families i.e. Roma children, children with developmental delays and disability. The evaluation results could be also used by the municipalities for the further development of preschool education services aimed to broaden access to the most marginalized children. Dubai Cares and UNICEF are important stakeholders that will utilise the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation in their future programing and support for increased early learning opportunities for children in BiH.

The **Scope** of the evaluation is defined by the following elements:

- Project implementation period to be considered: January 2013 - May 2014;
- focus on children aged 4-6, especially the most vulnerable ones i.e. Roma, CwD and their families;
- geographic coverage: 46 participating municipalities;
- formal preschool programmes39;
- level of change/intervention: national, entity and local (canton and municipal) level system change (e.g. legislation changes, institutionalization of the training curricula for professionals, staff changes within relevant institutions, and administrative procedure changes sparked by the Project).

Given the fact that, at the local level, the Project has worked in 46 municipalities and considering the available resources and time for this evaluation, field consultations, interviews, focus groups and discussion groups were carried out only in a selected number of 15 municipalities, as indicated in the ToR. The sample is described in section 2.2 below.

The main Units of Analysis for this evaluation are the following:
- teachers and professionals working in the preschool education and early detection and intervention services, as beneficiaries of trainings, technical assistance and active participants in the implementation of the Project;
- preschool institutions and primary schools which were endowed by the Project and where the 300-hour programmes have been implemented;
- children and parents, as beneficiaries of preschool education programmes and ECI services;
- ministries of education at entity, canton and BD levels responsible for managing the grants in the targeted municipalities, coordination and implementation of new approaches in ECE, modernisation of policy and regulatory frameworks, as well as important stakeholders for ensuring the financial sustainability of preschool education services supported by the Project;
- local communities (municipalities), as beneficiaries of support for the development and promotion of early education programmes.

Main themes to be addressed by the evaluation concern children’s access to preschool education (measured by enrolment rates), with particular focus on vulnerable children; relevance and quality of services, most notably of formal preschool programmes, early intervention and detection services; capacity building of preschool teachers and of professionals working in the education, social welfare and health systems; cost-effectiveness of investment; modernization of policy, legislation and work practices.

The evaluation was carried out by a team composed of an international and national consultant, selected by UNICEF following a vacancy notice, and whose responsibilities were agreed during the inception phase40.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The Evaluation Phases

The evaluation has been carried out in three consecutive phases:

39 The ToR includes under the scope of the evaluation (page 3) both formal and non-formal preschool programmes. During the kick-off discussion on 26 September 2014, UNICEF specified that only formal preschool programmes are to be considered.
40 The International Consultant was responsible for the development of methodological approach and instruments, quality assurance of the evaluation process and drafting of the evaluation report. The National Consultant was mainly in charge of constructing the control group, collection and analysis of enrolment data from sample and control groups and contextualising the evaluation.
I. Inception/Desk Phase

The evaluation commenced on 22 September 2014. The Inception Phase has coincided with the Desk Phase.

Kick-off discussion. The first step of the evaluation was a kick-off discussion (skype conference call) of the International Consultant with UNICEF country office on 26 September 2014 which was used:
- to learn about the client’s expectations and ensure that the evaluation team (composed of the International Consultant and a National Consultant41) is fully aware of the nature of the desired end-product;
- to clarify the purpose and objectives of the evaluation;
- to clarify some technical issues e.g. related to sampling and control group, impact assessment, etc.;
- to agree the final timetable of the evaluation;
- to learn about the key actors and interlocutors for the evaluation; and
- to establish procedures in order to have access to all needed documents and information throughout the evaluation.

The useful feedback and clarifications received from UNICEF has helped the evaluation team to fine-tune the evaluation methodology.

Review of secondary sources of information. UNICEF country office provided a comprehensive set of documents, relevant for the evaluation. The team reviewed the project documents (PD, ToC, progress reports, resource utilization reports, draft baseline study, KAP survey, field monitoring reports, training reports, several Project deliverables), UNICEF’s situation analysis, CPAP and annual reports, key laws, policy papers, strategies and action plans in the area of education and child welfare and available databases (e.g. MICS, project database on beneficiary children, TransMonEE). It reviewed the human rights international commitments of BiH and the annual EC Progress Reports, given the country’s EU accession perspective and the need to comply with European standards (including the political criterion of accession). The review has continued during the next phases of the evaluation with other relevant EU documents such as the “An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child” (2011) and the recent EC Recommendation on ‘Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage’ (2013) as well as relevant international literature on early childhood development and effects of preschool education on vulnerable children. During the review of Project documentation, a number of missing documents and data gaps have been identified. UNICEF country office has timely provided all information and documents requested by the evaluation team. Annex 3 provides a list of documents consulted for this evaluation.

Evaluability assessment. An important element of the Inception Phase was to undertake an evaluability assessment of the scope of work planned, based on resources available. Within the scope of the current assignment, the evaluability assessment considered the Evaluation Questions (EQs),

41 Recruited separately by UNICEF.
intervention logic and the associated indicators (descriptors) to determine the type of information that could be sourced from secondary sources and the areas which require primary data collection.

a) **Timing:** The ToR for the assignment established a series of time horizons for various activities and deliverables i.e. field visits, Draft Evaluation Report and Final Evaluation Report. During the kick-off discussion, a revised timetable has been agreed which allowed the needed evaluation activities to be carried out appropriately and the required deliverables to be provided in the available time for this evaluation.

b) **Resource constraints:** Considering resource allocation, not all supported municipalities could be visited for in-depth interviews and no survey is possible among beneficiary children and parents. The methodology of the evaluation thus relied on a sample of municipalities and focus groups with children and parents to collect the needed primary data to inform the evaluation as well as on a control group to compare the results obtained so far by the Project in terms of increased participation of children aged 4-6 in early learning programmes (as explained in section 2.2 of this report).

c) **Information sources:** Project level secondary information sources were available as well as a draft baseline study, the KAP survey and a database with beneficiary children based on the final grant users’ reports. It was noted that existing information sources do not provide for disaggregated data on enrolment rates of vulnerable children aged 4 to 6 in municipalities across BiH. Primary information sources were needed to capture the views of various stakeholders concerning the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the Project. These primary information sources are presented below in Table 2.

d) **Data gaps:** Apart from the data gaps mentioned above, another gap has been identified in relation to the Training Needs Assessment (TNA). Training needs which stay at the heart of the important capacity building component of the Project had to be identified retrospectively by the evaluation team, based on review of training courses reports, interviews with key informants and focus groups with professionals.

e) **Evaluation questions:** The evaluation questions are further elaborated in the section 2.2.2 and in the Evaluation Matrix, with details provided of the information needed to answer them. The evaluability assessment indicated that there was sufficient information, which could be processed in a concise and useful form and that additional required information could be obtained within the resource constraints identified above.

**Development of Primary Data Collection and Evaluation Tools.** Primary data collection methods and tools were designed to cover the identified information needs and ensure the required level of information needed to answer the EQs in relation to the various units of analysis. These methods are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Primary Data Collection Methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Research method</th>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Sample (as the case)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF management and project team</td>
<td>6 In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Interview guide</td>
<td>Deputy Representative, Education team, Health team, M&amp;E focal point, (former) Project Manager, field monitoring experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Civil Affairs, ministries of education (FBIH, RS, cantonal), Department for Education BD, Agency for pre-primary, primary and secondary education (Sarajevo and Mostar offices), pedagogical institutes (RS, FBIH), Ministry of</td>
<td>32 Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Interview guide</td>
<td>Representatives of all relevant stakeholders, nominated by their management to meet the evaluation team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group</td>
<td>Research method</td>
<td>Tool</td>
<td>Sample (as the case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health FBiH, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare RS, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy FBiH, Public Health Institute FBiH, Paediatric Clinic, health centres, ECI centres, medical and education faculties (Tuzla, Foča), EU Delegation, NGOs (Associations of Psychologists, EDUS)</td>
<td>12 Discussion groups</td>
<td>Discussion guide</td>
<td>8-10 participants/group in sampled municipalities (less in Tomislavgrad, Visoko and Drvor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiary school/preschool principals, representatives of local governments, health services and CSW</td>
<td>13 Focus groups</td>
<td>Focus group guide</td>
<td>6-8 participants/group in each sampled municipality (less in Tomislavgrad and Prnjavor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals: teachers, assistant teachers (including Roma assistants), Roma mediators, other professionals (psychologists, pedagogues, paediatricians, nurses, therapists etc. working in ECI services) who were trained and/or involved in the Project</td>
<td>14 Focus groups</td>
<td>Focus group guide</td>
<td>6-8 participants/group in each sampled municipality (less in Tomislavgrad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of children (including parents of children with disability and Roma parents) attending the 300 h-preschool education programmes</td>
<td>14 Focus groups</td>
<td>Focus group guide</td>
<td>6-8 children/group, including Roma children, in sampled municipalities (less in Tomislavgrad); age: 5-6; Homogeneous groups: gender and age; children whose parents’ consent was obtained prior to the discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (including Roma children), attending the 300 h-preschool education programmes supported by the Project</td>
<td>Participant observation in 6 primary schools, 10 kindergartens 2 ECI centres</td>
<td>Site visit</td>
<td>Site visits to various service providers during the visits to sampled municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service providers i.e. kindergartens, primary schools, ECI centres and resource rooms</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Data sheet</td>
<td>Collection of data on enrolment rates, total and disaggregated by vulnerable children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities and/or ministries of education responsible for preschool education in the Sample and Control group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The selection of secondary sources of information in relation to the employed research method has been reasoned by the following methodological aspects:

- It is common knowledge that each data collection method has its own limitations and can’t stand alone; therefore, the evaluation team included in the data collection process a wide

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42 Dubai Cares, the donor of the Project, has not responded to the on-line interview questions until the submission of the final evaluation report, due a very busy agenda (see e-mail dated 7 December sent to international consultant and copied to UNICEF).

43 “In situ, non-disruptive observation of the daily activity of actors and/or beneficiary of the evaluated intervention. The researcher tries to understand the situation “from the inside”. (EVALSED Guide, 2013)
array of sources to triangulate the findings and inform the analysis.

- Semi-structured interviews with key informants at national and local level were used to collect qualitative data and capture various perspectives on the way the Project addressed the complexity of issues in preschool education reform, monitoring and progressive realisation of children’s rights, how the Project worked and how could have worked better for advancing the implementation of reforms.

- The evaluation team wanted to receive in-depth feedback from as many stakeholders as possible and it is often not possible to conduct interviews with individual respondents. Therefore, the team used focus groups and discussion groups with professionals, respectively with local governments, preschool/school principals, health and social welfare services.

- The evaluation team also designed a representative sample of municipalities for site visits, needed to conduct in-depth interviews, focus groups and discussion groups with key informants mentioned above and to obtain factual evidence through participant observation. A control group has been also constructed for allowing comparison with the sample in terms of effects of the Project on preschool education enrolment. The sampling criteria and justification for the selection of the sample and control group are detailed below.

- Contact with final beneficiaries, to the extent possible, is crucial for any evaluation. Given the timeframe and available resources of this evaluation, it was not feasible to conduct a survey among beneficiary children and parents. Instead, the evaluation team used focus groups with children, parents and professionals to collect vital impressions on the relevance, accessibility and quality of provided services on relevant issues for this evaluation.

A number of data collection and evaluation tools have been also developed, including:

- Evaluation Matrix, grouping the evaluation questions under the evaluation criteria (Annex 4);
- Sampling of sites (municipalities) to be visited and a control group;
- Primary Data Collection Guides for semi-structured interviews, focus groups and discussion groups as well as a Data Sheet for collecting information on enrolment rates from sampled municipalities and control group (Annex 5);
- Performance Rating scale for Project’s relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

The Inception/Desk Phase ended with the drafting of an Inception Report, which included a revised methodology, a detailed work plan, the full set of the proposed data collection and evaluation tools, sample, control group as well as an annotated outline of the final report. This Phase lasted from September to October 2014.

II. Field Phase

The Field Phase has been mainly devoted to the collection of primary data from key stakeholders at national and local levels, based on the data collection and evaluation instruments developed during the Inception/Desk Phase. The selection of sites to be visited has been based on the sampling methodology and the data collection methods described in Table 2. The people who were consulted during the evaluation are listed in Annex 6.

The Field Phase, which lasted from October to November 2014, ended with a debriefing of UNICEF on 7 November 2014 concerning the preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation team.
III. Synthesis Phase

Information and facts collected during the first two phases were analysed and integrated in this Final Evaluation Report, in line with the "UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards" (Evaluation Office, UNICEF NYHQ, September 2004). The analysis was based on the Evaluation Matrix and the Performance Rating scale developed during the Inception/Desk Phase of the evaluation process.

All standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, set in the ToR, were endorsed by the evaluation team for the following reasons:

- they are sufficient to provide a sound assessment of the quality, value and significance of the aid intervention, are all necessary and equally important;
- they are fully appropriate for the evaluation purpose, after careful examination of the project’s strategy and ToC;
- they are in line with internationally recognised best practice for a formative evaluation of a project and also consistent with recommended methodologies for mid-term evaluation of external assistance.

More specifically, the standard evaluation criteria were approached as follows:

a) **Relevance:** According to the OECD DAC international definitions of the evaluation criteria, relevance refers to the extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor\(^{44}\). The assessment of the Project relevance was therefore based on the analysis of the state, entity, canton, district and local context, the challenges of the ECD and preschool education reforms, the relevance of the Project for the country’s strategies and policies, the international human rights commitments of BiH and the needs and priorities of vulnerable children and various other key stakeholders.

b) **Effectiveness:** According to OECD/DAC, effectiveness measures the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives\(^{45}\). The evaluation team analysed the progress made until May 2014 (the cut-off date of the evaluation) against the envisaged output and outcome level results of the Project. Using evidence collected during the first two phases of the evaluation, the report explains the factors that contributed or hampered the progress towards the achievement of results in the reference period in terms of improved ECE and ECI provision to effectively reach the most vulnerable children in the target municipalities and reducing the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination. The report also discusses the coordination among stakeholders and the indirect/unplanned effects (positive or negative) of the Project.

c) **Efficiency:** This criterion measures the outputs - qualitative and quantitative - in relation to the inputs. It is an economic term which signifies that the aid uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. It generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been adopted\(^{46}\). The report analyses how well UNICEF organized itself in delivering its work with regard to managerial and budget efficiency of the three pronged delivery modalities i.e. at state, entity/canton/district and local levels. Analysis of efficiency was based on the assessment of outputs/activities in relation to Project inputs, costs and planned timelines. The report also incorporates discussion of issues related to the assessment of cost-effectiveness of preschool education programmes supported by the Project, using as far as possible

\(^{44}\) [http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm)

\(^{45}\) ibid

\(^{46}\) [http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm)
benchmarking with similar programmes at country level. Synergy/coherence with other similar interventions and projects of other donors is reviewed as well.

d) Sustainability: The sustainability criterion measures whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn\(^{47}\). Considering the fact that the Project is still under implementation and that the evaluation has a formative nature, the assessment of sustainability focused on the likelihood that outcomes and benefits generated by the Project continue to exist without or with a lower level of external support. The evaluation assessed the extent to which prerequisites for sustainability are in place or are being put in place and the concrete measures undertaken to date to ensure sustainability of results. Sustainability was analysed from various perspectives: legal/policy, institutional, capacity building, financial. The report highlights the factors that may facilitate or hinder the sustainability prospects of the results of the Project.

e) Impact: According to OECD/DAC definitions, impact means the positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended\(^{48}\). The impact evaluation practice defines two types of impact evaluation: theory-based and counterfactual. The ToR requests a quantifiable approach (pages 2 and 5), hence the construction of a control group to compare the effects of the Project in the targeted municipalities (‘treatment’ group) compared to those not supported by the Project (‘control’ group) in terms of increased participation of children in early education programmes. The evaluation mainly identified the quantitative impact of the Project so far but also attempted to provide an assessment of its qualitative value-added in targeted municipalities compared to the control group. A fully-fledged impact assessment will be done after the end of the Project having as reference the initial baseline study and KAP survey.

