Evaluation of the

Roma Good Start Initiative

An EU-UNICEF Joint Management Project on Early Childhood Development as an Entry Point to the Social Inclusion of Roma Children

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Disclaimer
All opinions are those of the consultant and do not reflect UNICEF Regional Office CEECIS policies and opinions or any other stakeholders opinions. If there are any discrepancies, it is the sole responsibility of the reviewer.

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## Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FYRoM</td>
<td>Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</td>
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<td>HRBAP</td>
<td>Human rights based approach to programming</td>
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<td>ISSA</td>
<td>International Step by Step Association</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MoH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-government organization</td>
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<td>OSF</td>
<td>Open Society Foundations</td>
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<td>PAG</td>
<td>Project Advisory Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>RECI</td>
<td>Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Project</td>
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<td>REF</td>
<td>Roma Education Fund</td>
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<td>RGSI</td>
<td>Roma Good Start Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO CEECIS</td>
<td>UNICEF Regional Office for Central Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
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<tr>
<td>RBM</td>
<td>Results Based Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>SbS</td>
<td>Step by Step</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund</td>
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Executive Summary

The Roma Good Start Initiative (RGSI) is a EU-UNICEF Joint Management Project, funded by the EU with UNICEF RO CEECIS as the management agency accountable for the delivery of the project across six countries from July 2010 to October 2011 (the actual start date was September 2010) aiming to address measures to promote Early Childhood Development (ECD) as an entry point for fostering the social inclusion of Roma children. This multi-stakeholder collaborative effort includes international, regional and country offices of UNICEF, Open Society Foundations (OSF), Roma Education Fund (REF) and International Step by Step Association (ISSA) as well as local Roma NGOs and national government partners.

RGSI builds on and extends collaborative work with OSF and REF on the RECI (Roma Early Childhood Inclusion) studies, intended to review adequacy of existing policies and practices and identify good practices in early childhood care and education in Czech Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRoM), Romania, Serbia and Hungary (added later).

Roma children lack access to quality education, have low enrolment, low attendance and high rates of dropouts. Available data indicates enrollment of 3-6 years Roma in preschool is less than 50% compared to 80% enrolment for all children. In countries such as Serbia and FYRoM, enrolment drops to an abysmal 3.9% and 3.5%. Often Roma children are not developmentally ready for primary schooling, are placed in ‘special’ schools, receive inferior education and are further marginalized.

The overall goal of RGSI is to “foster comprehensive measures that address the rights of marginalized young Roma children and promote their meaningful and sustained social inclusion in Europe”. The project results were a) Improved understanding by key stakeholders of progress achieved, successful strategies and remaining challenges with respect to the importance of early childhood development and to addressing the rights of young Roma children b) Enhanced capacity of local authorities and Roma civil society service providers to strengthen and expand existing services to embrace and implement inclusive early childhood care and education approaches and c) Increased capacity of relevant stakeholders and service providers to include Roma children in early childhood interventions.

Activities were planned based on the needs of each country. 1) Research included a) Synthesis Overview of Phase I RECI (from earlier project) studies conducted in Czech Republic, FYRoM, Serbia and Hungary b) Situational analysis and policy review with young children in Hungary c) Roma ECD Financing and Costing Research Studies in Czech Republic, FYRoM, Serbia, Hungary and Spain d) Synthesis Overview of Roma ECD Financing and Costing Research Studies. 2) Advocacy and capacity development included a) National Consultation Meetings on ECD Policy Review and Situation Analysis for validation of RECI studies b) ECD Financing and Costing Research Validation Workshops c) Policy Round Tables d) Capacity development workshops – expert lectures, training on empowerment and social justice e) Study Tour (to

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1 EU (European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) provided core funding of Euro 424,747. co-financed by UNICEF (Euro 106,187)
2 Four EU member states of Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Spain and two countries in the enlargement process - Serbia, and FYRoM. All countries are members of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Spain was a learning site visit, others implemented RGSI
3 UNICEF Regional Office CEECIS, its national offices in Romania, Serbia, FYRoM and National Committees in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Spain were involved. REF was established in 2005 to expand educational opportunities for Roma communities in Central and South-eastern Europe. OSF works extensively with Roma civil society and government as well as on education. ISSA established in 1999 supported by OSF is an NGO membership organization promoting ECD.
4 EUMAP 2007
5 MICS 2005
Spain). 3) **Visibility Plan (Communication and Information)** included a) Translated versions of selected high quality ECD advocacy documents b) Young Roma Children Communication Kit c) Micro website on Roma children with information on RGSI. **Outputs** expected were 18 advocacy/training events, 18 print items, 12 videos, and 6 translated and published reports.

The **purpose of the evaluation** was for both accountability and learning: 1) Assess achievements and constraints against project plans 2) Identify lessons learned related to advocacy and communication 3) Provide recommendations and possible next steps. The evaluation report was expected to be **used** by EU, UNICEF and project partners and stakeholders, including OSF, REF, ISSA and local Roma NGOs and government partners at national levels.

The project period was for only 15 months. The evaluation therefore does not claim to assess impact (attribution) and causality. The evaluation plan used a qualitative methodology: document reviews, mining emails, interviews of key informants and focused group discussions. The evaluation approach was collaborative and triangulation was used to minimize risk of bias.

Two out of five countries implementing RGSI were studied in depth – one with a country field visit (Romania) and another using virtual technology (Serbia). Additionally, key informants from other three countries (some being regional partners) were also interviewed. Primary data collection took place over two weeks of which one week included on site visits (UNICEF RO CEECIS Geneva and Romania). The sampling size **exceeded** targets with 20 individual interviews, two group interviews and two focused group discussions to ensure maximum representation in the sampling which included government decision makers and thought leaders; partners country, regional and international; civil society organizations including Roma NGOs; service providers and researchers.

The **findings** related to evaluation criteria are:

1) **Relevance**: The RGSI resonated with the EU’s and UNICEF’s Commitment towards Roma Inclusion, national plans and international and global rights based initiatives. RGSI responded to various EU social inclusion initiatives as well as other international rights based frameworks, principles and programs.

2) **Effectiveness**: RGSI clearly contributed to the three result areas: there was better understanding among key stakeholders regarding progress achieved, successful strategies and remaining challenges; better capacity of local authorities and Roma CSO to strengthen or expand ECD; and better capacity of stakeholders and service providers to include Roma children in ECD and related activities. Contributing factors were the inclusion of Roma voices, multi-dimensionality of RGSI regional and international partners, participation of key and diverse stakeholders and high quality of RGSI activities – research, capacity building and communication materials.