The additional criteria i.e. coverage, coordination and coherence specified in the ToR have been integrated into the main evaluation criteria above. For instance, coherence was tackled when assessing the efficiency (see description of Efficiency above as well as section 2.2.2).

The Synthesis Phase took place from November until December 2014. The Draft Evaluation Report was released on 4 December 2014. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation will be presented to members of the PMB and WGs in Sarajevo at the beginning of next year. The feedback received from UNICEF was already incorporated in this Final Evaluation Report.

2.2.2 The Evaluation Questions and Performance Rating

The ToR specify:

- 12 Evaluation Questions (EQs)\(^{49}\) linked to the five evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability);
- 3 EQs linked to coverage of vulnerable children, coordination among different stakeholders and coherence with other donors’ policies for achieving goals and objectives of early learning.

Based on this, a comprehensive Evaluation Matrix has been developed (Annex 4). All EQs – formulated as in the ToR or slightly reformulated and rearranged - have been assigned to a specific evaluation criterion (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability). The EQs under the three additional criteria have been absorbed into the five criteria mentioned above to ensure a more

\(^{47}\) ibid

\(^{48}\) ibid

\(^{49}\) Two EQs have four, respectively two sub-questions, but only the main EQs have been counted. Three EQs are derived from the reading of the Sustainability (2 EQs) and Impact assessment (1 EQ) expectations in the ToR, page 5.
coherent and consolidated response: Coverage figures in EQ 11/Impact; Coordination is captured in EQ 4/Effectiveness; and Coherence is part of EQ 10/Efficiency. The Evaluation Matrix comprises additional evaluation areas apart from those mentioned in the ToR, such as the relevance of the Project for country's strategies and international commitments and for other key stakeholders (apart from children), the unplanned effects of the Project so far, qualitative impact of the Project on the beneficiary children in the reference period, etc. For each EQ, one or several judgement criteria have been included as well as related quantitative and qualitative indicators. Sources of information and methods of data collection have been also specified in the Matrix. Table 3 presents an overview of the grouping of questions.

Table 3. Grouping of questions and issues in the Evaluation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No. of EQ</th>
<th>EQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>EQ 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>EQ 4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>EQ 7-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>EQ 10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>EQ 12-13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The EQ in the Evaluation Matrix were to the extent possible framed based on the units of analysis, indicating their relative importance and relative emphasis on different target groups and beneficiaries.

The rating of the Project performance in the reference period January 2013-May 2014 was determined by separately evaluating and ranking the evaluation criteria specified in the ToR. Each criterion was assigned a scale point between 0 and 3. A descriptor corresponding to each scale point was also assigned. The average of the values for the evaluation criteria ratings was the overall project assessment rating. Fixed cut-off points were used to assign appropriate descriptors (highly satisfactory, satisfactory, moderately satisfactory, moderately unsatisfactory, unsatisfactory and highly unsatisfactory) to the aggregate numeric rating. The table below summarizes the approach and shows the relationship between the evaluation criteria, rating descriptors and scale points.

Table 4. Performance Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criterion</th>
<th>Definition according to the ToR</th>
<th>Rating descriptor</th>
<th>Scale point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Relevance</td>
<td>The extent to which the Project responded to the needs of stakeholders and beneficiaries.</td>
<td>Highly relevant</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relevant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly relevant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Effectiveness</td>
<td>The extent to which the Project achieved or is in the process of achieve its results (outcomes) as defined in the PD and ToC</td>
<td>Highly effective</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately effective</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ineffective</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Efficiency</td>
<td>The extent to which the Project management ensured timeliness and efficient use of resources so far.</td>
<td>Highly efficient</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Efficient</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately efficient</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inefficient</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Impact</td>
<td>The extent to which the Project contributed to ensuring that more vulnerable children are covered and participate in quality, inclusive preschool education programmes</td>
<td>High impact level</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good impact level</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low impact level</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sustainability</td>
<td>The extent to which the achieved Project results (outcomes) so far are likely to be sustainable from a policy, institutional and financial point of view.</td>
<td>Most likely</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Less likely</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2.3 Evaluation sample

Apart from desk review of relevant documentation, semi-structured interviews with key informants and focus/discussion groups, the evaluation methodology included site visits to a sample of municipalities for in-depth review.

UNICEF suggested a sample of municipalities which has been screened by the evaluation team against several sampling criteria to check its representativeness for the overall number of municipalities targeted by the Project. More specifically, the following sampling criteria have been used:

1) **Geographical distribution of municipalities** i.e. municipalities from all administrative units where the Project is active, meaning from the two entities (FBiH and RS) and Brčko District as well as from FBiH targeted cantons, in a number proportional to the one in the overall population of municipalities targeted by the Project.

2) **Number of grants per administrative unit**, i.e. administrative units where the Project provided one grant and more grants – important from the perspective of efficiency of investment by the Project.

3) **Vulnerable beneficiary children** i.e. Roma children and children with developmental delays and disability among overall beneficiary children – the Project has been focused on increasing the early learning opportunities particularly for these vulnerable children and there are specific evaluation questions in this respect.

4) **Typology of service providers** i.e. kindergartens, primary schools which provide preschool education and ECI resource rooms – important from the perspective of analysing various delivery mechanisms of preschool education and their effectiveness and efficiency.

Two additional sub-sampling criteria have been initially considered, as follows:

- under sampling criteria **Geographical distribution of municipalities**: “predominantly urban / predominantly rural municipalities”, given the fact that many vulnerable children aged 4-6 live in rural areas and the Project implicitly aimed to increase their access to preschool education, as specified in various project documents. This information was not available in time for the sampling, but it was nevertheless used later for the analysis of the relevance and equity dimensions of the Project.

- under sampling criteria **Typology of service providers**: “public/private service providers”, given a specific evaluation question in the ToR on public and private delivery system. This sub-sampling criterion has been finally disconsidered as UNICEF confirmed that the Project engaged only public service providers.

A control group of municipalities has been also constructed, as requested by the ToR (page 2), in order to compare the effects of the Project on increased participation in early learning programmes from a quantitative point of view between the targeted municipalities (the so-called ‘treatment’ group) and the ones not supported by the Project (called ‘control’ group).

---

50 Except Middle Bosnia canton
51 According to UNICEF, municipalities in BiH are not actually divided as urban or rural. They are considered urban/city zones, with urban and rural areas. A proxy indicator which was used for the purpose of the evaluation was the location in urban or rural areas of the service providers and corresponding number of beneficiary children living in the city/town, respectively village.
The Sample (Table 5) which resulted after the review of key Project documentation and analysis against sampling criteria was composed of 15 municipalities, representing 32.6% of the total number of municipalities targeted by the Project and including over 50% of the beneficiary preschools and schools (82 out of 160 institutions). The Control group consisted of 9 municipalities. Following the request of the evaluation for enrolment data, 13 sampled municipalities and 8 control municipalities have responded.

Table 5. The Evaluation Sample and Control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMPLE</th>
<th>CONTROL GROUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuzla Canton</td>
<td>Canton Bosnia Podrinje</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Tuzla</td>
<td>1. Goražde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herzegovina Neretva Canton</td>
<td>Middle Bosnia Canton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mostar</td>
<td>2. Busovača</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Čapljina</td>
<td>Western Herzegovina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canton 10</td>
<td>3. Siroki Brijeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tomislavgrad</td>
<td>Una Sana Canton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Drvar</td>
<td>4. Kluč</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ženička Doboj Canton</td>
<td>Tuzla Canton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Visoko</td>
<td>5. Banovići</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Una Sana Canton</td>
<td>6. Srebrenik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Cazin</td>
<td>Republika Srpska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarajevo Canton</td>
<td>7. Pale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sarajevo Stari Grad</td>
<td>8. Mrkonjić Grad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republika Srpska</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Bijeljina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Prnjavor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Banja Luka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Sokolac</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Foča</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brčko District</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Brčko</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 provides an overview of the sampling criteria and compliance of the sampled municipalities. The Control group is also included in the table to provide an image of some of its characteristics and commonalities with the sample group strictly from the perspective of sampling criteria.

Table 6. Evaluation Sampling Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling criteria</th>
<th>Sampled municipalities</th>
<th>Control group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geographical distribution of municipalities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• FBiH</td>
<td>9 (Tuzla, Mostar, Čapljina, Tomislavgrad, Drvar, Visoko, Cazin, Sarajevo Stari Grad, Sarajevo Hadzici)</td>
<td>6 (Goražde, Busovača, Siroki Brijeg, Kluč, Banovići, Srebrenik)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Republika Srpska</td>
<td>5 (Bijeljina, Banja Luka, Sokolac, Prnjavor, Foča)</td>
<td>3 (Mrkonjić Grad, Pale, Teslić)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brčko District</td>
<td>1 (Brčko)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no other municipality in the District
Sampling criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of grants/ administrative unit</th>
<th>Sampled municipalities</th>
<th>Control group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• one grant</td>
<td>4 administrative units</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• two or more grants</td>
<td>4 administrative units</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vulnerable beneficiary children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulnerable beneficiary children</th>
<th>Sampled municipalities</th>
<th>Control group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Roma children among beneficiary children</td>
<td>5 (Tuzla, Mostar, Visoko, Bijeljina, Brčko)</td>
<td>4 (Banovići, Ključ, Teslić, Srebrenik)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children with developmental delays or disability among beneficiary children</td>
<td>14 (Tuzla, Mostar, Capljina, Tomislavgrad, Visoko, Cazin, Sarajevo Stari Grad, Sarajevo Hadzici, Bijeljina, Prnjavor, Banja Luka, Sokolac, Foča, Brčko)</td>
<td>8 (Goražde, Busovača, Široki Brijeg, Ključ, Banovići, Mrkonjić Grad, Teslić, Pale)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typology of service providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology of service providers</th>
<th>Sampled municipalities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Kindergarten</td>
<td>12 (Tuzla, Mostar, Capljina, Tomislavgrad, Visoko, Cazin, Sarajevo Stari Grad, Sarajevo Hadzici, Bijeljina, Prnjavor, Sokolac, Brčko)</td>
<td>7 (Banovići, Goražde, Široki Brijeg, Ključ, Teslić, Mrkonjić Grad, Pale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Primary school</td>
<td>10 (Tuzla, Mostar, Capljina, Tomislavgrad, Drvar, Cazin, Sarajevo Stari Grad, Bijeljina, Banja Luka, Brčko)</td>
<td>2 (Banovići, Mrkonjić Grad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ECI resource room</td>
<td>4 (Tuzla, Visoko, Foča, Brčko)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.4 Evaluation constraints

There have been several constraints in carrying out the evaluation. They are presented in Table 7 together with corresponding mitigation approaches.

Table 7. Constraints to the Evaluation and Mitigation Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Limitations/Constraints</th>
<th>Mitigation approaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unavailability of key stakeholders (technical level staff changes, travels, etc.) — identified in the ToR</td>
<td>The evaluation team mapped the key informants and organised, in close cooperation with UNICEF, interviews with people that left the respective institutional stakeholder, if information obtained from the existing technical staff was insufficient; interviews were by e-mail or by phone, depending on the availability of the respective interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability of the consultant/team to visit all 46 participating municipalities since they are spread all over the country — identified in the ToR</td>
<td>The methodology included the use of a representative sample of 15 municipalities, representing 32.6% of the total number of targeted municipalities. The sample was constructed on the basis of several sampling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Potential Limitations/Constraints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Limitations/Constraints</th>
<th>Mitigation approaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of disaggregated data by age, gender and rural/urban living area of beneficiary children.</td>
<td>At the request of the evaluation team, UNICEF provided data on the urban/rural divide of service providers, as a proxy approach, gender and age. A specific data collection instrument was designed by the evaluation for compiling enrolment data from sample and control municipalities. Getting reliable information was challenging, but the evaluation finally managed to collect sufficient evidence to base the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of disaggregated data concerning service providers. Limited data availability at municipality level concerning enrolment rates – <em>identified in the ToR (generally) and by the evaluation team</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of output indicators and targets, which raised difficulties in assessing the effectiveness of the Project – <em>identified by the evaluation team</em></td>
<td>The evaluation reconstructed to the extent possible the monitoring and evaluation framework of the Project and assigned output indicators, baselines and targets with the support of UNICEF monitoring and evaluation team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Although participation was confirmed by the local project coordinators, no focus groups and discussion groups were organised in Tomislavgrad; no discussion group in Visoko and Drvor; no focus group with professionals in Prnjavor – <em>identified by the evaluation team</em></td>
<td>The methodology included a large number of focus groups and discussion groups from the very beginning. Even if some of them did not take place, there was a sufficient number which were organised (55 focus groups, 12 discussion groups) to allow the evaluation team collect representative opinions, facts and perspectives to inform the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources to visit the municipalities which are part of the control group for the purpose of qualitative analysis and deduction of the value added of the Project – <em>identified by the evaluation team</em></td>
<td>Apart from the quantitative comparison of enrolment rates, the issue of qualitative value-added of the Project in targeted municipalities compared to those in the control group was raised in the interviews with state and entity-level stakeholders which had an overall image of existing situation across all municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No TNAs developed prior to the delivery of training courses, which might have impeded the evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of capacity building investment of the Project – <em>identified by the evaluation team</em></td>
<td>The evaluation team reconstructed the training needs retrospectively, based on the training reports, interviews with key informants and focus groups with professionals who took part in the training events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.3 Evaluation Design

The methodology model designed for this evaluation aimed to utilize the best mix of data gathering tools to yield the most reliable and valid answers to the evaluation questions within the limits of resources and availability of data.

The evaluation was designed to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Project based on the PD and ToC, including Baseline Study, KAP study and Program Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.
As requested by the ToR (page 2), the evaluation used a ‘control’ group of municipalities to compare results obtained by the Project in the reference period in the ‘treatment’ group of municipalities (municipalities which were targeted by the Project) and to identify the “numerical changes sparked by the project” (page 5) as far as increased participation of children aged 4-6 in early learning programmes is concerned.

The design of the evaluation methodology combined a Results-Based Management with a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to programming and evaluation i.e. achievement of planned results through morally-acceptable processes to realise human rights, in particular children’s rights for this evaluation.

The HRBA which was applied by the evaluation team has been guided by five core principles: normativity, participation, non-discrimination, accountability and transparency, and by the Common Understanding on Human Rights-Based Approaches to Development Cooperation and Programming, approved by the United Nations Development Group in 2003:

- All programmes of development cooperation, policies and technical assistance should further the realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.
- Human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the programming process.
- Development cooperation contributes to the development of the capacities of ‘duty bearers’ to meet their obligations and/or of ‘rights-holders’ to claim their rights.

The evaluation identified the “rights holders” of the Project the preschool population aged 4-6 in the targeted municipalities, particularly Roma children and children with developmental delays and with disabilities.

The Evaluation assessed the extent to which the Project results and outputs achieved to date contributed to the achievement of children’s rights, equity and addressing gender sensitive issues. In this respect, the Evaluation Matrix included specific evaluation questions, as follows:

- How relevant is the strategy applied by the Project for broadening access of children aged 4-6 to early learning opportunities in the targeted municipalities, especially of the most marginalised children, from the perspective of:
  - Equity
  - Human rights principles for early learning
  - Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to programming and gender mainstreaming
- To what extent has the Project improved the preschool education and ECI provision to effectively reach the most vulnerable children in the target municipalities and reduce the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination?