3) **Efficiency**: Targets for communication products and services, research studies as well as advocacy and capacity building events were either exceeded or met, with the exception of one costing study. RECI studies of four countries (from a previous project) were not available at the start of RGSI affecting the timelines and perhaps compromising the possible larger impact of RGSI. The costing study in Czech Republic was delayed. Costing studies in other countries had difficulty in collecting data, were redesigned as feasibility studies and hence the planned synthesis report was not available. Deliverables were many in a short timeline of 15 months, costs underestimated but efficiently managed by UNICEF RO and partners to meet project needs and targets. RGSI is supported by the EU (core funding of Euro 424,747) and co-financed by UNICEF (Euro 106,187). Funds were utilized adequately and efficiently and included partner contribution in the RECI. ISSA contributed 24,332 Euros and REF and OSF did not respond to queries by the
evaluator. It may be stated that the available RGSI funds mentioned above were utilized in full.

4) Potential Impact and Sustainability: The short implementation period of 15 months has limitations for the measurement of impact. It is also difficult to assess impact against other initiatives as RGSI was one among many ongoing advocacy attempts in countries. In such cases, it is widely accepted practice to mention contribution of the current initiative (RGSI) rather than attribute impact. There is some evidence of use and influence of the research (RECI mainly and where applicable the costing study) and capacity building activities (expert lectures, national consultations, ESJ training) towards policy change.

5) Coordination: Coordination and consensus-building slowed down implementation but was considered valuable. Sharing and coordination at multiple levels was important for research, capacity building, organizing events and providing feedback on documents and research. Overall, international/regional partners’ support was extremely valued at the country level; at regional level some partners’ expectations did not always converge.

6) Results Based Management: Close monitoring by UNICEF RO led to completion of most targets; UNICEF manager played a key role in coordinating with all stakeholders to monitor progress. Changes were made in implementation based on implementation feedback.

7) Rights based approach: RGSI goal expressly states inclusion and ECD as an entry point to mainstream Roma children and protect against stigma; evidence through research and capacity building indicated the need and benefits to do so. Inclusion of Roma NGOs such as REF and local NGOs and researchers indicate rights based approach in design. First person video accounts of the importance and aspirations of mothers in ECD sensitized decision makers deeply; this was more ‘real’ than the advocacy of Roma NGOs or print material.

Lessons learned are a) Synergy with ongoing efforts and identifying gaps in information that are of value increases acceptance from all stakeholders; b) Stakeholders are able to overcome bias, increase understanding, enhance capacity and take action if supported by high quality research, expertise, advocacy and dialogue with a cross-section of relevant stakeholders including diverse decision makers, NGOs and marginalized voices; c) Building on or piggybacking on the deliverables of an earlier project provides for valuable synergies but there are also risks. Delays in the earlier project can affect the current project’s timelines and potential to deliver. Constraints of time and money can be overcome with good management but it is important to plan and budget realistically; d) the right issues expertly addressed at the right time involving the right people in an inclusive approach are important contributing factors to achieve impact. However policy change is slow and long-term requiring sustained advocacy efforts and difficult to attribute to any one intervention. At best one can only assess contribution to impact; e) coordination is critical in multi-country projects with multiple stakeholders but it is important to not only clearly delineate roles but also to assess and address expectations to ensure a common understanding among those involved; f) complex multi-country, multi-stakeholder projects must have efficient systems and human resources to track progress and make adjustments as needed; g) The voices and participation of marginalized communities (including importantly poor and marginalized women who are key ECD stakeholders) together with those of international expertise are critical to implement a rights based approach. Early learning opportunities and inclusion of marginalized children not only provide a head start for learning but also protect them against stigma and discrimination.
Recommendations for regional and international organizations involved in ECD and Roma issues are that a) there be an extension of the RGSI to consolidate gains made (having had a short 15 month duration) and that it be designed to align and synergize with other Roma initiatives both policy (EU, regional and country level) and program; b) at periodic intervals (e.g. five years), regional partners should provide/make available technical support to country level counterparts to repeat the RECI studies to plot change and ensure up to date information availability and use, especially since baseline data is now available for comparison; c) to maintain momentum and ensure sustainability regarding the importance of early development and learning for Roma, regional partners support government to develop and strengthen inter-sectoral policies and systems; d) policy changes be monitored and expert inputs provided as needed to ensure the early development and learning inclusion of Roma children; e) international agencies harmonize and align early development and learning and Roma inclusion messages and drive the agenda in a targeted advocacy to achieve stronger results; f) roles and responsibilities of multiple stakeholders and/or partners be clearly defined in letters of agreement, realistic plans be made and a management group should oversee operations.

Recommendations for country decision makers are that a) in the next phase to build on RGSI success with upstream advocacy and advocate early development and learning and Roma inclusion at multiple levels for downstream advocacy; b) in the next phase for countries to should have a regional perspective and consultation so that countries can share data, best practices and lessons learnt with regard to policies and programs.

To summarize, RGSI piggybacking and extending the work of the RECI studies (though the studies were delayed) has clearly helped to advocate for ECD and especially early development and learning from 0-3 years in the context of Roma children. The products developed as a result of the RGSI were found to be useful and the participation of key stakeholders at the country level, partnership of international organizations renowned for their work on ECD and Roma community and the management from the UNICEF RO office of this complex, six country, multi-stakeholder initiative contributed to achieving results in spite of complex challenges in coordination and insufficient budget demonstrating the use and usefulness of the RGSI.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Roma Good Start Initiative (RGSI) is a EU-UNICEF Joint Management Project across six countries from July 2010 to October 2011 (the actual start date was September 2010) aiming to address measures to promote Early Childhood Development (ECD) as an entry point for fostering the social inclusion of Roma children. The RGSI is a multi-country, multi-stakeholder collaborative effort that includes international, regional and country offices of UNICEF, Open Society Foundations (OSF), Roma Education Fund (REF) and International Step by Step Association (ISSA) as well as local Roma NGOs and national government partners addressing three components: 1) Research 2) Advocacy and Capacity Development and 3) Communication and Information.

RGSI builds on and extends collaborative work with OSF and REF on the RECI (Roma Early Childhood Inclusion) studies, intended to review adequacy of existing policies and practices and identify good practices in early childhood care and education in four countries, the Czech Republic, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRoM), Romania and Serbia. The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-15) provided a platform for RGSI and was responsive to the priorities of both the EU and UNICEF towards the inclusion of Roma children with special reference to early childhood development.

The project was a joint management project, with EU (European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) as the funder and UNICEF RO as the management agency accountable for the delivery of the project.

Consultation was sought with OSF and REF internationally as well as with their national partners and/or offices. Roma civil society organizations were involved in each country. In the spirit of partnership, all the logos were used for visibility and as a symbol of cooperation – EU, UNICEF, OSF, REF and ISSA.