Attention was given to the evaluation of the gender equality and mainstreaming issues reflected by the Project, in line with BiH’s international commitments and UNICEF Gender Policy (2010)\(^\text{53}\) which states that UNICEF aims to work with partners to pursue gender equality and the equal rights of girls and boys “to contribute to poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through results-oriented, effective and coordinated action that achieves the protection, survival

and development of girls and boys on an equal basis." The evaluation will use to the extent possible disaggregated data by age, gender and disability.

**Ethical dimensions of the Project design and implementation**

The evaluation was so conceived to enable the analysis of how ethical the Project was as far as its initial design, respectively implementation were concerned. The section on relevance in particular addressed specific human rights and cross-cutting issues and provided a detailed response on various ethical aspects of the Project, including human rights and gender equality prioritising, rights-based budgeting, benefits and costs for participants. In addition, ethical issues were also considered in the relevance and efficiency sections of the report.

**Ethical considerations related to the evaluation design**

During data collection, attention was paid to ensuring that the evaluation process is ethical and that participants in the process can openly express their opinions, protecting the confidentiality of their answers. Overall, the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System (March, 2008) was strictly respected, notably independence of judgement, impartiality, honesty and integrity, accountability, respect and protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects and communities, confidentiality, avoidance of risks, harm to and burdens on those participating in the evaluation, accuracy, completeness and reliability of report, transparency. The evaluators were sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and acted with integrity and honesty in their relationships with all stakeholders, ensured that their contacts with individuals were characterized by respect, protected the anonymity and confidentiality of individual information.

The process of recruiting stakeholders from different institutional levels followed a standard procedure in order to ensure an informed consent to participate in the evaluation (letter of introduction from UNICEF presenting the evaluation process, protection of privacy and information confidentiality, followed up by the evaluation team through written/verbal communication regarding the interview/focus group/discussion group details). Participation in the evaluation was voluntary and opinions were presented in the report in an anonymous manner.

Selection of parents (part of the target group) for the focus groups was done in cooperation with the project coordinators and service providers (kindergartens, schools, ECI resource rooms) in the visited municipalities. Parents were informed about the scope of the focus group and its main discussion topics. Parents of Roma children and parents of children with disabilities were approached in a culturally-sensitive manner, based on UN Ethical Guidelines.

The participation of children (final beneficiaries) in the data collection process was also ensured through the project coordinators and service providers (kindergartens, schools, ECI resource rooms) and based on prior consent of parents. Children were informed about the scope and themes of the discussion. Before starting the focus group, the evaluators explained again the purpose of the discussion, the way their opinion will be processed ensuring the confidentiality. They were also asked to confirm their consent. Children were informed that they can withdraw anytime during the focus group without any obligation to explain the reasons.

Interviews, focus groups and discussion groups were used not only for data collection and qualitative insights, but also for checking the perceived priorities for the continuation of reforms in increasing early learning opportunities in BiH by the key stakeholders. This was very useful for informing the
recommendations of the evaluation based on an open and participatory process carried out during the Field Phase.

Throughout the process, the evaluation was in compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.

Involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation

Involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation is of utmost importance for the collection of vital data and critical insights, but also for validating findings and conclusions as well as checking the feasibility of recommendations while ensuring buy-in.

In total, a number of 516 people have been involved during the evaluation, representing the key stakeholders of the Project: target groups, final beneficiaries (children and their families), implementing partners, civil society organisations, as detailed in Table 2, first column, above.

The evaluation was so designed to ensure the involvement of stakeholders at three levels: information, participation and consultation, depending on the nature of each stakeholder and engagement in the Project. Interviews, focus groups and discussion groups were used for:

1) **Informing the evaluation**: primary data collection to cover gaps and add multiple informant perspectives;

2) **Enabling participation of stakeholders in the evaluation**: collection of qualitative, critical insights from stakeholders; direct participation of stakeholders in the analysis and evaluation of the Project results and impact, also via self-evaluation;

3) **Engaging stakeholders in consultation on future priorities and reforms**: checking the perceived priorities for the continuation of the reforms in early childhood education and BiH by the key stakeholders and the role each of them could play in the future. In this respect, specific questions have been included in the Interview Guides (Annex 5) to capture the various perspectives of a large range of stakeholders.

Even very small (age 5-6 years), children have been fully involved in an active process of participation in the evaluation in their capacity of final beneficiaries and key rights holders. Apart from providing feedback on the quality of preschool education, they have been consulted on aspects that they would like to be improved in the daily educational programme of the kindergarten or primary school providing preschool education, as the case. The same applied to their parents.

This was very useful for informing the recommendations of the evaluation based on an open and participatory process initiated during the Field Phase and which will continue with the presentation of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations in a meeting of the PMB and WGs.
3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

3.1 Relevance

Evaluation of Project relevance was based on the following evaluation questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent are the Project design and its objectives relevant for</td>
<td>state/ entity/ cantonal/district policies, strategies and equity-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state/ entity/ cantonal/district policies, strategies and equity-</td>
<td>focused development priorities, as well as for international commitments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focused development priorities, as well as for international commitments</td>
<td>of BiH?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How relevant is the strategy applied by the Project for broadening</td>
<td>access of children aged 4-6 to early learning opportunities in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>access of children aged 4-6 to early learning opportunities in the</td>
<td>targeted municipalities, especially of the most marginalised children,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>targeted municipalities, especially of the most marginalised children,</td>
<td>from the perspective of equity, human rights principles for early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from the perspective of equity, human rights principles for early</td>
<td>learning, HRBA to programming and gender mainstreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning, HRBA to programming and gender mainstreaming</td>
<td>To what extent is the Project relevant to the needs of other key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is the Project relevant to the needs of other key</td>
<td>stakeholders, i.e. preschool teachers and professionals in ECE/ECI,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stakeholders, i.e. preschool teachers and professionals in ECE/ECI,</td>
<td>local authorities, parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local authorities, parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relevance of the Project has been assessed using available data, facts and statistics for year 2012 when the Project started as well as relevant legal and strategic documents of the Government, BiH's international commitments to comply with human rights standards and UNICEF strategies in the country. Interviews with key stakeholders were also used to triangulate findings. The basic shortcomings in the area of early childhood education have been already presented in Chapter 1 and they were also highlighted in a number of reports, studies, assessments and researches of government and international partners.

The evaluation has found evidence through desk research and field phase that there is alignment of Project design and its objectives with needs and priorities at all levels of governance in BiH in the area of early childhood development and early learning. Preschool education is recognised by decision-makers as essential for individual development and as such integrated in the legislation at the state, entity, district levels as well as in seven out of ten cantons. The legal basis is Article 3 of the Framework Law on preschool upbringing and education according to which education authorities in Brčko District (BD), Republika Srpska (RS), cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) “are obliged to apply and respect principles and norms established in this law, and to ensure upbringing and education under the same conditions for all children”. The Project has been designed in a way which ensured compliance with the legislation in all its elements, including the coordination and management structures. In this respect, the Project has been steered by a management board whose membership was composed of representatives of relevant competent authorities with the mandate to guide and ensure coordinated actions within their administrative unit (entity, canton, district) for achieving the goal of the Project in a concerted manner.

The Project is in line with the country strategies and policy papers in the area of preschool education, inclusive early learning opportunities for vulnerable children and early childhood development. The Strategic Directions for Education Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Implementation Plan 2008-2015\(^4\) state the following: “Considering that early start of systematic upbringing and education is a key factor of individual development and concern for the society, there is a need for rapid revitalization and development of this segment in education sector, which primarily implies increase in children coverage by preschool upbringing and education” (page 28). The strategic document defines as mid-term goal an increase to 20% of the enrolment rate in preschool education\(^5\). Three years after the adoption of the strategic document, that goal has not been achieved as only 12.9%\(^6\) (according to TransMonEE data) of boys and girls were enrolled in preschool education in 2011/2012. The Project has addressed this need by increasing the preschool education provision and ensuring opportunities for enrolment of more children in approximately one third of cities and municipalities of the country. The strategic document emphasizes the need to involve all relevant

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\(^4\) Published in the Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina no.63/08.
\(^5\) The mid-term goal for enrolment in preparatory preschool programme is 40%.
\(^6\) Defined as net enrolment rate of population aged 3-6, ISCED 0 level.
social, economic and political actors in a coordinated effort in order to implement the country's early childhood development and education policies. The Project has thus engaged a wide range of stakeholders and partners in its implementation and management, embracing in the membership of PMB and WGs not only the education sector but also the health, labour and social welfare, academia, representatives of local communities and NGOs. Such an approach is also consistent with global trends according to which “The integration of child care and education contributes to a more holistic view of child development and greater clarity in objectives for centres, educators, parents and other key stakeholders.” The Project is also aligned with the policy documents in the area of early childhood development, notably the Framework Policy for Early Childhood Development, adopted by the Council of Ministers in March 2012.

Review of the Action Plan for the Children of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011 – 2014 confirm that the Project has been fully in line with the goals of the document and four specific measures in the area of preschool education i.e. enforcement of the Framework law on preschool upbringing and education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including one year of compulsory preschool education; increase of the coverage of children in preschool education, especially of children from vulnerable groups; provision of preparatory classes, thereby linking preschool with primary education; and training of teaching staff who is currently insufficient.

The Project design is also aligned with the Revised Action Plan on Roma Educational Needs (2010) which inter alia states that “The education system can be either the biggest obstacle or the biggest aid in the process of the social inclusion of Roma” and that “early childhood is recognized as a key phase in the learning process. It is necessary to give Roma families widespread access to services related to the early development of children.” (page 153). The design of the Project has put the focus on the inclusion of Roma children, who figure among the final beneficiaries and have a prominent position in several activities, notably the ones aimed to support Roma community leaders and mediators to encourage Roma families to enrol their children in preschool education and to train Roma teaching assistants. However, with few exceptions, the implementation has not been optimal because of some flaws in the outreach activities, as explained in the next sections of the report.

The Project is fully consistent with the international commitments and human rights standards ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina. It addressed the shortcomings identified by the CRC Committee in its Concluding observations (2012)\(^{58}\), notably the low rate of children attending preschool education, inadequate school readiness and support programmes addressing education needs of Roma children, limited access and quality of education in rural areas and severely limited inclusive education for majority of children with disability. The Project has also addressed the political criterion of accession related to rule of law and human rights and the concerns of the European Commission included in its 2012 Progress Report, which urged the country to ensure equal access of children belonging to vulnerable groups (Roma, poor children, children with disabilities), to inclusive and culturally appropriate services, including early childhood development and education.\(^{59}\) Indeed, the Project has been designed to provide early learning opportunities to vulnerable children, as identified in the various national strategies and reports. The Project has been also consistent with current European strategies, most notably the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) which calls for "increasing participation in early childhood education as a foundation for later educational success, especially in the case of those from disadvantaged backgrounds".\(^{60}\)

The Project is relevant for the priorities of UNICEF BiH, implementing body, as addressed in the Country Programme Action Plan 2010-2014 (outcome 2, output 2.2). The perspective of Dubai Cares, the donor of the Project, will be incorporated in the final evaluation report as soon as it will be made available to the evaluation team.

The Project remained relevant in time, as demonstrated by strategies and policy documents adopted during its lifetime. An illustrative example is the Strategic Plan for Improvement of Early Childhood Development in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013-2017 which calls for the development of programmes aimed at increasing preschool education coverage of children aged 3-6, with an emphasis on children with developmental delays, and vulnerable and marginalised children (strategic goal 4, programme 4.1. As well, the EC Progress Report for 2013 mentions that additional legislation has been adopted in the field of early childhood development, but implementation needs to be improved, hence the preservation of Project relevance during its implementation.

The Project planned to ensure an equity focus by orienting grant and domestic investment towards the most vulnerable children. The Project was relevant to the needs of these children, particularly of children with developmental delays and disabilities and of children from poor family backgrounds. The Project has been designed on the basis of in-depth needs assessments and studies (e.g. “Information on Implementation of Strategic Directions for Development of Preschool Upbringing and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, “Preschool Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Financial Analysis with Policy Recommendations on Standardization and Expansion of Required Programs, Financial Feasibility and Organization”, MICS 2011-2012, etc.). Relevance has been enhanced by the systematic use of consultations and engagement of a large spectrum of stakeholders in Project implementation: state, entity, district, canton and local, public and non-governmental, decision makers and operational staff, professionals and, to a certain extent, parents.

The Project targeted the most vulnerable children by increasing access to early learning in the regular education system and by providing opportunities for a good start in life. As shown in the impact section of the report, the Project has successfully reached its targets as far as CwD are concerned. Although no “hard” data is available, focus groups with parents indicate that the beneficiaries were usually children from disadvantaged family backgrounds. At the same time, the Project faced challenges in overcoming the systemic barriers of low participation rates of Roma children in preschool education, as the outreach strategy designed to reach this group was not always efficiently followed (see efficiency and impact sections). The Project has not specifically targeted the children living in rural areas. Nevertheless, they represented around 36% of beneficiaries of preschool education programmes supported by the Project61. As most poor children live in rural areas and since financial constraints are among the main obstacles in enrolling children in preschool education, relevance of the Project for this group might have been higher in case rural children were explicitly targeted by the selection criteria of municipalities and by specific outreach activities. This would have been also justified by the fact that in urban areas, 22.8% of children attend preschool, while in rural areas that number drops to 7.9% (see Table 1). As far as age is concerned, the Project targeted children aged 4-6; however, data indicate that the majority of beneficiary children were above 5 years old. It meant that the education authorities in charge of managing the grant support provided by the Project primarily implemented preparatory preschool programmes i.e. the programmes available for the age group 5-6, although the enrolment rate in such programmes seems to be sensibly higher than the average rates62. In this respect, children aged 4-5 were, with few exceptions, neglected.

61 Calculation based on urban/rural disaggregated data available in case of 91.3% of the total number of beneficiary children.
62 The coverage of children in preparatory preschool education was almost 100% in Sarajevo canton and in Bosnia - Podrinje canton Goražde, over 36% in Republika Srpska (see Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, “Information on
The Project responded to the need for continuous teacher training in order to build the capacity of teachers to apply and organise quality and inclusive preschool education. Coverage of need was however insufficient. As mentioned in chapter 1, there is a limited number of qualified/trained staff in BiH, primarily kindergarten teachers and professionals to work with children with disability. By providing opportunities for networking and knowledge sharing, the Project has extended professional networks in the area of ECE and ECI. By providing training to professionals working in ECE and ECI, the Project has supported the implementation of provisions for teacher training included in the Strategic Directions for Education Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Implementation Plan 2008-2015. According to the feedback received from the focus groups with professionals, the training courses provided with the support of the Project were useful and relevant for their needs. The training courses for ECI professionals working in the integrated early childhood development centres and resource rooms were particularly useful for the early identification of children with developmental delays and provision of intervention services; still, it was perceived that the coverage of these trainings was insufficient and more training was needed for preparing all teachers to work with children with disability (apart from those involved in specific ECI services). Relevance would have been higher if thorough training needs analysis was done prior to the delivery of the training courses in order to better adapt the curriculum and learning process to the particular needs of each learning group.

The Project addressed an important challenge of the preschool education in BiH i.e. lack of awareness and motivation of parents to enrol their children in preschool education, particularly those from vulnerable groups. The Project addressed this challenge by raising awareness of parents, as duty-bearers, on the value of preschool education. There was however insufficient focus on equipping the weakest parents with the knowledge and abilities to cope with their parental duties (see the effectiveness section of the report) and to be able to contribute, as active partners, to the improvement of the relevance and quality of the pre-school programmes. This is an important aspect of the Human Rights-Based Approach in the programming of UN support which requires better attention in the future.

From the perspective of local community, the Project was in line with the need to expand the preschool facilities at municipality level (furniture, equipment, didactic materials, human resources) and thus the coverage of preschool education, supporting the education authorities to enforce the legal provisions in particular those related to preparatory preschool year. It also addressed the need for strengthened capacity of local stakeholders for multidisciplinary integrated approach to early childhood development. The Project include further activities for capacity development of government officials at municipal level in the area of ECE and ECI (budget lines 2.1.2 and 2.1.3). Relevance would have been better if the Project had an explicit focus on rural communities which are the most deprived of preschool infrastructure and teachers, and on communities with an enrolment rate below the country average (21.2% enrolment rate in target municipalities compared to 14.2% for BiH).