At the end of the project period, an external evaluator was commissioned by UNICEF RO CEECIS to assess what had been achieved with reference to the goals, activities and outputs outlined in the project proposal. Impact assessment was not possible because of the short project period (15 months).

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6RGSI is supported by the EU (core funding of Euro 424,747) and co-financed by UNICEF (Euro 106,187)
7Four EU member states of Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Spain and two countries in the enlargement process - Serbia, and FYRoM. All countries are members of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.
8UNICEF Regional Office CEECIS, its national offices in Romania, Serbia, and FYRoM; and national committees in Hungary, Spain and Czechoslovakia were involved. REF was established in 2005 to expand educational opportunities for Roma communities in Central and South-eastern Europe. OSF has worked extensively with Roma civil society and government as well as on education. ISSA established in 1999 because of the successful work on ECD of the Step-by-Step Program, is supported by OSF and is an NGO membership organization.
9For the RGSI, two countries were added – Hungary and Spain, the latter was included to learn how they had integrated Roma children.
10Sonal Zaveri was the external evaluator and would like to thank UNICEF RO CEECIS and specifically, their national offices in Serbia and Romania for arranging video and face-to-face discussions respectively.
1.2 Project Rationale

1.2.1 Project Goal

The overall goal of RGSI is to “foster comprehensive measures that address the rights of marginalized young Roma children and promote their meaningful and sustained social inclusion in Europe”.

1.2.2 RGSI Theory of Change

The RGSI proposal outlines why it is important to address early childhood development especially for Roma children and these assumptions underpin the rationale of the RGSI.

a. There is a significant body of research regarding the critical impact of development in the early years of childhood and the importance of early access to high quality care and education services. Such a good start in life is positively associated not only with improved access in education but also for future employment, thus enabling breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

b. Social inclusion is an important principle of the EU. However, in EU member states with significant Roma minorities, ECD is not seen as a major strategy to tackle social and educational disadvantage.

c. Transition countries such as those who are part of the RGSI faced a breakdown of early childhood services in the 90’s and have not yet fully recovered. Quality ECD services for Roma children represent critical gaps in services.

d. A few ECD projects in the region have demonstrated the positive impact of ECD but children enrolled in ECD tended to be from well off sections of societies rather than Roma children.

Based on such evidence related to the need for early learning (especially 0-3 years), lack of access of Roma children to high quality early childhood development, lack of awareness and capacity of significant stakeholders (such as policy makers, civil society, researchers, educators) to address the exclusion and marginalization of Roma children and families, the RGSI project identified three components: Research, Advocacy and Communication to address these issues. Each component would address a number of activities.

1. **Research** was a critical component to promote evidence based advocacy and capacity building. An earlier project in these countries, RECI (jointly implemented by OSF, UNICEF and REF) had with the help of local and international researchers captured available data (from various sectors including education, health and social welfare) regarding ECD and the inclusion of Roma children. RECI was a pioneering effort and for the first time collated and analyzed all available data across sectors to provide a comprehensive understanding of the status of Roma children with reference to early childhood development and an emphasis on the early years of learning (0-3). By piggybacking on existing initiatives like the RECI, RGSI intended to enhance the use and influence of these studies.

In addition, RGSI commissioned ECD costing studies to support decision-making by policy makers. Also, there was research evidence gathered internationally regarding the impact of early learning that could be translated and concisely shared in the region.

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2. **Advocacy** and **capacity building** was critical to sensitize key decision makers and implementers. Relevant stakeholders through dialogue and capacity building were expected to understand, learn, share and cooperate with each other to promote social inclusion through ECD. One strategy to do so was to disseminate the RECI and costing studies through a variety of Round Table national consultation events bringing significant stakeholders together – from government, civil society, researchers and thought leaders. Another strategy was the expert lectures by internationally renowned experts to both build capacity as well as advocate for the need to prioritize ECD with Roma children. In addition, some workshops (called Education for Social Justice or ESJ) were planned to bring attitude change and challenge stereotypes among frontline workers.

3. **Communication and information materials** – print, audio-video and virtual (using a website) – supported the dissemination of research and advocacy related information translated in the national languages.

A **crosscutting strategy** was the involvement of Roma civil society organizations and thought leaders in this process, using the principle “Nothing for them, without them”.

These activities would facilitate policy dialogue and discussion addressing issues related to the promotion of the ECD agenda and ways of implementing inclusive policies targeting the most disadvantaged segments of the population, the Roma.

Governments would be able to make concrete commitments in terms of short and medium-term outcomes for regional development, including utilization of available structural funds. While all of the above represent an overall framework for the advancement of the ECD agenda, each country being unique would customize strategies.

The activities across all components would lead to specific **project results**

1. Improved understanding by key stakeholders of progress achieved, successful strategies and remaining challenges with respect to the importance of early childhood development and to addressing the rights of young Roma children

2. Enhanced capacity of local authorities and Roma civil society service providers to strengthen and expand existing services to embrace and implement inclusive early childhood care and education approaches.

3. Increased capacity of relevant stakeholders and service providers to include Roma children in early childhood interventions

**1.2.3 RGSI Logical Framework**

To support the theory of change, RGSI identified a number of **inputs, processes and activities, outputs that would lead to project results (see above)**.

**Inputs** included financial resources available through the donor (EU) as well as contribution from UNICEF; appointment of a Manager at the UNICEF Regional Office; hiring consultancy services of local and international researchers; introduction of available research such as RECI studies; involvement of national, regional and international partners of OSF, REF, UNICEF and Roma civil society institutions. UNICEF had a presence through their national offices in Serbia, FYRoM and Romania. In the other states such as Czech Republic, Hungary and Spain, UNICEF RO depended on the partners to support the implementation of activities.
Under each component (Research, Advocacy/Capacity Development and Communication), a number of processes and activities took place.

1. **Research** included the following four main activities
   - Synthesis Overview of Phase I RECI (from earlier project) studies conducted in Czech Republic, FYRoM, Serbia and Hungary
   - Situational analysis and policy review with young children in Hungary
   - Roma ECD Financing and Costing Research Studies in Czech Republic, FYRoM, Serbia, Hungary and Spain
   - Synthesis Overview of Roma ECD Financing and Costing Research Studies

2. **Advocacy and capacity development** included the following activities
   - National Consultation Meetings on ECD Policy Review and Situation Analysis for validation of RECI studies
   - ECD Financing and Costing Research Validation Workshops
   - Policy Round Tables
   - Capacity development workshops – expert lectures, training on empowerment and social justice
   - Study Tour (to Spain)

3. **Visibility Plan** (Communication and Information)
   - Translated versions of selected high quality ECD advocacy documents
   - Young Roma Children Communication Kit
   - Micro website on Roma children with specific information on RGSI

The outputs included 18 advocacy and training events, 18 print items, 12 videos, 6 translated and published reports. These outputs were expected to sensitize and mobilize key stakeholders to understand the urgency of placing early childhood especially for Roma children in the national plans; address the roles and capacity building gaps of state, institutions, service providers and communities and disseminate and use evidence (through the research and communication materials) to influence national priorities, strategies and programs for Roma children to access quality early learning.

1.2.4 The Context: Why Roma Inclusion and the Importance of ECD

The Roma, population estimated at 10 million, is dispersed across Europe and represent one of the largest and most vulnerable minorities facing widespread discrimination. The EU enlargement process (2004, 2007) recognized that for a socially inclusive Europe, it was important to include Roma (and other vulnerable groups) in society.

However, even mid-way through the Decade of Roma Inclusion, it is clear that efforts to improve European social inclusion have not had enough impact on Roma families. Meanwhile, Roma children and young people – who account for around 40 to 50 per cent of all Roma – rarely feature in the debate at all and are largely invisible in most National Strategies to address Roma issues.

Findings from reports on Roma early childhood inclusion point out that:

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13 The largest ethnic minority in Europe, the Roma arrived in Europe during the 14th century. Today, Europe’s 10 million (including almost half that number in CEE) Roma continue to face widespread ‘anti-gypsyism’ and xenophobia. The traditional government response to Roma was one of repression and segregation.
14 MTSP Focus Area 5: A Fair Chance for Every Roma Child: UNICEF and ECD in CEECIS 2012-2014, Natcom Donor Toolkit Regional Approach
Progress is being made but a large gap exists between aspirations and implementation. Among the reasons advanced for the slow progress are the following:

- Though national legislation has developed remarkably, it rarely requires public authorities to take specific actions or to achieve measurable results;
- In the Roma policy field, a lack of indicators, institutional audits and evaluations severely hamper knowledge of which policies work.

Extreme poverty, intolerable living conditions, low educational levels and lack of employment undermine Roma family life and the health of infants and young children. The great majority of Roma families suffer from severe poverty, which is underlined by research as one of the greatest barriers to the holistic development of young children. The impact of poverty is reinforced by family stress (due to lack of employment and income), malnutrition (sometimes severe), and intolerable living conditions, for example, severe overcrowding, lack of running water and other community infrastructure.

The social exclusion of the Roma is greatly reinforced by the discrimination and prejudice of the majority population. The RECI Reports and various European surveys (notably the Gallup Poll organized by EU Fundamental Rights Agency in 2009 and the EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS, 2009) testify to the widespread prejudice against Roma groups in the four countries. Prejudice ranges from negative stereotyping to political extremism, with threatening marches on neighborhoods, used to injure, intimidate or evict Roma residents.

The early development of Roma children, during infancy and the pre-kindergarten period, is not sufficiently supported. The early development of Roma children is often neglected, partly for two reasons: firstly, because of a general under-estimation of the importance of the period 0-3 years, with Central and South East Europe (CSEE) governments spending little on specific developmental programmes for children in the age group. Secondly, national spending on the public services that critically affects young children, that is: public health, social protection, and family policies, is in most instances, well below the EU average.

National kindergarten and primary education systems are failing to recruit, include, retain and educate Roma children. The basic findings of the RECI Reports can be summarized as follows:

- A high percentage of Roma children never enroll in the education system.
- The participation rate of Roma children in preschool education is extremely low.
- The drop-out rates of Roma children, especially in lower secondary education are extremely high. Drop-out rates are even higher in segregated educational settings.
- Roma adolescents, in particular girls, have a very low transition rate into upper secondary education.
- The total years spent by Roma children in the education system is, in general, about half the national average.

By the time Roma children reach the age of six, they face a life-long pattern of poverty and exclusion. Available data indicates enrollment of 3-6 years Roma in preschool is less than 50%, compared to 80% enrolment for all children. In countries such as Serbia and FYRoM, enrolment drops to an abysmal 3.9% and 3.5%. Because Roma children are not developmentally ready for primary schooling, they are placed in ‘special’ schools where they receive inferior education and are further marginalized. Roma parents being poor, place children in these institutions as

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15 EUMAP 2007
16 MICS 2005
families receive state support. Only 18 per cent of Roma children attend school, compared with 75 per cent of non-Roma children.17

Each of the countries implementing the RGSI indicated different contexts of Roma exclusion.

**Czech Republic**: According to the most recent census (2001), there were 11,747 of the population who self-identified as Roma. Many experts, however, regard the figure as too low, estimating the true size of the Roma minority to be 150,000-300,000.

Estimates for 2007 indicated that 70% of Roma children participated in schools attended mainly by Roma children or in practical basic schools (former special schools). A large percentage of Roma pupils are diagnosed with medical impairments.

The system of services for children between birth and 3 years of age remains under-developed. There are two types of institutions (with different funding) for early childhood education managed by different sectors: crèches (up to the age of 3) and nursery schools (age group 3-5 which provide pre-primary education). The institutions are mostly public; the majority of them are established by municipalities. Crèches are not funded by the central government; the expenses are covered from the budget of the organizing body and by parent through fees. At the same time, pre-primary education for children before the age of compulsory education (6 years) in nursery schools has a long tradition and is highly developed. Even though preschool attendance is not compulsory, data show near universal enrolment. The participation rate for Roma children is, however, estimated at 30-40%.

The Ministry of Education has initiated a desegregation process of the education system, but Roma children still face multiple barriers to participate fully in mainstream education. One of the contributing factors is the questionable validity of diagnostic methods and instruments for assessing children's readiness for school; in general, schools are not ready to receive Roma children, and preschools and primary schools do not encourage parental involvement.

**Hungary**: Data disaggregated by ethnicity has not been collected due to the law on protecting citizens’ rights. Estimates, however, put the number of the Roma in Hungary between 400,000 and 600,000. Based on the data of TÁRKi’s Household Monitor Survey of 2007, half of the Roma can be considered poor.

Although the administrative requirements for enrolment in school are not considered to be obstacles for Roma families, Roma children generally start school later and are more likely to drop out of school than the average. Separation of Roma children into segregated schools and classes has been significant during the last decade. Roma are over-represented in special schools/classes for children with intellectual disabilities, or in segregated classes, or in classes with remedial curriculum. On the one hand, geographic segregation (living in areas with no pre-school availability nearby) and, on the other hand overcrowding still remain significant sources of obstacles. Even though minority language education is provided for by law, Roma children are not consistently able to gain access to education in their mother tongue. Against this background a number of different programmes and policies have been adopted to address issues relevant for Roma children.