The Project has been guided by the Human Rights-Based Approach to programming and implementation and systematically monitored against the overarching human rights principles of non-discrimination, equality, and inclusion. The principles of rule of law and use of maximum available resources were implicit in the implementation and monitoring of the Project. The participation principle was better represented at the level of professionals and education authorities, in their

Implementation of Strategic Directions for Development of Preschool Upbringing and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina", 2012, Sarajevo, compared to 14.2% country average.
63 Only 53 trainees, compared
64 Sources: KAP (for target municipalities), TransMonEE (for BiH)
capacity of duty-bearers, by engaging them in various Project activities (in working groups, trainings, delivery of preschool education programmes, assessment of impact upon development of children). Participation of parents was however limited; with few exceptions, they were not meaningfully engaged in the joint activities with the children and teachers or in quality monitoring. The Project had an important contribution to the implementation of the principle of progressive realisation of children’s rights which was also part of the monitoring of human rights principles in general. It did so through: promoting children’s rights in the newly adopted strategy in FBiH; assessment work to provide evidence on the impact of preschool education upon the development of beneficiary children; improving the practices early detection of children with developmental delays and families at risk; opening access of vulnerable children to organised early childhood education programmes; developing the understanding and capacity of professionals, as duty-bearers, on their role in providing quality educations services in line with quality standards for service provision; raising awareness of the decision-makers on the need to invest in ECE through the provision of policy briefs. The empowerment principle worked well at the level of duty-bearers, notably professionals working in ECE and ECI services.

Given its profound UNCRC-oriented nature, the budget of the Project is fully rights-based.

Although gender equality was not an explicit strategy pursued by the Project, there was a good gender balance among the beneficiary children and professionals. The PD and the ToC do not include any reference to gender issues. The formulation of target groups, final beneficiaries and indicators in the Programme Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (PPME) is gender-blind. Progress reports do not report gender disaggregated data nor do they contain specific discussion on any possible gender issues raised during the implementation of the Project. Following the request of the evaluation team, UNICEF has kindly compiled gender disaggregated information based on the final reports of grant users and inquiries among project coordinators at entity, district and cantonal level. According to data made available to the evaluation, there was a balanced gender representation among the final beneficiaries of the Project (49.5% girls and 50.4% boys). The gender disaggregated data regarding the professionals who benefitted of training courses and the teachers who were hired to deliver the preschool programmes show that over 94% of them were women (see the effectiveness section of the report for more details), reflecting the fact that the education sector is female-dominated rather than being the result of a gender-sensitive strategy employed by the Project.

3.2 Effectiveness

Evaluation of Project effectiveness considered the following evaluation questions:

| What is the achievement level of planned results to date65 (quantitative and qualitative)? |
| To what extent has the Project improved the preschool education and ECI provision to effectively reach the most vulnerable children in the target municipalities and reduce the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination? |
| Has the Project provided any additional (not directly planned by the Project) significant contribution towards improvement of pre-school education in target municipalities? |

Analysis of Project effectiveness until the cut-off date of the evaluation has been a challenging exercise for the evaluation team given the lack of output indicators; these indicators are particularly relevant for a mid-term evaluation. The Program Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Plan (PPME) includes only outcome indicators (pages 9-10) and a list of quantitative and qualitative indicators (page 8) which are not assigned to outputs and which have been only partially reflected in the Baseline Study. The PPME has been prepared in November 2012 and since then it has not been updated.

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65 *to date* refers to May 2014, which is the last month of the project implementation period subject to this evaluation.

Mid-Term Project Evaluation "Increasing Early Learning Opportunities for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina", December 2014
based on final version of the PD\textsuperscript{66} and decisions of the PMB\textsuperscript{67}. To the extent possible, the evaluation has assigned indicators to various Project outputs, based on the list of qualitative and quantitative indicators in the PPME and in consultation with the UNICEF M&E team. It added baselines, where available, using the Baseline Study and the KAP, and reconstructed some of the reference groups, as the Baseline Study was not always sufficiently accurate in this regard (see Annex 8). However, as indicators considered in the Baseline Study have not been reported against in full in the progress reports, insufficient information about the achievement level was available to the evaluation.

According to the ToC, the Project envisaged to achieve three outcomes and nine outputs. This mid-term evaluation has particularly analysed the progress in achieving the outputs until May 2014 (the cut-off date of the evaluation).

**Outcome 1: Increased pre-school education enrolment rate in 46 municipalities, for all children aged 4-6, including Roma children, and children with developmental delays and disabilities**

The outcome indicator in the PPME is “preschool education enrolment rates for children aged 4-6”.

- **Baseline:** 21.2% (KAP)
- **Target:** 50% (PPME)

Progress until May 2014: The final survey to be carried out at the end of the Project will provide information about the enrolment rate in the target municipalities in the school year 2013/2014. Meanwhile, information about the contribution of the Project upon enrolment of children is provided in the section about impact and it is based on data collected from the sample and control group of this evaluation.

Three outputs are aimed to contribute to the achievement of outcome 1:  

**Output 1.1 - Increased awareness of parents, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, on the importance of and need to enrol children in early education, in 46 municipalities**

There has been progress towards achieving this output and it is likely to be fully achieved until the end of the Project i.e. March 2015. Under this output, a “Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Survey (KAP Survey) on Early Childhood Education and Development” was carried out in November 2013-January 2014\textsuperscript{68} in order to inform the Behaviour Change Communication Campaign. According to the KAP Survey, the parents are not aware of the overall and multiple benefits of early education on cognitive, social, emotional and psychomotor development of the child. A percentage of 41.3% of parents do not enrol their child in preschool education because they think that there is no need or it is too early (see Figure 6 below). As far as parents of children with special needs are concerned, only 23.2% of them intend to enrol their child in a preschool programme. Roma parents are less likely to be aware of the existence of the preschool programme and around 12.8% of all parents who composed the sample of the KAP survey consider that Roma children should attend separate preschools.

At the end of the Project, the survey will be repeated to measure the change as a result of the Behaviour Change Communication Campaign. The campaign was initially planned to be carried out in the third semester of the Project (until June 2014), but it was postponed due to the floods which affected the country in May 2014. According to its strategy and action plan which was shared with the

\textsuperscript{66} The formulation of several outputs in the PPME is different compared to the Project Document and the Progress Reports.

\textsuperscript{67} The PPME reflects the PD which sets the age bracket of beneficiary children to 4-5 and the number of municipalities to 15. Following the decisions of the PMB, the focus of the Project has been expanded to the age bracket 4-6 and to 46 municipalities.

\textsuperscript{68} The survey used a sample of 1,635 households with preschool-aged children in 45 project municipalities and 10 control municipalities.
evaluation team, the campaign was planned to start in October 2014 and last until March 2015. Since this is outside of the scope of the evaluation, no analysis is further done.

**Figure 6. Parents’ Reasons for not enrolling children in preschool education (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is no need, the child is looked after by unemployed parent or other relatives</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s too early, the child is still very young</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial problems</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/No answer</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intend to enrol the child/the child already attends preparatory preschool programme</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health problems</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child is not interested or doesn’t want to go</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents are not informed about opportunities</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KAP Survey, February 2014

It is to be noted that the parents whose children benefitted of the preschool education programme implemented by the Project in the target municipalities are much more aware of the importance of early education as they were before the Project started. The promotional activities carried out in the target municipalities and the effects of preschool education on their children (see also section 3.4 on impact below) have contributed to an increased awareness level, as confirmed by the focus groups with over 100 parents which were organised within the scope of the evaluation. The results of the Study on measuring the effects of preschool education on the cognitive, socio-emotional, language/communication and physical development of beneficiary children, carried out by the Association of Psychologists in FBiH in partnership with the associations of psychologists in RS and BD (June 2014), will provide evidence-based arguments for further promotion of the importance and need for early learning among the parents.

**Output 1.2 - Increased number of facilities in 46 municipalities where children can have access to inclusive Early Childhood Education services and Early Childhood Detection and Intervention services, which are adequately equipped**

This output has been achieved. A number of 160 primary schools, kindergartens and rehabilitation centres have been endowed with quality, functional furniture in accordance with existing pedagogical standards as well as with equipment and didactical materials to be able to provide the preschool education programme to around 278 groups of children. The average of 27 children/group was rather high.**69**. ECI resource rooms have been also organised in eight municipalities, thus supporting the education process of CwD through early detection and intervention services. According to interviews with professionals (particularly with teachers), the furniture and didactical materials were appropriate

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69 Preschool standards for children older than 4 years of age recommend an optimal number of 21 children/group (see e-mail of UNICEF dated 17 December 2014).
for the educational process, but in some cases insufficient; it was perceived that the tripling of the number of municipalities from initially 15 to 46 and consequently the high increase in the number of institutions delivering the education programme (especially in rural areas where no suitable furniture and didactic materials were available) has made the available budget to be spread too thinly across these various locations. The project budget did not predict any costs for rehabilitation works or construction of toilettes for small children in schools. During the field monitoring visits it was noticed that many classrooms were in need of painting and wooden floor repairs.

The Baseline Study provides information on the number of available rooms and sqm for preparatory preschool programme (434 rooms, respectively 15,802 sqm), number of institutions with no architectural barriers for children with disability (55 institutions) as well as the number of children on the waiting lists for the enrolment in preparatory preschool programme (1,430 children). The evaluation did not have data concerning the changes in the level of these indicators up to May 2014. Such information will be made available once the study will be repeated at the end of the Project.

Output 1.3 - Equal opportunities for poor children, children with developmental delays and disabilities and Roma children to have access to inclusive preschool education.

This output has been partially achieved. In case of CwD, the planned number of beneficiary children have been exceeded by 9%, as detailed in the impact section of the report. The capacity for outreach, assessment and case management has been improved through the delivery of a complex, high quality training programme to ECI professionals (see more details under output 2.1 below). As far as Roma beneficiary children are concerned, the target has not been achieved: only 31% (see impact section). Only in few cases (e.g. Bijeljina) Roma community leaders and Roma NGOs were engaged by the Project in identification and outreach activities. The failure to provide timely support and training to Roma leaders and mediators, as planned, decreased the opportunities of Roma children in the sample municipalities to be identified and enrolled in the 300-hour preschool education programme. There is also little evidence of the involvement of centres for social work in the identification of Roma children of preschool age and provision of subsidies to vulnerable and poor children in general to facilitate preschool attendance. UNICEF country office has been advocating for one year of universal, free of charge preschool education for 5-6 year old children, one year prior to primary school enrolment, but there are no significant results at the moment. It is to be noted that the country has been harshly hit by floods and funding was primarily oriented towards rehabilitating the damaged infrastructure. UNICEF is nevertheless committed to continue its advocacy efforts until a feasible solution is found for the enrolment of all poor children in preschool programmes. This desideratum is however unlikely to be achieved until the end of the Project.

Outcome 2: Enhanced quality of early childhood education in BiH for children aged 4 to 6, including Roma children and children with developmental delays and disabilities

The outcome indicators in the PPME are the following: “% of children of school-entry age who enter the first grade of primary school”, “% of children of school-entry age who enter the first grade of primary school and have disabilities” and “% of school-entry children who enter the first grade of primary school who are Roma”.70

- Baselines: 29.17%, respectively 2.17% and 1.36% (Baseline Study)
- Targets: 95%, respectively 30% and 50% (PPME)

70 These indicators are helpful for measuring the quality of preschool education (outcome 2) from the perspective of school readiness, hence facilitated enrolment in primary school. However, they are not sufficiently comprehensive to cover all facets of quality of the education programme.
Progress until May 2014: The school year to be considered for the assessment of progress against the above-mentioned outcome indicators is 2014/2015, which started in September 2014. It means that the assessment of this outcome is outside the scope of the mid-term evaluation whose cut-off date is May 2014.

Nevertheless, the evaluation has analysed the progress achieved from the perspective of the three planned outputs:

Output 2.1 - Increased number of facilities in 46 municipalities where children have access to inclusive ECE and ECI services that are adequately staffed with qualified teachers and assistant teachers.

This output has been achieved on a short-term basis. As mentioned above, the Project managed to increase the number of facilities providing ECE and ECI services to 160 institutions. Staffing was ensured with the recruitment of 236 teachers and teaching assistants for Roma and CwD. Of these, over 95% were women, mostly unemployed. Job creation was an unplanned positive effect of the Project. However, employment has been short-term. Once the 300-hour programme was completed and service contract terminated, many teachers left the system and became unemployed again, especially those working in bigger municipalities (Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Brčko). According to interviews and focus groups, the retention rate was apparently better in the small, rural municipalities, but the evaluation does not have sufficient evidence in this regard. It meant that the facilities providing preschool education increased and were in general adequately staffed, but only for a short duration. The project had longer-term effect on preschool teachers for whom this was the first work experience and participation in professional trainings. “During workshops we had a chance to listen experienced teachers and to share knowledge, we have learned a number of useful techniques and acquired new skills that we can we apply in work with preschool children.” (Preschool teacher, October 2014). The preschool teachers participating in focus groups pointed out that the Project provided a unique opportunity for them to learn the practicalities of working with CwD, because that was an area not sufficiently well covered by initial education for preschool and school teaching. In addition, the work experience gained by the young teachers and which was certified by the ministries of education could be helpful in passing a professional exam without which the teachers cannot work independently in educational practice.

Output 2.2 - Institutionalized capacity development initiatives for preschool teachers, taking into account the special needs of children with developmental delays and disabilities and Roma children.

The achievement of this output is in progress. The Project delivered 176 hours of training to 298 professionals working in ECE and ECI services, of whom 94% women (see Table 8). The Project has thus provided capacity building and empowerment opportunities to female professionals. Given the fact that the education sector is female-dominated, the Project contributed to the promotion of gender equality, without necessarily using a gender-sensitive strategy.

Table 8. Training courses delivered until May 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the course/</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Main training topics</th>
<th>No. of training</th>
<th>Target audience</th>
<th>No. of trainees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td>NGO EDUS</td>
<td>early detection,</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td>diagnostic and</td>
<td></td>
<td>staff of ECI</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>intervention for ECI</td>
<td></td>
<td>resource centres and resource rooms</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ensuring Quality of Implementation of Preschool Programme

| Agency for Preschool, Primary, Primary and Secondary Education | Quality assurance, learning outcomes, planning and programming based on principles of integrated curricula, partnership with family | 39 | Preschool teachers (especially young, unexperienced =104), advisors from pedagogical institutes and ministries of education | 150 | 9 | 141 |

Training of trainers on the French preschool model 'école maternelle'

| French consultant and local trainers | 'école maternelle' concept | 26 | Preschool teachers, pedagogues, advisers from pedagogical institutes and representatives of ministries of education | 45 | 3 | 42 |

Nikola Training Centre (NTC) methodology

| NTC | Advancing cognitive skills in children through games and associative learning | 13 | Preschool teachers | 50 | 3 | 47 |

**TOTAL**

| 176 h | 298 | 18 | 280 |

Source: project progress reports, quarterly reports of EDUS, interviews with training providers

There is no evidence of training needs assessments carried out before the delivery of the training courses. Hence the comment of some trainees that the content was not always sufficiently well adapted to the knowledge and experience of each learning group. The overall feedback from professionals is nevertheless positive, most appreciated being the trainings provided by the Agency for Preschool, Primary, Primary and Secondary Education and EDUS. The excellent quality of the ECI training programme provided by the latter, a highly respected NGO, in a blended learning format (combining classroom training with on-the-job training and practical sessions at EDUS premises), has been confirmed by the professionals who took part in the focus groups organised for the purpose of this evaluation. At the same time it is to be noted that a certain turnover in the group of trainees took place; interviews with UNICEF country office and EDUS confirmed that this was mainly due to the fact that the group included teachers who were hired by the education authorities only for the duration of the 300-hour preschool education programme at municipality level (3-5 months); once the programme came to an end, some of the teachers who were also EDUS trainees stopped to attend the training sessions. This is a lesson learnt for the future according to which investment in capacity building in general should primarily be done for the permanent teaching staff of schools and preschool institutions rather than for temporary, project-dependant staff.