In case of early childhood development, the most important aim remains to ensure that children with multiple disadvantages attend these educational institutions. In order to achieve this, as of September 2008, local municipalities must ensure that all children with multiple disadvantages have access to kindergarten education as of age of 3. In addition, the parents of children with multiple disadvantages have been entitled to a kindergarten allowance from 2009. Efforts aiming

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17 MTSP Focus Area 5: A Fair Chance for Every Roma Child: UNICEF and ECD in CEECIS 2012-2014, Natcom Donor Toolkit Regional Approach
to put an end to segregation in separate schools continue. Large scale programs are to be implemented in order to improve and develop the quality of and access to the system of public education.

**Serbia:** According to the World Bank, the Roma population in Serbia is 108,193 or 1.44% of the total Serbian population. However, other estimates set the number of Roma at 250,000. As in other countries Roma are the poorest group of the population and disparities persist in child outcomes.

Serbia does not have a developed network of pre-school institutions nor adequately trained staff for pre-schools, which is one of the main obstacles for greater coverage. Only 33% of Serbian children attend pre-school institutions, but just 7% among the poorest quintile and less than 4% Roma children. Additionally, the rate of Roma children enrolled in special schools is about 30%, which is extremely disproportionate considering that only 2% of the population is officially Roma. Roma children find themselves overrepresented in institutions and caught in a juvenile justice system that is still not fully sensitive to the rights of vulnerable children.

The Law on the Foundation of the Education System was amended in 2004 and introduced a compulsory Preparatory Preschool Programme for children one year prior to primary education to be applied from the 2006/2007 school year. In spite of the promising initiatives, progress in practice remains uneven.

The Government has developed a well-designed strategic and institutional framework including a Poverty Reduction Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of the Roma and pertinent Action Plans, and a National Plan of Action for Children, to be implemented through Local Action Plans in 21 municipalities. However, these policies lack adequate implementation plans supported by actual funding.

**FYRoM:** According to the official census from 2002, there are 53,879 Roma in FYRoM or 2.66 percent of the total population; however, the estimated Roma population is believed to be between 80,000 and 130,000. Poverty in Roma settlements is three times the national average, Education is one of the four strategic priorities stated in the National Programme for the Work of the Government, 2008-2013. Even though FYR Macedonia has accomplished much in the realm of primary school enrolment (in 2005, its net enrolment ratio was 92%), the government has not been as successful in increasing enrolments in pre-primary, secondary and tertiary education.

There are still large gaps in access to early childhood services (health, education) between sub-national groups. FYRoM has among the lowest pre-school enrolment rates of the region and very few Roma attend pre-schools. Disparities persist not only for Roma but also the Albanian community. Recent progress in the development of political frameworks and standards are still to be implemented.

One of the key achievements during the period of 2005-2009 was the normative work resulting in the National Childhood Development Policy aiming to provide diversified quality early childhood development services and universal access to early learning opportunities for young children and the Early Learning and Development Standards (2006) that are now to be implemented. Beginning from the school year 2005/2006, there is also a compulsory preparation year for all children aged six, prior to starting the first grade of primary school. However, despite promising developments, there still remain large gaps in access of early childhood services (health, education) between sub-national groups.

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18 [info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/.../Session2P1Matkovic.ppt](http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/.../Session2P1Matkovic.ppt)
Romania: It has the largest Roma population in Europe. Some estimates put their number up to two million, which makes up about 10% of the country’s total population. The poverty risk among the Roma remains four times higher than the majority population.

Although Romania has made much progress toward achieving universal primary school completion and improving education for all its children, Roma enrolment and completion rates are far below the national average for non-Roma children. Pre-school net-enrolment rates remain well below EU levels, with 52 % for non-Roma and only 20% of Roma children. Only an estimated 40% of Roma children enroll in primary school compared with the national average of 93%, with 23 % of Roma having no education whatsoever.

Against this background, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, in close partnership with UNICEF, the National Authority for Child Rights Protection and the Ministry of Public Health, developed a set of Early Learning and Development Standards to support the monitoring and expansion of Early Childhood programs. The national pre-school curriculum for children under seven was revised and early childhood education was adopted as a national priority in 2008. Since 2000, Roma mediators have been working in schools, while the number of Roma teachers and teachers speaking Romanes has increased.

Despite these promising initiatives, Roma children continue to face social, economic, and cultural barriers to the fulfillment of their rights, including lack of birth registration and/or identity papers; lack of access to quality health services in rural areas, lack of certified baby-friendly hospitals, insufficient pre-school capacities; costs of pre-school education (although pre-school education in public facilities is free of charge) and persistent segregation of Roma (residential segregation, “Roma-only” schools, placement of Roma children in separate classes, channeling them into special schools).

Spain: The estimated Roma population in Spain is over 700,000. As a country with a traditionally large Roma community Spain has gained considerable experience in working towards the social inclusion of Roma. Despite different histories and trajectories, lessons learned from the Spanish experience would be very valuable for other EU Member States and enlargement countries.

In Spain, pre-primary education has been strongly promoted in the last decades because of its recognized role in prevention and compensation of disadvantage. The participation rate in the educational system of children aged 3-6 is almost 100% while the participation rate of ages 0-3 is increasing\(^{20}\). Most of the provisions are either public or private publicly funded. Practically all Roma children go to school at the compulsory age and a large number remain in school throughout the entire primary stage. According to one source, as of 2001, the majority of Roma children (about 91 %) began school at the same age as their non-Roma classmates. However, studies show that differences between Roma pupils’ age and grade level tend to increase by the end of primary school. The illiteracy rate stands 13 %, compared to 2.3 % for the Spanish population as a whole.

In EU member states with significant Roma minorities, ECD is still not a major strategy for tackling educational and social disadvantage. The earliest years are critical for a child’s emotional and mental development, and if this moment is lost, it is gone forever. Later attempts to regain this lost ground are not only more expensive, but less effective. ECD is the ‘first’ human right, ensuring a strong foundation from the outset for the development of both individuals and society. Against this background, activities included in the RGSI aim to highlight the urgency of placing early childhood at the forefront of national policies and to translate already existing policies and practices into effective actions on the ground.

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\(^{20}\) As the Report notes the population figures used are projections from the 2001 census, therefore a rate below 100% in compulsory ages may be due to variations in the real population figures from these projections.
1.2.5 RGSI Project: Scope

The project was implemented in Romania, Serbia, Hungary, FYRoM and the Czech Republic with Spain representing an opportunity to learn how they have dealt with Roma Inclusion.