The Project produced a valuable package of support materials aimed to be used by both professionals and parents (Table 9), providing a solid basis for the continuation of reforms in the area of professional development in ECE and ECI.

**Table 9. Resource Packages developed by the Project until May 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title / Author of the document</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Year of finalisation/release/publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring Quality of Implementation of Preschool Programme / Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide for individual development workplan / EDUS</td>
<td>Guide</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide for the development of the individual education workplan / EDUS</td>
<td>Guide</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabi for the training on further education of professional staff for early detection, diagnostic and intervention / EDUS</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scales for developmental assessment of children aged 0-6/ EDUS and Association of Neurologists</td>
<td>Assessment scales</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum for parent education / EDUS</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ecole maternelle kit / French consultant: video script for parents; training of trainers manual: teacher’s handbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training kit</th>
<th>Pending completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rulebook with modules on ECI for development of professionals from health, preschool education, care and social protection / ECI working group at FBiH level</td>
<td>By-law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Efforts are being done by UNICEF in cooperation with the education authorities, Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education, pedagogical institutes and universities to institutionalise the training programmes on ECE and ECI. Discussions are going on as to the feasibility of embedding in the system models such as ‘ecole maternelle’. The views are shared among professionals and remains to be seen to what extent the Bosnian system have the required resources to take it over.

*Output 2.3 - Implementation of the one year preschool programme based on the common core curriculum and ensuring the stimulation of children through (a) physical development, (b) socio-emotional development, (c) cognitive development and (d) development of speech, communication and creativity, with a particular focus on Roma children and children with developmental delays and disabilities.*

**This output has been achieved.** A 300-hour preschool programme has been provided in 46 target municipalities, lasting 3 to 5 months, depending on location. It meant a double number of hours compared to the standard 150 hours provided usually by the education authorities during the preparatory year. The programme was based on the common core curriculum, which is the standard curriculum used across the country. The third progress report of the Project (January-June 2014) mentions that the curriculum “was abridged for 300 hours and included targeted development within four major areas” (page 20). However, according to interviews with the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education, pedagogical institutes and teachers, no adjustment has been operated to this curriculum to ensure focus on the stimulation of the children in the four development areas or specific focus on Roma children and CwD. The capacity of parents to influence the development and expansion of pre-school education was limited. Apart from some presentations of Nikola Tesla Centre methodology (a system of learning which stimulates the cognitive development of children using techniques of associative learning), no other empowerment actions and engagement of parents in the design of programmes or in quality monitoring were planned. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, “parents are most often seen as recipients of services, somebody who needs advice, or their role is compensated, instead of active partners in the process of upbringing and education”71. This is an important issue which requires due consideration in future projects.

**Outcome 3: Evidence-based advocacy, adoption of legislation, policy development and budgeting supported to expand early childhood education in BiH**

The outcome indicator in the PPME is “Policy recommendations to expand pre-school education in BiH (yes/no)”. The achievement level has been assessed against the baselines and targets in the PPME, as follows:

- Baseline: Framework Law and 7 Cantonal Laws, RS Law and Brčko District Law on Preschool exist, 3 Cantonal Laws still pending adoption (PPME)
- Target: 3 Cantonal Laws adopted (PPME)
- Progress until May 2014: Not achieved yet, especially due to the financial implications of the enforcement of such laws, on the background of scarce resources at cantonal level. UNICEF

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71 Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2012), “Information on Implementation of Strategic Directions for Development of Preschool Upbringing and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, Sarajevo, page 13
Three outputs are aimed to contribute to the achievement of outcome 3:

**Output 3.1 Operational system to monitor progress in children’s learning achievements and school readiness as a result of various formal and informal ECE programmes developed and used in 46 municipalities.**

**This output has been partially achieved.** Standardised instruments for assessing the effects of ECE upon children in four development areas (cognitive, language, physical, socio-emotional) and school readiness were developed, tested and applied in a sample of target municipalities by the Association of Psychologists in FBiH. Embedment of these instruments into an operational system of monitoring progress in children’s learning across all municipalities is dependent upon ensuring several prerequisites: a) resolution of some methodological issues (see output 3.3 below); b) capacity building of the Agency of Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education, pedagogical institutes and other relevant public bodies to develop knowledge and skills concerning the assessment instruments and their practical use; c) adoption/adjustment of the relevant regulatory framework on quality assurance at state/ entity/ cantonal levels, as the case.

**Output 3.2 Evidence-based, budgeted policy options submitted to the BiH authorities to inform future policies and projects in the country as well as effective reallocation of resources in support of ECE.**

**This output has been achieved.** A Policy Brief “Preschool Education for All. A financially feasible plan to provide at least one year of preschool education to all children in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (May 2014) has been drafted and presented to policy-makers. The policy brief was based on an excellent study commissioned by UNICEF and carried out by Innova Management Consulting entitled “Final Report on Preschool Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Financial Analysis with Policy Recommendations on Standardization and Expansion of Required Programs, Financial Feasibility and Organization” (March 2013). UNICEF advocacy for effective reallocation of resources in support of ECE continues.
Output 3.3 Evidence collected in BiH through the Dubai Cares – UNICEF Project is informing global research, policies and projects related to early childhood education.

The achievement of this output is in progress. Evidence planned to be collected through the study on measuring the effects of ECE upon the development of children in four development areas is aimed to be presented during the conference at the end of the project and disseminated widely to inform global research, policies and programmes. According to the feedback from professionals, there are some methodological issues which might affect the reliability of results, stemming from the short period elapsed between the initial and final testing of children (e.g. for physical development); large mortality among Roma sample (20% in BD) which might decrease the reliability of measurement; lack of representativeness of RS sample (100 children only, apparently too small for validation); no validation of instruments by the professional community (e.g. associations of psychologists from BD and RS, pedagogical institute from RS, teachers/educators not consulted in the development of instruments). These methodological issues need to be settled quickly in order to ensure credibility of measurement.

3.3 Efficiency

Evaluation of Project efficiency was based on the following evaluation questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How well have the implementation of activities been managed? To what extent are activities implemented as scheduled? What management and monitoring tools have been used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well have the Project resources been used so far? Were funds managed in a cost-effective manner to achieve expected first results? Could the same outputs/results have been achieved with less resources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the project ensure co-ordination and coherence with other similar interventions to encourage synergy and avoid overlaps?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As described in section 1.2, the Project is being implemented by UNICEF BiH under the steering of the PMB and with the technical support of two WGs on ECE and ECI. At local level, the main Project partners are entity, cantonal and BD education authorities as well as preschool institutions and primary schools from target municipalities.

The PMB was instrumental for fine-tuning the orientation of the Project, but its functioning was not optimal during the second year of implementation. The PMB includes senior officials representing key decision-makers in education, health and social welfare at state, entity and district level. It has been functioning based on the Rules of Procedure adopted during its first meeting. The PMB held two formal meetings in 2013. Based on the minutes of the meetings and feedback from interviews, important decisions were taken by the board concerning the target municipalities (selection criteria, total number) and final beneficiaries (eligible age of children to be enrolled in preschool programmes). There was no PMB meeting in 2014\(^{72}\) and, according to the feedback from interviews, insufficient information concerning the progress of the Project was shared with the members of the PMB during the second year of implementation. The lack of meetings in 2014 is perceived as a missed opportunity for discussing issues related to the sustainability of the Project.

The technical inputs of the WGs have efficiently informed the decision-making process of the PMB and project management generally. The two WGs existed prior to the Project, but their membership has been reconfirmed and broadened in March-April 2013. Both WGs provided useful technical steering of the Project in the particular areas of ECE and ECI and inputs were used by the PMB and

\(^{72}\) Although the cut-off month for evaluation is May 2014, interviews were held in October-November 2014. The evaluation was informed that no PMB meetings were held in October-November 2014 and no one was planned until the end of the year.
the project team in making decisions during the implementation work. The WGs held regular meetings and had extensive on-line communication. Project updates were usually sent via e-mail.

**Efficiency of cooperation with education authorities was uneven.** The cooperation with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which chaired the PMB, as well as with the education authorities at entity and BD levels, was very good. They all supported the implementation of the Project according to their mandate and the commitments taken during the PMB meetings. The staff was cooperative and the deadlines were generally respected. At cantonal level, the cooperation with ministries of education, as grants users, and their appointed project coordinators was more challenging. The monitoring reports and interviews with the former Project Manager and field monitors confirm that some of them were active, creative and energetic (e.g. Tuzla canton, Herzegovina-Neretva canton), while others had to be seriously ‘pushed’ to deliver the outputs and results according to letters of grant agreement, respect deadlines, attend coordination meetings and complete administrative and outreach tasks (e.g. Sarajevo Canton, Una-Sana Canton, Central Bosnia canton). In several cases (BD, RS and Sarajevo, Tuzla and Central Bosnia cantons), the education authorities with whom the letters of grant agreement was signed with UNICEF have included fees for the project coordinator in their budget. Based on the analysis of results in all target municipalities, it is to be noted however that there was no direct correlation between the performance of the project in a certain location and the payment of the respective project coordinator. Indeed, the performance at the level of target municipalities was unequal, depending on the interest, time allocation and commitment of project coordinators as well as of principals of schools and preschools delivering the preschool education programme. The evaluation has been informed that the tasks of project coordinators were set via an exchange of correspondence between UNICEF and education authorities at different levels, thus outside the letters of agreement between the two parties and thus not always perceived as binding by some project coordinators.

**The Project has been managed in an inclusive and culturally-sensitive manner.** The project management was ensured by a Project team established under the supervision of the UNICEF Head of Education and in close consultation with the UNICEF Deputy Representative. The team included a Project Manager hired for this particular position and professionals from the education, health, communication and monitoring and evaluation sections of UNICEF country office. Most members of the team were women. The Project team was responsible for ensuring the efficiency and expertise in the operational management of the Project i.e. day-to-day technical and financial management of the Project, monitoring and reporting to the donor, quality assurance of outputs and outcomes, advocacy and communication. There have been some discontinuities in the project management function which at times affected the timeliness of some Project activities\(^73\), but overall the education section of the country office managed to ensure a smooth implementation process. The feedback from stakeholders confirms that activities and management of the Project were conducted professionally and that particular attention has been paid to ensuring an implementation approach which is highly inclusive and culturally-sensitive: “In a country with such a fragmented, asymmetric education system and where nothing could progress without consensus, UNICEF has to be praised for the way in which it put us together and enabled a decision-making and implementation process catering for the peculiarities of each entity and canton “ (government partner, October 2014). UNICEF is perceived as a respected partner and authorities at various levels as well as parents are grateful for the support provided so far. “UNICEF plays a crucial role in the development of preschool education in our country” (government partner, November 2014).

\(^73\) There was no Project Manager (PM) during the first three months of Project implementation. The first PM worked for the next three months, but had to leave due to pregnancy reasons. The second PM worked for the next 11 months and the contract was not able to be extended until the end of the Project due to some internal procedural constraints of UNICEF. Hence, there was no PM for the remaining 7 months of Project implementation.
The system used by UNICEF to monitor the Project is presented in Box 1 below.

**Box 1. Project monitoring**

The Project team has carried out the monitoring of the Project on the basis of the following documents:

a) ToC, which was part of the Program Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Plan (PPME);
b) Activity plans and Gantt charts included as specific chapters in the bi-annual Project Progress Reports;
c) Resource utilisation plans attached to the bi-annual Project Progress Reports;
d) Project Cooperation Agreements concluded with partner NGOs and reports from consultants, trainers and other contractors;
e) Field monitoring reports, released following regular field visits to targeted municipalities and beneficiary preschool institutions/primary schools;
f) Letters of grant agreement concluded with education authorities (as grant users) and progress reports.

Results monitoring has been impeded by the lack of assigned indicators for outputs in the PPME and lack of targets, as already explained in the effectiveness section of the report.

Process monitoring went smoothly and strived to assist adaptation of project strategies to meet the arising needs in the field.

Human rights principles of non-discrimination, equality, inclusion, rule of law, progressive realisation of children’s rights were embedded in the monitoring work.

The field monitoring reports were well structured and provided plenty of useful findings and recommendations for corrective actions in the visited municipalities; still, there is no evidence that the recommendations were followed up by the project management.

UNICEF released bi-annual progress reports to the donor and presented progress updates during the meetings of the PMB in the first year of implementation, but less in 2014.

There have been delays in the implementation of activities. The participatory strategy used by the Project worked well for ownership, but affected the efficiency of support on short term. The Project used an approach which ensured the full involvement of the education authorities in every stage of the process, which meant that the original timeframe for some activities was too ambitious and required rescheduling. This risk has been acknowledged by UNICEF in the first progress report according to which the participatory approach nurtured by the Project may lead to “the prolongation of deadlines and delays” (page 34). Still, no risks assessment was done in advance and the PD does not include any mitigation strategy. As grant users, the education authorities were fully accountable for the implementation of activities (staff recruitment and payment, procurement, local trainings, provision of education space, delivery of the preschool education programme, supervision, etc.) and achievement of planned results as per letter of grant agreement. UNICEF was primarily overseeing the implementation across the country, providing support when needed and supplying school furniture. According to interviews, delays were caused by the late start of assessment, outreach and promotion activities at canton level which impeded the timely enrolment of children in some municipalities, insufficient commitment of several project coordinators and constraints related to the budget adoption procedures (the case of RS). There were big delays in the payment of teachers (sometimes of 3-4 months) because of the late submission of progress reports to UNICEF by the grant users. In addition, the floods in May 2014 hampered the implementation of the Project in the affected municipalities (Banja Luka, Bijeljina) and also delayed several country-level activities, most notably the launch of the awareness raising campaign in the country and advocacy to continue and expand access to preschool

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There is an Enterprise Risk Management system at country office level, with Risk Profile and Actions, but it can in no way substitute a risk mitigation strategy at project level given its higher level applicability and aggregation of risk factors across all UNICEF interventions in the country.
education. Despite these delays and due to intensive efforts of the project team in UNICEF, the output performance until May 2014 was by and large in line with the intervention logic, outputs were of good quality and accessible to relevant stakeholders, and the immediate impact and results of the Project to date were significant as confirmed by a large number of people consulted for this evaluation. According to UNICEF, a no-cost extension of three months has been granted by the donor to allow the finalisation of activities and attainment of estimated results.

Financial monitoring was based on regular financial reports prepared by UNICEF on a bi-annual basis, financial reports from the grant users and visits to the target municipalities. UNICEF financial reports are well structured, including expenditures broken down per activity and types of budget categories. With few exceptions, the financial data reported in the bi-annual reports indicate that there was pretty straightforward spending as per approved budget by the donor, with funds spent in an accountable and cost-effective manner. Annex 9 presents an overview of the budget of the Project and amounts spent until June 2014. As expected, most funds have been allocated for the implementation of activities under outcome 2 (45.6%, compared to 20% for outcome 1 and 11.7% for outcome 3), as it included the grant component of the Project. The project management costs (staff and field monitoring), representing 16% of the budget, were in line with the market prices and salary levels for the respective level of qualification, experience and responsibility in an international project. Administrative (overhead) costs represented 6.5% of overall costs, similar to the usual thresholds for such costs in internationally-financed projects. A more detailed analysis was hampered by the lack of information concerning the unit costs used in estimating the budget for certain activities and a narrative financial report. The evaluation team has been nevertheless informed that UNICEF has strictly followed the donor requirements for budget reporting and breakdown. As far as the grant component is concerned, the Project employed a financial monitoring mechanism which is presented in Box 2 below.

### Box 2. Financial monitoring mechanism of UNICEF for grants

1) **MICRO assessment performed for all new partners**
   Based on thorough check up of all financial data submitted by education authorities (grant users), a micro assessment of each of them was performed by UNICEF to identify the level of risk for each partner. All partners involved in implementation of the Project were assessed as low risk partners.

2) **HACT (Harmonized approach to direct cash transfers) training**
   The training was organized in September 2013 for all partners with a view to ensure a proper utilization of funds (concepts and rules related to transfers of funds to government and NGO; FACE form - instructions for filling; VAT - procedure related to VAT; changes to the approved budget during implementation; internal controls; unused funds upon implementation; storage of project documentation; procurement - presentation of procedures and rules). In addition, the partners were provided written instructions on UNICEF financial rules and regulations.

3) **SPOT Check on utilization of the funds from first instalment**
   Upon utilization of the funds of the first instalment and before payment of the second, a thorough check up of all financial data was performed by Finance Assistant and Dubai Cares Project assistant. All documents were examined.

4) **Permanent support in financial management and funds utilization provided to partners.**

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75 According to the financial data for period January 2013 - June 2014 made available by UNICEF, the planned cost has been exceeded for three activities: 2.1.4 "Support inclusion of Roma assistants and personal assistant for children with disabilities", 2.2.2 "Capacity development of teachers, assistant teachers and Roma mediators on ECE" and 2.3.1 "Implementation of ECE and ECI curricula". There is no narrative budget expenditure report attached to explain the reasons for exceeded spending.

76 The evaluation team has requested UNICEF to provide information about the unit costs. Until the date of the submission of the draft report, no information was received.
Grants were paid in full to all grant users, although some of them failed to achieve the planned targets, i.e. Una-Sana canton, Zênica-Doboj canton and Vitez-Central Bosnia canton (see impact section). This was due to the fact that the last instalment was paid during the grant agreement implementation to ensure smooth implementation of activities and not at the end, after checking all achieved figures. There was no performance reserve or conditionality for the final payment.

Until end June 2014, an amount of 1,149,207 USD (67.5% of the budget) has been spent. According to interviews with UNICEF, the full budget will be disbursed if extension is provided by the donor until March 2015. This is likely to happen.

As far as cost-effectiveness of human resources is concerned, internal staff of UNICEF was engaged to review and comment on various policy and strategic drafts, and regional UNICEF consultants involved in joint UN projects were used for monitoring the Project in the respective cantons, without any additional costs for the Project. Local experts and trainers were hired whenever possible instead of international consultants, leading to important cost savings for fees and translation costs. A cost-effective practice of UNICEF was also to team up international trainers with local experts to enable the latter learn and ensure proper follow up without reliance on international experts.

Additional efficiency features of the Project consisted of the use of available premises in kindergartens and primary schools for the delivery of preschool education programme and centralised procurement of furniture for all municipalities in order to minimise the costs and ensure as far as possible coordinated implementation schedules at local level. The procurement process was transparent and guided by the value-for-money principle.

The average cost/child for 300-h preschool education programme delivered by the Project in the 46 beneficiary municipalities was approximately 144 BAM, indicating a better cost-effectiveness level compared to the country benchmark. Based on the information provided in the study “Preschool Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Financial Analysis with Policy Recommendations on Standardization and Expansion of Required Programs, Financial Feasibility and Organization” (Innova Management Consulting, March 2013), the evaluation team has calculated an average cost/child in a 300-h compulsory preschool education of 190 BAM, higher than the one in the Project.

The principle of additionality according to which donor funds are paid in addition to a contribution from the country, not instead of that, has been considered only marginally in the design of the grant component of the Project. In this respect, the Project should have covered only the cost of the additional 150 hours of the preschool programme and possibly the equivalent of the contribution of parents. Instead, it covered almost all costs of the 300-hour programme, including 150 hours which were the legal obligation of education authorities in the respective jurisdiction. There was a certain level of cost sharing by engaging entity, district and cantonal funding. However, this was very small. As presented in Table 10, overall contribution amounted to 127,424 BAM (89,797 USD),

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77 “Applying the Human Security Concept to Stabilize Communities in Canton 10” (UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM); “Advancement, Cooperation and Social Inclusion in the Birač Region” (UNDP and UNICEF).
78 It has been calculated based on the budget spent for grants and didactic materials (budget lines 2.3.1 and 1.2.3, column ‘Total utilized funds’, 3rd Progress Report), amended with wage taxes and contributions which would have been due were teachers hired with labour contracts (to make it comparable with the benchmark in Innova study) and divided with the number of children enrolled in the 300-hour programme delivered by the Project. Cost of furniture was not considered as this was a one-off cost, without any equivalent in the cost structure of the benchmark cost.
79 The overall cost in the study (section 6.1) has been amended, by considering a 300-hour duration of the programme and by deducting the cost of meals and transportation, to make its structure as much as possible comparable with the one reflected by the budget breakdown of grant users in the Project.
80 Exchange rate at 31 December 2013, source: www.cbbh.ba
representing an average of 14.5% of the total costs of preschool education programmes implemented in beneficiary municipalities. The level of own contribution varied largely among the grant users, from 3.4% in Tuzla canton to 21.5% in RS and Canton 10. There was no minimum level set in the selection criteria apart from a general co-financing requirement: "Local community is committed to co-financing the project" (Annex 7).

Table 10. Sources of financing for preschool education programme (in BAM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Implementing agencies (grant users)</th>
<th>Own contribution (BAM)</th>
<th>UNICEF grant (BAM)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ministry of Education RS (16 municipalities)</td>
<td>63,684</td>
<td>231,884</td>
<td>295,568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Department of Education BD (1 municipality)</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>51,950</td>
<td>57,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MoE Una-Sana Canton (2 municipalities)</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>97,080</td>
<td>106,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MoE Canton 10 (6 municipalities)</td>
<td>14,220</td>
<td>52,000</td>
<td>66,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MoE Ženica-Doboj canton (4 municipalities)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>107,094</td>
<td>117,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MoE Herzegovina Neretva Canton (5 municipalities)</td>
<td>12,680</td>
<td>52,200</td>
<td>64,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>MoE Sarajevo canton (8 municipalities)</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>52,199</td>
<td>57,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>MoE Tuzla canton (3 municipalities)</td>
<td>1,840</td>
<td>52,200</td>
<td>54,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Municipality Vitez (1 municipality)</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>52,194</td>
<td>57,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>127,424</td>
<td>748,801</td>
<td>876,225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Grant Applications (budget annex)

Nevertheless, the Project has a significant efficiency characteristic given by its very nature, i.e. investment in early childhood education and development, which brings about tremendous returns in the future for the individuals, communities and society generally. Numerous studies\(^{81}\) demonstrated a large range of benefits, from improved academic outcomes for children who benefitted of early childhood education and reduced dropout rates to economic savings for states. Another important reference document is the 2011 Communication of the European Commission\(^{82}\) which notes that early childhood education and care is an essential foundation for successful lifelong learning, social integration, personal development and later employability and that it is particularly beneficial for the disadvantaged and can help to lift children out of poverty and family dysfunction. Initial Project investment in the endowment of classrooms and in the development of training modules for teachers and other professionals could be quickly recovered in the coming years as more and more children will enrol in the preschool education and benefit of child-centred, quality programmes. In other words, education and development returns in the future will pay for initial investment. From this perspective, efficiency of the Project might have been higher on long-term in case the final beneficiaries included younger children of 4-5 to a bigger extent. As put it by James J. Heckman, Nobel Prize laureate in economics, "The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from


As mentioned in the relevance and impact sections, most beneficiary children of the Project were older than 5.

The Project built on the existing policy environment, formal coordination mechanisms and knowledge gained from already supported initiatives in the area of ECE, notably “Building Child-Friendly Schools and Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (2008-2009), co-funding projects with municipalities on early learning (2012-2013) and the IPA “Social Protection and Inclusion Support” projects financed by EU which resulted in coherent and mutually reinforcing approaches and methodologies. It also built on the experience of UNICEF in assisting the country to develop ECE and inclusive and intercultural education, thereby ensuring coherence, complementarity and cost-effective use of resources.

3.4 Impact

In relation to impact evaluation, the ToR mentioned the following: “Since the project implementation has been rather short, it is assumed that the impact level results will not be possible to show and/or document. It is unlikely that there will be evidence to support impact results. Since, this is a formative evaluation, it is expected that the consultant/team will show the numerical changes sparked by the project (number of children who attended early education programmes due to this Project) and this information will further be analysed and put into relevant context” (page 5). Hence, the evaluation responded to the following evaluation questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent has the Project contributed so far to increasing the number of children from vulnerable groups benefiting from pre-school services compared to those in the municipalities where the Project has not been active?</td>
<td>The Project contributed to increased numbers of children from vulnerable groups benefiting from pre-school services in the target municipalities. Enrolment of Roma children was however challenging. Overall gender balance was good. The number of children enrolled in preschool education programmes increased from 11,442 (the baseline number) to 19,103 children in the school year 2013/2014, as a direct effect of the Project. According to feedback from 14 focus groups with over 100 beneficiary parents, almost all of them (98%) would have not enrolled their children without the Project support, given the inability to cover the associated costs (120-160 BAM/month), but also because they were not aware of the benefits of preschool education before. “I am a single mother and do not have funds to enrol my child into kindergarten. Thanks to this project, my child was in kindergarten with other children.” (Parent of a child with disability) “Without this project we would have not been able to enrol our children in preschool.” (Parent of Roma children, October 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the effects so far of 300-hour preschool education programmes in terms of benefits for children participating in these programmes, especially for vulnerable children?</td>
<td>It meant that over 7,500 children (out of the total number of 7,661 beneficiary children) were given the opportunity to benefit of early childhood education and a good start in life who would have otherwise been denied. This is a major achievement of the Project indeed. In this respect, the Project has overly achieved its planned target by 9.4%, as seen in Table 11. According to data retrieved from the final</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reports of grant users, there has been a balanced gender participation in the preschool education programmes delivered with the support of the Project: 49.5% girls and 50.4% boys\(^6\). With few exceptions (e.g. some kindergartens in Sarajevo canton, canton 10), the age of beneficiary children was 5-6 (age of entering the preparatory year), although the planned age bracket was 4-6.

Table 11. Beneficiary Children of the Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficiary children</th>
<th>Planned</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children, of whom:</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>7,661</td>
<td>109.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Roma children</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Children with developmental delays/disabilities</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>117.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNICEF project data

As far as vulnerable groups are concerned, the Project was successful in enrolling CwD, the target being exceeded by 17.1%, i.e. 410 children enrolled compared to 350 children planned to be enrolled. Gender analysis of available data show that 60% were boys and 40% were girls\(^7\). This gender imbalance might be the result of a higher number of boys in the overall number of children with disability in the target municipalities. There are no reliable data in this respect and without having a gender-based vulnerability profile of these children, it is difficult to judge to what extent gender mainstreaming has been ensured in the provision of education services. The parents of CwD who participated in focus groups have confirmed that they had no intention to enrol their children in preschool education before hearing about the opportunity provided by the Project. In their case, the decision to enrol their children was reasoned not only by insufficient incomes to pay the attendance fee, but primarily by the lack of trust that their children would be adequately catered for. The promotion of the inclusive approach of the Project combined with the setting up of ECI resource rooms within the schools and kindergartens and training of professionals in ECI have increased the confidence of parents and encouraged them to enrol their children in preschool education programmes.

The performance of the Project was suboptimal in case of Roma children. Only 125 Roma children have added to the existing 107 enrolled children in target municipalities. Compared to the estimated number of 400 children, it meant an achievement rate of only 31.2%. The gender balance was satisfactory: 53% boys and 47% girls\(^8\). Having in view the fact that Roma parents are reticent to allow girls attend education, the achievement of the Project in this respect is to be commended. Overall however, the main reasons which led to a poor enrolment of Roma children were the following:

a. **Failure to engage Roma community leaders and Centres for Social Work in outreach activities.** The evaluation was informed that the Project planned to engage Roma representatives in the process of identification of disadvantaged children and of encouraging their parents to enrol the children in preschool education. The enrolment figures in the beneficiary institutions indicate that the Project succeeded to do so in only few municipalities (e.g. Zivinice, Bijelina). Discussion groups revealed that the centres for social work were not systematically involved in the identification of preschool age Roma children. The reports on funds utilization until June 2014 indicate that several budget lines directly aimed at enhancing the outreach of preschool education programmes were not used at all i.e. ‘support to Roma mediators’, ‘advocacy, awareness and outreach work to identify vulnerable children’, ‘social mobilisation activities, advocacy and capacity development of key stakeholders’ (27,000 USD in total).

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\(^6\) Calculation based on data available from 135 out of 160 institutions where the Project implemented preschool education programmes. For 31 institutions, reported data are not gender disaggregated.

\(^7\) Calculation based on gender disaggregated data available in case of 92% of the total number of beneficiary children with developmental delays and disabilities.

\(^8\) Calculation based on gender disaggregated data available in case of 95% of the total number of beneficiary Roma children.
b. **Promotion of the project via inappropriate information means.** During the focus groups, the evaluation was informed that the promotion of the 300-hour preschool programme was done in most cases via electronic media which is unlikely to be accessible to Roma communities.

c. **Lack of transportation means.** According to feedback from focus groups with parents and professionals, the location of institutions delivering preschool education programmes in the Project was in some cases too far away of Roma communities and transportation costs were not covered either by the Project or local contribution.

d. **Low value of preschool education perceived by Roma parents.** The review of various studies as well as feedback from professionals and school principals indicate that Roma parents prefer to engage their children in child labour activities rather than education especially because of a lack of awareness on the value of preschool education on the background of poverty and insufficient social/financial/material support earmarked by the CSW or schools.

The enrolment rate of children in preschool education increased in the municipalities where the Project has been active. A negative trend has been registered in the municipalities outside of Project influence. As described in section 2.2, the evaluation methodology used a control group to measure the quantitative impact of the Project, by comparing the enrolment rates in the school year 2012/2013 (before the intervention of the Project) with those in 2013/2014 (after the intervention of the Project) in the municipalities forming the sample, respectively the control group. As seen in Figure 7, the overall enrolment rate in the sample group of municipalities increased with 12%, while, on the contrary, in the municipalities of the control group the enrolment registered a decrease with 6% during the same period. This is a worrying trend indeed.

**Figure 7. Evolution of enrolment rate in sample and control groups**
(in %, school year 2012/2013 compared to school year 2013/2014)

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UNICEF (2013), "Situation Analysis of Children’s and Women’s Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina"

Responses were received from 13 out of 15 sample municipalities and from 8 out of 9 municipalities in the control group.

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Mid-Term Project Evaluation "Increasing Early Learning Opportunities for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina", December 2014
A positive trend has been recorded in the sampled municipalities in the enrolment rate of vulnerable groups as well i.e. Roma children (+32%), CwD (+40%), children living in rural areas (+15%) and children from low income families (+15%) in the school year 2013/2014 compared to 2012/2013. In the control group, the enrolment rate decreased in the case of CwD (-18%) and children from families with low incomes (-30%) and remained stable for Roma children. The only positive evolution has been recorded in case of children from rural areas, whose enrolment rate increased with 6%, still lower than the one in the sample group (14%). High unemployment and increasing poverty rates among parents\textsuperscript{81}, leading to inability to pay the preschool contribution, and insufficient social welfare support, combined with low awareness of parents on the value of preschool education and difficulties encountered by poor municipalities and some education authorities to enforce the preschool legislation are among the most important reasons (see Box 3) which counted for declining enrolment of children in preschool education in 2013/2014 compared to the year before, including in the municipalities composing the control group.