RGSI was a joint EU-UNICEF managed project, according to the title but in practice, it was UNICEF RO CEECIS that received funds, employed a manager and was considered the implementing agency accountable for the deliverables. UNICEF RO CEECIS communicated to EU through the UNICEF Brussels office. This created an additional communication loop for UNICEF.

RGSI piggybacked on an earlier project called RECI – a joint research project of OSF, REF and UNICEF. The intention was that the publishing and dissemination of the RECI reports would provide the starting point for advocacy, communication and capacity building in the RGSI. However, a few changes took place in implementation and time lines as the RECI reports were not completed when RGSI began.

The RGSI was tailored to country needs for advocacy, communication and research related to ECD and vulnerable children, especially Roma children and hence implementation details varied.

The various events in RGSI countries were organized collaboratively, as far as possible with local partners. ISSA was an important implementing partner working in collaboration with local offices of UNICEF, REF and OSF (where available) as well as with country based NGOs and Roma civil society.

A Project Advisory Group (PAG) was constituted with UNICEF RO, OSF, REF, ISSA and country UNICEF partners. This was a virtual group and served an advisory function. The Project Manager, appointed by UNICEF, managed the communication and coordination for the PAG.

RGSI relates to Focus Area 5 of the MTSP: Policy Advocacy and Partnerships for Children’s Rights, especially Key Result Area 1 and 2.

The inception report outlined a number of risks and assumptions in achieving the RGSI objectives: a) Roma inclusion is politically charged and achievement would be dependent on the political and enabling environment available b) RGSI will have modest reach as it does not directly intend to bring behavioral changes in the wider majority population. Its reach will be limited to the people from the majority population who participate in the RGSI c) As all the project activities are interlinked, a delay in one is likely to affect the timeliness of others d) The multi-country and large number of activities will be require close monitoring and e) Evaluation will only be able to address process and outputs since the project period is too short.

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21 See Annex Three for details on each country needs
22 MTSP Focus 5 refers to policy advocacy and partnership for children’s rights and Key Result Area 1 is to support national capacity to collect, analyze and disseminate strategic information on the situation of women and children. In the Key Result Area 1, RECI studies of RGSI correspond to organizational targets 1 and 2 i.e. support the collection, compilation and analysis of up to date data, strategic information and knowledge on children and women; and support the disaggregation of data to reflect existing disparities and to focus on marginalized populations. Key Result Area 2 refers to research and policy analysis on economic/social policies supporting governance of CRC/CEDAW implementation. Here, expert lectures and costing studies of RGSI refers to organizational target 5: With partners, generate and disseminate high quality research and analysis, addressing implications of international policy frameworks, national legislation and public policies for the rights of women and children. The Key Result Area 3 refers to policy advocacy: dialogue and leveraging and organizational target 6, which discusses leveraging partnerships to promote improved resource allocation and enhanced investment for children. The national consultations with multiple stakeholders in RGSI refer to this target.
An understanding of the context (the deep seated discrimination of the Roma community, lack of emphasis on ECD and the priorities of EU, UNICEF and others, see 1.2.4), the project logic (the theory of change and logical framework, (see 1.2.2 and 1.2.3) and the DAC criteria (including related to human rights and gender equality, see TOR Annex One) has guided the evaluation design and plan.

1.2.6 Stakeholders: Implementation

Project partners for implementation included UNICEF RO CEECIS as the principal contact for the EU for the project with OSF and REF as regional partners.

1. **UNICEF** has been working in the CEECIS region since the ‘90s with the objective of ensuring that the rights of children, especially those from the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, are addressed comprehensively. UNICEF is closely engaged in supporting national governments in creating enabling policies and redefining basic services in order to address the rights of young children and their families. Recently, UNICEF was invited to join the Steering Committee of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. UNICEF plans to develop a systematic and coherent engagement with Roma issues. UNICEF contributed its international expertise in children’s rights, early childhood education, excellent programming experience and strong partnerships with government and civil society in the region.

2. **Roma Education Fund** is a central pillar of the Decade of Roma Inclusion; the Roma Education Fund (REF) was established in 2005 to expand educational opportunities for Roma communities in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Its goal is to address the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma children, not least through supporting desegregation and the development of inclusive education systems. The REF receives funds from governments, multilateral organizations and private sources. It finances projects that are designed to meet its goals and which are proposed and implemented by governments, NGOs and private organizations.

3. **Open Society Fund** (OSF) is one of the main drivers of the Roma Decade and a privileged partner for UNICEF. OSF has considerable experience of working in partnership with Roma civil society organizations and governments to support full inclusion of Roma into European society. It has extensive experience in piloting, monitoring and evaluating Roma education projects and programmes.

4. **International Step by Step Association** (ISSA) established in 1999 supported by OSF is an NGO membership organization promoting ECD created because of the successful implementation of the ECD project Step by Step (SbS).

Each partner complemented and pooled their expertise. At country level, partnerships varied according to presence of partners and included where available national partners or offices of UNICEF, OSF and REF.

The **coordinated involvement of regional and international organizations** that represented and emphasized rights based, child focused and early learning initiatives to implement RGSI – such as UNICEF, OSF, REF and ISSA – was intended to convey the seriousness of and a unified rationale for the need to include ECD and especially early learning from 0 to 3 years for the most vulnerable, the Roma children.
1.2.7 Changes in implementation:

The following changes were noted in the Inception and Interim Reports as well as interviews with UNICEF RO, OSF and REF and their local offices.

a) Four RECI studies (Czech Republic, Serbia, Romania and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) were to have been finalized when the RGSI project proposal was submitted or during the preparation of the project inception report (October-November 2010), in other words a few months into the start of the RGSI. The Hungary RECI study was added for RGSI and it was proposed to also have an overview or synthesis report, bringing the deliverables to six for the RGSI. The RECI studies had started in 2008 involving an international consultant as well as OSF, REF and UNICEF. However there were data gaps that delayed RECI finalization. The RECI reports are currently (at the time of the evaluation, January 2012) being finalized, having been through an extensive exercise of consensus building, editing, updating translated versions and incorporating new data from the MICS 4. The delay in the RECI country reports led to a delay in the Synthesis Report which was meant to make a comparative analysis to support policy and program recommendations. All six reports will be available for publication by project closure date of March 2012.

b) The ECD costing studies were meant to complement the RECI studies to provide decision makers evidence for policy and programs. The costing studies were planned for five countries – Spain, Romania, Serbia, FYRoM and Spain. However, fieldwork in Romania indicated that because ethnic registration is considered discriminatory, many Roma do not self-identify themselves and as a result accurate estimation was not possible. For this reason, brief feasibility studies were planned in other countries to ascertain data availability before launching into full-fledged studies. FYRoM had an earlier costing study that could be used for the RGSI as well. Spain did not have Roma specific ECD policies to enable calculation of costing scenarios.