**Box 3. Bottlenecks in Early Learning Provision in BiH**

Lack of clear strategies and insufficient preparedness for the implementation of the Law on Preschool Upbringing and Education, in particular at the local level is a major short sight in this sector. Local government authorities show insufficient preparedness while the limited resources and funds allocated to ECE is an identified bottleneck. Investment in early learning still seems to be seen as an additional burden on limited budgets. The number of children from vulnerable and marginalised groups who receive support in this early period of their development is scarce and there is a weak support of the system or community-based services for parents who are not in a position to pay for preschool. Community resources across the country are rarely earmarked for preschool age children.

\textit{UNICEF (2013), "Situation Analysis of Children’s and Women’s Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina", page 70}

“These laws (\textit{n.a. on preschool upbringing and education}) have still not been passed in three cantons (Middle Bosnia, Herzegovina-Neretva, and West Herzegovina canton), whereas in Una-Sana canton this law was passed in mid 2010, but it is still not effective.” (page 7) 

“It is important to point out here that, in those cantons where preschool legislation has not yet become a reality, ministries of education have long ago submitted their drafts to the procedure, but the activities stopped there. As can be observed from the answers of the ministries – the reasons are primarily of financial nature”. (page 8)

“The access to preschool institutions and good quality preschool programmes is directly conditioned by the financial power of parents. This implies further deepening of inequality and violation of the right to early education, and subsequently strengthening of poverty and the absence of the social inclusion mechanisms for marginalised and vulnerable groups”. (page 23)

\textit{Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2012), "Information on Implementation of Strategic Directions for Development of Preschool Upbringing and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina", Sarajevo}

The Project managed to contribute to the increase of the enrolment rate in municipalities where it was active, by addressing these bottlenecks at the level of parents (free provision of preschool programmes to children, increased awareness of the benefits of early learning) and education authorities (more and better trained teaching staff, more space made available through endowment with furniture and didactic materials, increased capacity to enforce the legislation, etc.).

Impact at local level was dependant on the efficiency of promotional activities, engagement of community leaders and commitment of project coordinators and school principals. Within the evaluation sample, the highest enrolment rate has been recorded in Tomislavgrad, Foča and Brčko municipalities. Mostar and Zavidovic were the municipalities which managed to enrol the highest number of children with development delays and disabilities in preschool education programmes supported by the Project. In view of Roma children inclusion, the best performant municipalities were Zivinice (Tuzla Canton) and Bijeljina (RS), especially due to engaging Roma community leaders and Roma NGOs in the promotion work of the Project. As far as achievements at the level of administrative units is concerned, the ‘best performers’, i.e. those which achieved all planned indicators, were Herzegovina-Neretva and Tuzla cantons (17.4% of sampled municipalities), while the ones which failed to reach all planned targets were Una-Sana, Zenica-Doboj and Central Bosnia cantons (15.2% of sampled municipalities) – see Table 12.

The Project has increased access to organized and inclusive early learning programmes of children aged 4 to 6 in the 46 municipalities across BiH, provided by professionals in child upbringing and early learning. Quality has been however affected by the tripling of the number of target municipalities compared to initial plans. The need to support the children attend early education programmes is huge in BiH and there is often a risk to ignore quality over quantity, in an effort to encourage more children from as many local communities to participate. The Project was planned to be implemented in 15 municipalities, but it was increased to 46 municipalities following the decision of the PMB. The initially planned number of beneficiary children was preserved; however, the quality of the preschool education programme has been affected by three main factors, as highlighted by the field monitoring reports and also confirmed by the interviews with the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education and pedagogical institutes as well as focus groups with professionals: a) insufficient resources for training all young and unexperienced teachers hired to work in the 160 institutions participating in the Project; an economy of scale would have been possible in case the Project was active in only 15 municipalities; b) insufficient supervision and quality assurance from education authorities, unable to dedicate the needed time resources to all municipalities under their responsibility, especially to unexperienced teachers; c) insufficient didactical materials procured for all participating kindergartens and primary schools, as the allocated budget had to be used for institutions in 46 municipalities instead of 15.

Nevertheless, there have been significant improvement in children competences and learning capabilities as a result of participation in the preschool education programme. The evaluation

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*A number of 236 teachers and assistant teachers were hired, most of them being young and unexperienced. Training was provided only to 104 of them (interview with the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education)
learnt from parents’ feedback and teachers who participated in focus groups that the Project helped the children to socialise (they learnt how to share toys and food, how to play in a group, how to address the others, how to listen and respond); improve knowledge (learning poems and songs, local geography, demography or history), improve skills (writing, drawing, painting, singing, dancing, hitting, aiming, avoiding obstacles, communication); acquire personal hygiene habits. Parents were enthusiastic of the Project and of the teachers. At their turn, children participating in the focus groups confirmed that they liked very much their teachers, enjoyed the programme and acquired new knowledge and skills. A more rigorous measurement of the impact of the preschool education programme upon the development of children (cognitive, socio-emotional, physical, etc.) has been done by a dedicated study, commissioned by UNICEF within the framework of the Project and whose results will be made available soon.

**Impact on children’s school readiness has been assessed by parents, preschool principals and teachers and primary school teachers as very high.** Assessments of primary school teachers in this regard are particularly relevant as they continued to work with children who participated in the Project, after they have enrolled in primary school. For Roma children, participation in the 300-hour preschool programme supported by the Project had a specific benefit as they became familiar with the language of instruction used in primary school; lack of command of this language is one of the major obstacles faced by Roma children in making progress in first grade of primary school.

**The Project has contributed to the early detection of developmental delays which is crucial for children’s future development.** Intervention helps avoid socially and financially costly alternatives, such as institutionalisation. An important body of specialised literature confirms the tremendous benefits of ECI upon vulnerable children. Box 4 presents an excerpt from a relevant study.

**Box 4. Importance of Early Childhood Intervention**

"Disadvantages in early childhood have implications for how prepared children are when they enter school. School readiness includes not only cognitive skills but also those associated with socialization, self-regulatory behavior, and learning approaches. Assessments (...) indicate that children with more-disadvantaged backgrounds enter school with lower levels of the knowledge and social competencies that are important for subsequent school success. While these readiness measures indicate that children from more enriched environments enter school better prepared, longitudinal data demonstrate that these early gaps persist and even widen as children progress through school. Thus, because disadvantaged children do not advance at the same rate at their more advantaged peers, achievement gaps tend to widen over time. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds also experience higher rates of special education use, grade repetition, and dropping out of high school. Lower rates of school achievement are in turn associated with unfavorable trajectories in later years. The latter include such outcomes as low rates of employment, welfare dependency, and delinquency and crime. Even if only a portion of these detrimental outcomes in childhood and adulthood can be averted, the benefits may be substantial".


In this regard it is illustrative the case of a sampled municipality where 28 out of 147 children screened by the ECI centre were identified to be in need of therapeutical assistance. In general, early detection was highlighted by the majority of professionals as one of the very important Project effects.

“The Project has enabled joint actions for early detection and interventions by the teams of doctors, therapists, psychologists, pedagogues, social workers and teachers”. (Professional from Health Service, October 2014)
3.5 Sustainability

Evaluation of Project sustainability considered the following evaluation questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What factors are likely to hinder or support the sustainability of results, i.e. legal framework, capacity of teachers and other professionals, financial resources at local level to continue financing pre-school services that target the most marginalized children?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What measures is the Project putting into place to support and ensure the sustainability of results?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current legal framework governing the preschool education system in BiH is supportive for the further development and expansion of early childhood education programmes and approaches put in place by the Project as well as for improvement of core curriculum and better observance of the quality standards for work of preschool teachers, pedagogues and principals. As already explained in the relevance section, the Project goes in line with the existing legislation in the area of education, particularly the Framework Law on Preschool Upbringing and Education, adopted in 2007, and the harmonised laws adopted by the jurisdictions in RS, BD and the cantons in FBiH. In the FBiH, the adoption of the new Strategic Plan for Improvement of Early Childhood Development 2013-2017 and Rulebook with modules on ECI for development of professionals from health, preschool education, care and social protection, both developed with the support of the Project, provide an excellent basis for expanding the access and coverage of quality preschool education over the next years. There is however an important legal constraint which needs to be overcome would the strategic goals of the plan be accomplished, i.e. adoption of the preschool education laws in the remaining three cantons: Middle Bosnia, Herzegovina-Neretva and West Herzegovina. UNICEF country office is in permanent contact with the respective education authorities and carries out an energetic advocacy to support the completion of the adoption process in these three cantons. During the field phase, the representatives of the ministry of education of Herzegovina-Neretva canton provided evidence for lobbying at the assembly level to pass the law, confirming that things are progressing in the right direction.

UNICEF is also advocating for the introduction of free of charge, universal, one-year preschool preparatory programme of 600 hours to ensure efficient school readiness. In this respect, the policy brief (see Box 5) presented to decision-makers regarding the financial impact of such a policy decision has been well received and steered debate about possible scenarios and options for ensuring implementation.

**Box 5. Policy Brief on Preschool Education for All**

“Preschool education for all children in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is possible. Recent analysis shows it is not a dream but a realistic objective, to be achieved in the coming years”.

“At 74 BAM, the monthly costs per child of the short programs are about 4.5 lower than those of full daycare, but their impact on child development and school-readiness is the same. The number of five year olds who are currently not yet in preschool is estimated at 21,200. This would mean that an additional 19 million BAM per year is needed at national level to enroll all the five year olds. This is only a fraction of GDP growth even under pessimistic economic forecasts. The money can also be mobilized by reducing inefficiencies in primary education; in fact, this strategy would free up sufficient resources to enroll even the four year olds”.

*Source: Excerpts from UNICEF (2014), “Preschool Education for All. A financially feasible plan to provide at least one year of preschool education to all children in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, page 1*
The elections and floods this year have put on hold the decision-making process and it is unlikely that significant progress will occur until the end of the Project. With few exceptions\textsuperscript{93}, due to severe financial constraints, not even the 300-hour programme (financed by the Project last school year) is functioning at the moment, apart from the standard 150-hour (190-hour in RS) preparatory programme. The evaluation has nevertheless informed that sustained efforts are being made in three out of six cantons where the Project has been active (Canton 10, Herzegovina-Neretva and Tuzla) to continue the implementation of the 300-hour programme in the future. \textbf{As far as preschool education of smaller children (aged 4-5) is concerned, the over-reliance on municipality budgets and parents’ contribution put under risk the provision of ECE especially in poor municipalities of the country.}

\textbf{Continuation of reform is thus dependent on external funding at the moment, as demonstrated by the negative evolution of the enrolment rates in the control group (see impact section) and low additionality of donor funding (see efficiency section). External support is crucial for increasing access and coverage of vulnerable children in preschool education until solid rights-based foundations of practices and procedures are built and capacities are in place to ensure that laws and systems run effectively.} This is also acknowledged by UNICEF country office in its second progress report:

> “Keeping in mind the complex country structure, fragmented responsibilities for preschool education, lack of unified legislation related to ECE programmes and insufficient budget resources, it is clear that a two-year project timeframe is too short to further expand ECE in BiH. As Government authorities reiterated on several occasions, extended support will be required to ensure long-lasting results.” (page 38)

The evidence provided by the Project concerning the benefits of preschool education upon child development and the financial feasibility of expanding it to one year represent an important ground for the continuation of reforms and expansion of preschool education provision in the country. Due to the Project, the physical infrastructure allows the 160 kindergartens and schools to accommodate next generations of children in preschool programmes (furnished classrooms with furniture, equipment, didactical materials, etc.). Feedback from parents confirms that the \textit{Project succeeded to increase demand for preschool education and for early detection and referral of children to specialised ECI services}, which is likely to act as a lever for resource mobilisation in the future.

In this process, \textit{the manuals, toolkits, curricula, guides and assessment instruments developed by the Project (see effectiveness section) will be instrumental for the continuation of capacity building and quality assurance activities.} Efforts are being made by UNICEF in partnership with the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education to institutionalise the school readiness programme for preparatory year into the in-service training system. The Agency will also publish very soon the results of the evaluation of training events implemented by the Project in a document entitled “Supporting the Development of Quality in Early Childhood Education” in order to promote the importance of teacher training as a crucial factor of quality assurance in preschool education. The Project has provided important learning opportunities; however, it was able to cover a limited number of professionals in certain areas (e.g., only 53 trainees in ECI services where the need is very high) and many of them are no longer working in the system given the temporary nature of employment in the preschool education programme supported by the Project\textsuperscript{93} (see effectiveness section). It is therefore of utmost importance to continue the capacity building activities and the Project provided essential prerequisites for doing so. \textbf{An important sustainability result is the integration of two of}

\textsuperscript{93} In its comments to the draft evaluation report, UNICEF has informed the evaluation that the 300-hour programme is functioning in five municipalities of canton 10.

\textsuperscript{94} The key informants participating in interviews and focus groups estimated that the retention rate is 40% in the small, rural municipalities and very limited in bigger municipalities. There is no other evidence available to triangulate this finding.
the eight ECI centres supported by the Project (Tuzla and Foca) into the health, respectively education system. They are properly staffed and able to advice the teachers on early detection of children with developmental delays and referral to specialised services.

It is to be noted that the PD does not include a specific sustainability strategy or explicit activities planned to be taken to ensure sustainability of results. The selection criteria of the 46 municipalities (Annex 7) include a very general requirement to be fulfilled in order to get the grant i.e. “the local government and local institutions are committed to ensuring the sustainability of the project” – this criterion is not embedded as a binding requirement in the letters of grant agreements between UNICEF and the grant users, hence not followed it up. The progress reports discuss various venues explored by the Project to put in place measures to support the sustainability of results, but there is no evidence of discussion in the PMB and decision-making in this regard. The lack of PMB meetings in the second year of the project was a lost opportunity for working out a timely sustainability strategy. As the duration of the Project is likely to be extended until March 2015, the PMB could be used for discussing the way forward.
4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

Relevance

The Project is relevant for BiH’s policies aimed at improving the early childhood education and development, as it addressed important gaps and challenges of the current preschool system. The Project is in line with BiH’s Strategic Directions for Education Development and Implementation Plan 2008-2015 while its primary objectives are tied to the implementation of the Framework Law on preschool upbringing and education. The Project addressed the needs of vulnerable children, in particular CwD, but it faced challenges in overcoming the systemic barriers of low participation of Roma children in preschool education. Children living in rural areas who are severely deprived of access to preschool education were not explicitly targeted by the Project. Priority was given to delivery of preparatory programmes for children aged over 5, while programmes for smaller children (4-5 years old) were almost neglected. The Project was highly relevant for the needs of professionals and municipalities to implement quality and inclusive preschool education programmes. Further investment is still needed to reach a critical mass of qualified staff in the system and better coverage of communities with lagging behind enrolment rates as well as to better respond to parents’ needs for empowerment and meaningful participation in the reforms of preschool education. The multi-pronged approach (including working on policies, developing methodologies and tools, endowment of space, capacity building) and highly-participatory approaches used by UNICEF and its partners to implement the project were appropriate in view of the underlying ToC and its key assumptions.

As far as human rights and cross-cutting issues are concerned, the Project is highly relevant for BiH’s international commitments deriving from the ratification of CRC and its status of EU potential candidate country. It had a major contribution to the promotion and realisation of child rights through opening access to pre-school education services and early learning development to children who are left out of the system. The Project had a positive contribution to the strengthening of the capacity of a wide range of Bosnian duty-bearers to protect and fulfil the child right to early childhood education and development. The Project contributed to women empowerment, but without necessarily having a gender mainstreaming approach. It managed to ensure an equity focus by orienting investment to vulnerable children.

Effectiveness

Based on the assessment of mid-term results, the Project was effective in improving the ECE and ECI provision for the most vulnerable children. It did so by contributing to the reduction of the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination, increasing parents’ awareness on the importance of early education and opening access of vulnerable children to inclusive and generally well staffed and equipped ECE and ECI services. Adaptation of preschool facilities and capacity building actions prepared the service providers and education authorities for better fulfilment of their statutory roles in preschool education provision. Due to the Project, an operational system to monitor progress in children’s learning achievements and school readiness is going to be in place soon. Evidence-based, budgeted policy options submitted to BiH authorities are expected to inform future policies and reallocation of resources in support of ECE. UNICEF’s partnership to date with key stakeholders allowed for effective and coordinated implementation of the Project at municipality level and connection with legal and policy developments at state level. Effectiveness would have been higher in case the capacity building activities were based on thorough training needs assessment to ensure a

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Based on the Performance Scoring detailed in the methodology of the evaluation.
critical mass of trained professionals throughout the country and a better adapted curriculum to learning groups. More effective quality safeguards would have been needed to ensure observance of quality standards across the beneficiary municipalities.

Efficiency

The implementation of the Project until the cut-off date of the evaluation is assessed as moderately efficient. The Project has been managed in an inclusive and culturally-sensitive manner. The participatory strategy used by the Project worked well for ownership, but affected efficiency of support on short term. At municipality level, the performance of the Project was unequal, depending on the commitment of project coordinators and principals of participating schools and preschool institutions as well as engagement of local communities. There have been many delays in the implementation of activities, some of them outside the control of the Project. A risk mitigation strategy was missing. Although planned targets were not achieved by some grant users, grants were paid in full. The average cost/child of preschool education supported by the Project was lower compared to the country benchmark, but the additionality principle of donor funding has been only marginally considered. Nevertheless, the efficiency of the Project is ingrained in its very nature, as early childhood education and development returns in the future will exceed by far the initial investment. Results-oriented monitoring would have been facilitated by a clearer and updated monitoring and evaluation framework, with reporting based on prior defined targets in the ToC.

Impact

Considering its rather limited resources, the Project is likely to have a good impact level, making an important contribution to increasing the coverage and participation of vulnerable children in preschool education. Around 98% of parents would have not enrolled their children without the Project support, given the inability to cover the associated costs and lack of awareness on the benefits of preschool education. Impact on children’s school readiness has been assessed by parents, preschool principals and teachers and primary school teachers as very high. Significant improvement in children competences and learning capabilities has been reported as a result of participation in the preschool education programme. The enrolment rate considerably increased in the municipalities where the Project has been active and had a negative trend in the municipalities outside of Project influence. Enrolment of Roma children was however challenging, given insufficient engagement of Roma community leaders and centres for social work in outreach activities and low awareness level of Roma parents regarding the value of preschool education. Impact at local level was dependant on the efficiency of promotional activities, engagement of community leaders and commitment of project coordinators and school principals. Quality of impact was affected by the tripling of the number of target municipalities compared to initial plans.

Sustainability

Based on achievements until May 2014, effects and outcomes of the Project are less likely sustainable. Although the current legal framework governing the preschool education system in BiH is supportive for the further development and expansion of early childhood education programmes and approaches put in place by the Project, the severe financial constraints at the level of government (especially in poor cantons and municipalities) and scarce resources of parents make the continuation of reform dependent on external funding. With the exception of one canton, the 300-hour programme (financed by the Project last school year) is not functioning at the moment in the target municipalities, apart from the standard 150-hour (190-hour in RS) preparatory programme. There is a low level of additionality of donor funding. External support is crucial for increasing access and coverage of
vulnerable children in preschool education until solid rights-based foundations of practices and procedures are built and capacities are in place to ensure that laws and systems run effectively. Increased demand for preschool education and early detection and referral of children to specialised ECI services is expected to act as a lever for resource mobilisation in the future. The manuals, toolkits, curricula, guides and assessment instruments developed by the Project provide a good basis for further capacity building and quality assurance activities.

4.2 Recommendations and Lessons Learnt

4.2.1 Recommendations

The recommendations presented in Table 13 below are based on the findings and conclusions of the evaluation as well as on consultation with all key stakeholders that were interviewed during the field phase. Each interview, focus group and discussion group has checked the perceptions of various stakeholders (ministries, UNICEF, EU, municipalities, professionals, service providers, NGOs) and final beneficiaries (children and parents) concerning the top priorities of the ECE reform in BiH that needs to be addressed in the coming years and consequently the role each of these stakeholders should play (see Interview Guides in Annex 5).

Validation of recommendations is planned to be done in two phases: 1) by UNICEF and the donor, following submission of the draft report; and 2) by key stakeholders during the presentation of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations in a meeting of the PMB and WGs.

Recommendations are divided into two categories, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O - Operational</td>
<td>Operational recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP - Strategic and Programming</td>
<td>Recommendations are aimed to be used in policy making by the government and in prioritising and programming of future donor support. Each recommendation has an addressee and a proposed timing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Operational Recommendations are aimed to inform the implementation of the Project until March 2015 (its end date, following the no-cost extension), while the Strategic and Programming Recommendations are aimed to be used in policy making by the government and in prioritising and programming of future donor support. Each recommendation has an addressee and a proposed timing.
### Table 13. List of Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Addressee</th>
<th>Timing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Operational Recommendations (O)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>O1</strong> Document good practices and lessons learnt to inform future policy measures and projects</td>
<td>UNICEF country office</td>
<td>Until the end of the Project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The performance of the Project was uneven in target municipalities. As mentioned in the efficiency and</td>
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<td>effectiveness sections, it depended on the commitment of the project coordinators and engagement of</td>
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<td>local community. The prerequisites for the replication of good practices to other municipalities or</td>
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<td>country-wide require the documenting of the practices in the 46 target municipalities, analysis of factors</td>
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<td>which increased the efficiency and impact of the practices, and of those which raised challenges in the</td>
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<td>implementation work, the analysis of the sustainability prospects and identification of the transferability</td>
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<td>potential. As the time available until the end of the Project might be insufficient for documenting</td>
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<td>practices in all target municipalities, UNICEF could select few municipalities which were successful in</td>
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<td>expanding the ECE provision (based on field monitoring reports and feedback from project coordinators)</td>
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<td>and carry out an in-depth documenting. It is recommended that the project team allocates resources out</td>
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<td>of the unspent budget for this documenting activity and disseminates widely its results with the aim of</td>
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<td>informing future policy measures and projects. Under outcome 3, the Project aims to disseminate the</td>
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<td>results of this evaluation, but it is advised to expand the scope of this activity by including good</td>
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<td>practices as well, possibly in the form of a dedicated ‘catalogue’ for more in-depth evidence-based</td>
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<td>advocacy.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>O2</strong> Organise a quality assurance workshop</td>
<td>UNICEF in cooperation with the Agency for</td>
<td>Until the end of the Project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The tripling of the initially planned number of municipalities affected the quality of the ECE programmes</td>
<td>Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education</td>
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<td>supported by the Project, as mentioned in several sections of the report. The trainings provided by the</td>
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<td>Project were very beneficial; however, they covered a limited number of professionals, while the quality</td>
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<td>of supervision of young, unexperienced teachers by the education authorities and pedagogical institutes</td>
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<td>(as the case) varied from one municipality to the other. The common core curriculum used in the 160</td>
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<td>beneficiary institutions has been applied unitary, but without focus adjustment for the four developmental</td>
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<td>areas planned under outcome 2. Quality of curriculum is another area of concern. As the Project</td>
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<td></td>
<td>acquired a lot of useful lessons learnt and as the results of the study on measuring the impact of ECE on</td>
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Mid-Term Project Evaluation "Increasing Early Learning Opportunities for Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina", December 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Addressee</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O3</td>
<td>Develop a sustainability plan for project results</td>
<td>PMB and WG on ECE and ECI with the assistance of UNICEF country office</td>
<td>Until the end of the Project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Sustainability Plan is recommended to be developed until the end of the Project by the PMB assisted by the ECE/ECI working groups and UNICEF to make sure that results and impacts of assistance are taken over and enhanced by the relevant stakeholders and mainstreamed in policies and practices. Creating a sustainability plan could provide a road map for the project management team and its partners as they work on sustainability actions in the future as well. The process of creating a written sustainability plan can also strengthen partners’ buy-in and understanding of the efforts needed to keep the project operating and improving. Engaging in sustainability planning gives an opportunity to map out how to maintain valuable project ideas, practices and innovations in a changing environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic and Programming Recommendations (SP)</th>
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<tr>
<td>SP1</td>
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</table>

Better participation of children in preparatory preschool programme is definitely needed until full coverage is ensured. The government has taken important steps forward over the last years and it is expected to continue its efforts in line with legal obligations on the matter and long-term objective of the Strategic Directions 2008-2015. In order to ensure the additionality of donor funding and avoid substitution for government responsibility (as explained in the efficiency and sustainability sections of the report), it is recommended that future donor support is focused primarily on children aged 3 to 5, whose...
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<tr>
<th>No</th>
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<td>enrolment rate in preschool education is much lower than the one of children in preparatory programme (children usually above 5-5.5 years). At the same time, it is recommended that priority is given to under-developed, rural municipalities where the participation in preschool education is below the country average. The main partners in this process are expected to be the municipalities, preschool institutions, parents and civil society organisations. Parents should be the focus of intensive empowerment activities, aimed to develop their capacity to play a meaningful role in the design and monitoring of the quality of the education programme for their children. Training should be based on a thorough TNA to calibrate the curriculum and be mainly oriented towards the teachers who are part of the regular staff of preschool institutions to ensure sustainability of investment. A mandatory induction training would be needed for the young, unexperienced teachers before they start working in the preschool programme, followed by efficient supervision/mentoring. Investment in both soft and hard infrastructure (physical preschool facilities) is needed. The support provided by UNICEF, Dubai Cares and other donors for the development of early childhood education opportunities for vulnerable children should continue in order to assist the country reach its strategic targets and European benchmarks.</td>
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<td>SP2</td>
<td>Develop the framework for securing the financial sustainability on long-run of ECE programmes in least developed municipalities, based on the principles of equity, cohesion and social solidarity</td>
<td>Government (education, health, social welfare, labour, public finance authorities) in partnership with municipalities, UNICEF and international donors</td>
<td>2015-2017</td>
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The evaluation assessed the sustainability prospects of the Project to be very challenging and drew the attention on the severe financial constraints faced by the government and parents. Although continuation of reforms in early childhood education and further expansion of ECE provision is dependent on external funding at least on short term, policy makers are nevertheless advised to revisit the current funding model of preschool education whereby municipalities needs to cover almost entirely the cost of preschool education of smaller children (3-5 years) and whereby parents are required to cover a significant part of the costs (40%), irrespective of their income level and family circumstances. Given the discrepancies in the development level of municipalities, there are good reasons for the canton and RS authorities to intervene and earmark funding for increasing the preschool coverage rates of children in the under-developed municipalities. At the same time, a fair distribution of responsibilities should be worked out between the public sources (entity/canton/district/municipality governments) and private sources (parent participation) and based on solidarity principles (subsidies or free attendance for
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<td>socially-marginalised children). In this regard, the policy brief on a financially feasible plan for expanding preschool education, which was developed by the Project, provides an excellent basis for further reflection and decision-making. UNICEF is recommended to continue to advocate for more efficient financing of preschool education with the newly-appointed ministers of education</td>
<td>Canton, entity and local governments with the support of UNICEF</td>
<td>2015</td>
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| SP3 | **Prioritise the participation of Roma children in early childhood development projects, based on inclusive and sustainable approaches**  
The very low enrolment rate of Roma children in preschool education calls for urgent and concerted effort of all relevant stakeholders (education, health and social welfare authorities, schools and kindergartens, NGOs) to develop and implement efficient outreach strategies, awareness raising and empowerment of Roma parents, as highlighted in the impact section of the report. Any future intervention needs to engage in a systematic and efficient manner the centres for social work and the municipalities, which were only marginally involved in the current project. Based on the lessons learnt in the project, investment in building the capacity and partnerships with Roma mediators and Roma NGOs is a must for promoting the participation of Roma children in preschool education. Ensuring support for ‘active inclusion’ of vulnerable Roma parents is the best means to promote sustainable solutions for encouraging child enrolment in preschool education programmes and prevention of dropping out, poverty alleviation and social inclusion. According to the ‘active inclusion’ concept, access of Roma parents to active employment measures and flexible working arrangements should be combined with adequate income support and access to quality social services. In this regard, durable synergies with education, child care, health, housing and social assistance services need to be generated. International assistance and civil society support are needed to partner with the government in implementing systematic and coherent active inclusion policies and measures for Roma inclusion. | UNICEF Country office | For future projects |
| SP4 | **Improve the design and evaluability of future projects**  
The project Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan has not included output indicators and targets, was not updated following the refocusing of the project and consequently not used as a management tool by the project team. The monitoring and evaluation framework of future projects needs to include |                                                        |                |
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<td>well defined indicators, baselines and targets, at each level: goal, purpose, outcomes and outputs, disaggregated by gender, age, disability, region, etc. and be updated each time when the project main characteristics are adjusted. It is recommended that a Risk Mitigation Strategy is designed during the programming and regularly reviewed and updated, to inform the project management and donors about risks that could affect the estimated results and guide the prevention and remedial actions, as needed(^{98}) (see efficiency section of the report). A Sustainability Plan is also recommended to be developed during the design of the project for reasons already mentioned under operational recommendation O3. Financial monitoring and evaluation of efficiency are facilitated in case the planned budget and expenditures are broken down per unit costs and if a narrative financial report is accompanying the figures, even if the respective donor does not require such details and documentation (see efficiency section of the report). For grants projects, the letter of agreement should include a clause according to which payment of the respective grant is subject to achievement of planned results (e.g. number of final beneficiaries) and a clear formula of financial corrections to be made to grant for partial achievement. Gender mainstreaming needs to be embedded in the PD, indicators, monitoring and reporting processes (see analysis of human rights and cross-cutting issues in the relevance section).</td>
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\(^{98}\) The risks matrix described in the UNDG (2011), “Results-Based Management Handbook” could be used for the development of the mitigation strategy.
4.2.2 Lessons Learnt

Although this is not a final evaluation of the Project, some emerging lessons learnt could be drawn up.

1) **Expansion of early learning opportunities requires both hard and soft investment.** The strategy used by the Project to invest in the procurement of furniture and didactical materials in parallel with the delivery of preschool education programmes and capacity building was a good mix and a feasible solution for the particular context of the country. However, investment in rehabilitation and adaptation of infrastructure would have been also needed as the existing primary school facilities are not always adapted to the needs of small children; at the same time, the network of kindergartens are not ensuring an efficient coverage of children in many municipalities of the country, requiring additional physical capacities to be provided, more efficiently via rehabilitating the unused buildings/pace of municipalities. As explained in chapter 1 on Project Context, there are insufficient preschool facilities, especially in small towns and rural areas, while those in large cities are overcrowded and unable to cover all children left out from the preschool education. Any attempt to expand the preschool education should consider the investment in physical infrastructure, too.

2) **Securing ownership and empowerment of national counterparts may decrease efficiency of support on short-term, but yield important investment returns on long-term.** Commitment to ensure the full involvement and participation of national stakeholders in the implementation work, and to advising policy making processes in an open and transparent manner could render the initial timelines envisaged for certain activities too ambitious, as it was the case of the Project under evaluation. As a result, project managers need to frequently align the implementation schedule to the agenda and capacities of the national stakeholders and to adjust deadlines for various deliverables accordingly. Extension of the implementation period might be required as well. In case projects include activities that are dependent on the adoption of budget laws (as in the case in Republika Srpska), usually not under the control of the project managers, implementation delays could be even higher. These risks need to be identified during the design phase and a mitigation strategy has to be worked out to prevent or address them in case of occurrence. At the same time, building ownership and empowerment should not be underestimated given their strong investment returns on long term.