c. The development of multiple videos (12) was a challenge because of time and fund constraints. As a result, shorter versions of existing films were developed as well as animation of photo essays.

d. An addition was the publishing of “Women-Motherhood-Early Childhood” research paper commissioned earlier by UNICEF, conducted in Serbia and FYRM and finalized in 2011. Early childhood development interventions for the Roma have tended to be directed to children alone, focusing on issues of access, desegregation, language of instruction and social justice in relation to preschool aged children. It was decided to publish the report within RGSI because it focuses on Roma in countries within RGSI and provides evidence of women’s rights and roles in the survival, growth and development of young children.

e. The redesigning of Costing Studies led to the consideration of other training programs such as Education for Social Justice for local authorities and service providers.

f) Launches of products (RECI and costing studies) and website will now be towards project closure in March 2012 in Brussels and/or other countries.
2. EVALUATION

2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was for both accountability and learning, intending to:
1. Assess achievements and constraints against project plans
2. Identify lessons learned related to advocacy and communication
3. Provide recommendations and possible next steps

The project period being completed, the evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF RO CEECIS to report to the donor (EU) what had been achieved for accountability purposes. In addition, there was also interest among users of the report to learn lessons regarding any outcomes and in particular whether the various initiatives in the project had been useful, what influence it had and how. The evaluation report was expected to be used by EU, UNICEF and project partners and stakeholders, including OSF, REF, ISSA and local Roma NGOs and government partners at national levels to address further work planning related to ECD and Roma inclusion. An independent evaluator was appointed to evaluate the project with managerial oversight from UNICEF RO CEECIS ECD specialists and Regional Advisor Monitoring and Evaluation.

2.2 Scope and focus

The project period was for only 15 months and the evaluation was not expected to study impact. The scope of the evaluation was tailored to what the RGSI had intended to achieve. The RGSI project was essentially for advocacy with key decision makers and meant to raise awareness regarding importance of ECD and particularly early development and learning (ages 0-3) with a special focus on Roma children. Advocacy was supported by evidence through research and expert lectures, and strengthened by the use of communication materials. Both advocacy and communication built capacity through dialogue and discussion, as did specific workshops designed to change attitudes and question stereotypes.

The focus of the evaluation was guided by the key questions in the TOR. An analysis of each of the key questions helped to determine the evaluation framework. (Also see sections 2.3. and 2.4)

1. Was the design of the intervention appropriate?
   This key question refers to the theory of change.

2. Did the intervention get delivered effectively?
   This key question refers to the logical framework. Was the project implemented as planned? This question addresses the inputs, processes and outputs of the project.

3. Were there contextual factors that were important in making the intervention work or not?
   This key question refers to understanding both supporting and hindering factors that influenced the intervention.

4. Did the intervention alter the target audiences’ attitudes in ways that were

23 Please see TOR in Annex One
expected?

This key question is difficult to assess but by proxy one can assess key results such as was there greater awareness, motivation and capacity to include Roma children in early learning.

The Theory of Change and Results Framework were not explicitly available in the project proposal and therefore needed to be rebuilt by the evaluation in order to frame the questions appropriately. The RGSI Logical Framework and the Theory of Change reconstructed from the project proposal and inception report in consultation with and validated by the UNICEF RO CEECIS office were used to construct the evaluation questions. (See Annex Six)

2.3 Evaluation Framework

The evaluation questions were guided by OECD/DAC criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact), how contextual, rights based and gender focused the project was, whether it addressed issues of protection and the nature of the cooperation and collaboration with different stakeholders. (Please see TOR Annex One for detailed questions on each of the DAC criteria and the Interview Guide in Annex Seven). The rationale for using each of the criteria is explained below:

Relevance: This was an important criterion since RGSI was about Roma, an excluded group; young children, a neglected age group; and early childhood development, not a priority focus in education. The theory of change discussed the assumptions of RGSI project logic. For this reason it was important to assess how RGSI resonated with the EU’s various initiatives (Decade for Roma Inclusion, Structural funds and others) and UNICEF’s MTSP, the two joint managers of the project. Because RGSI was multi-country, it was also important to assess how it influenced national plans. The criterion of coherence in the TOR has been addressed in this section (and not separately). Clearly, because the project was about children belonging to a marginalized group of people, it was important to assess RGSI against CRC and Human Rights Based approach to programming. Because RGSI was about young children, the role of mothers was important and so an assessment of gender rights and involvement related to focus on CEDAW.

Effectiveness: Effectiveness was measured in several ways. One referred to the quality of the materials, capacity building and consultations since the project was related to advocacy with high level stakeholders. A second measure related to achievement of the results set out in the proposal – were they reached and if so how effective were they and what were the contributing factors. The TOR mentions Coverage as a criterion and this is included in the Effectiveness criterion in the discussion of key results which analyzes which stakeholders, Roma and non-Roma were involved and what was the different impact on them.

Efficiency: This criterion was particularly important since RGSI was only for 15 months and the focus was on how efficiently it was implemented. This criterion assessed if targets were achieved within the funding as well as the timeliness. Meeting this criterion was important because UNICEF managed the project.

Impact: The proposal clearly sets out outputs and the inception report states that it is not possible to measure impact in such a short project period. This criterion has limited scope for this evaluation. The TOR questions related to impact are a) is there increased awareness and capacity among individuals, communities and institutions.
As this is one of the three key result areas, it is addressed in the criterion Effectiveness. The questions for this criterion concentrate on evidence related to systemic or policy level changes regarding ECD, Roma children and inclusion. The evidence is limited to stakeholder’s reporting since the evaluation took place at the end of a short implementation time of 15 months. The sustainability criterion is addressed with impact as there were obvious limitations – the evaluation was scheduled soon after the completion of RGSI. As per the TOR, sustainability questions such as whether the project contributed to placing young Roma children on policy agendas at national level are addressed in the impact criterion. Other questions related to people’s motivation, resources and ability to continue advocating on delivering messages of ECD and inclusion of Roma children are addressed as key results in the effectiveness criterion.

Additional criteria that were included in the evaluation framework and their justification are as follows:

Coordination: Because RGSI was a multi-stakeholder project at different levels – national, regional and international – it was important to ascertain what the value addition was of involving so many partners (government, non-government and Roma) and whether a common voice was available on key areas of ECD for Roma. Since most of the activities were at the national level, the quality of coordination and the involvement of relevant stakeholders were important.

Results Based Management: This relates to how results were monitored and how UNICEF RO CEECIS managed this process and be responsive to changes in implementation. This criterion was important because RGSI was a complex project being multi-country, multi-stakeholder and with a large number of activities to be implemented in a short time.

Rights focus: Being a marginalized group, this criterion was important and the criterion of protection has been addressed here as well. The evaluation asked – did RGSI clearly indicate that early development and learning was important to address the rights of children’s and especially those who belong to marginalized communities such as the Roma? Did RGSI address the role of mothers belonging to traditional communities with respect to children’s learning?

2.4 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology was tailored to address the object of the evaluation and the purpose of evaluation.

2.4.1 Evaluation Approach

The evaluation approach was guided by the evaluation literature on advocacy and communication. This literature informs that it is often difficult to attribute impact but it is possible to identify the contribution of initiatives. (See the discussion on impact above). Also, the project period was for only 15 months, a very short time for impact (e.g. changes in the lives of children) to occur. It is for this reason, this evaluation does not claim to assess impact (attribution) but will focus on the results of implementation efforts to assess outcomes, understand how the process contributed (or not) by looking at the factors that contributed or hindered progress and what lessons could be learned to indicate the way forward. For this reason, the evaluation

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24 See Annex Eight for References
plan *did not use a survey (quantitative) methodology*. The qualitative methodology involved document reviews, interviews with key informants, focus group discussions, mining e-mails, and using triangulation to validate findings.

The evaluation approach was collaborative, in line with the evaluation purpose which was of accountability and learning. “Collaborative evaluation is defined as any evaluation in which there is a significant degree of collaboration or cooperation between evaluators and stakeholders in planning and/or conducting the evaluation.” (Cousins, et al., 1996) This approach was selected because the RGSI evaluation was evaluating *contribution*. In cases such as RGSI, with its geographically wide spread, socio-cultural differences and multiple stakeholder involvement, it is difficult to collect data without the participation of the implementing partners because of language and access. Collaborative methodology was particularly useful in RGSI as it helped to identify in detail factors that supported and hindered the management and implementation process. One of the recognized by-products of collaborative evaluations is increase in ownership of the findings and enhanced utilization, enhancing learning (one of the purposes of the evaluation).

The stakeholders to the evaluation were the implementation partners – UNICEF RO CECECIS, OSF, REF and ISSA. The evaluation questions, methodology and interview plan were shared, the evaluator reviewed the feedback and finalized the evaluation questions, data collection plan and questions in consultation with UNICEF RO CECECIS. Once finalized, the report will be shared widely with stakeholders at country level.

The evaluation though collaborative was independent and adhered to evaluation standards since the evaluator used her expertise to question, review, analyze and triangulate findings.

The process of using participatory and qualitative methods to collect data from a representative sample minimizes risk of bias of project personnel as potential gains are high. Triangulation and reflection were used to minimize risk of bias positive or negative.

In order to *triangulate* findings across stakeholders, the same set of questions was asked (as applicable) and differences discussed in order to validate findings. This meant that specific points of enquiry were followed up with respective stakeholders subsequent to their scheduled interviews or group discussions. Since some interviews and group discussions were remote through Skype and some involved translations, the evaluator used a *critical-reflective approach*. This meant that during the interview process, the evaluator consistently summarized key points in the interview and sought validation (or correction) during the interview/group process itself. If there was a differing point of view it was discussed and validated or not. This interview approach ensured both reliability and validity of the data collected.

2.4.2 Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan took into consideration time and budget constraints, adhered to established evaluation practices for sampling and was prepared in discussion with UNICEF RO CECECIS. Two out of five countries implementing RGSI (Spain was a learning site for project implementers) were studied in depth – one with a country


TORs had been developed in consultation with partners REF and OSF
field visit (Romania) and another using virtual technology (Serbia). Additionally, key informants from other three countries (some being regional partners) were also interviewed (see table below). Primary data collection took place over two weeks of which one week included on site visits (UNICEF RO CEECIS Geneva and Romania).

### 2.4.3 Data Sources

Multiple data sources were used and the desk review started a month before the site visit.

1. Desk review of documents to assess inputs, activities and outputs; analysis of existing international and national policies/priorities; mining emails regarding discussion threads
2. Interviews with key stakeholders, including government representatives, project partners (REF, OSF, ISSA) and Roma civil society organizations as well as thought leaders
3. FGD with service providers (e.g. Roma health and education mediators, members of NGOs, etc.)
4. Field visit to one of the countries where RGSI is being implemented that included face to face meetings, visit to a Multi-functional early learning site and discussion with local authority supporting the site.
5. Virtual interviews with another country mirroring the country field visit.

### 2.4.4 Sampling

The suggested **sampling** size was 10 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders and partners and at least two focus group discussions with beneficiaries/service-providers. The sampling size **exceeded** targets with 20 individual interviews, two group interviews and two focus group discussions to ensure maximum representation in the sampling. At the country level, Romania and Serbia were studied in depth, with some interviewing in FYRoM. Regional and international partners were interviewed. The table below provides details of the sample and the following section (Limitations of the study) outlines constraints as well as who did not respond in spite of multiple reminders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of person</th>
<th>Country (if applicable)</th>
<th>Designation/position</th>
<th>Interview or FGD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Decision Makers and Thought Leader</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viorica Preda</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Preschool General Inspector</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adina Codres,</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>General Directorate for Child Protection</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One key decision-maker at local level</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Local government office in Magidia; meeting with Mayor and local officials; meeting with Multi-functional Center managers, educators and staff</td>
<td>Group interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelina Skarep</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>Ministry of Education (Roma Education Strategy and IPA)</td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2.5 Limitations of the Study

The evaluation was a rapid assessment of RGSI project results primarily outputs and immediate results and was not an impact study. For this reason, it would not be appropriate nor is it possible to construct a counterfactual. Theoretically, the counterfactual may be considered as the situation that existed before the
implementation of RGSI (Please see context 1.2.4 for more details) However, RGSI was one of many initiatives that have been included for Roma children and it would be difficult to attribute RGSI alone (or not) for any change seen. It is for this reason that the evaluation does not assign causality but studies the contribution of RGSI to ongoing initiatives and is modest in its findings. The rapid assessment could not detail costing although overall discussion on cost constraints has been described. Information was sought from partners regarding exact costs incurred but there was no response.

RGSI covered five countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, and FYRoM) and a learning site visit to Spain. A sample of stakeholders was interviewed. The number of persons contacted and the site visits had to be selective but were based on established evaluation sampling practice. One site visit was planned and the country selection was based on the number of project activities implemented to understand what worked and what did not and conditions that contributed to either. To validate this understanding, another country where a similar number of activities had also taken place was included for virtual interviews and focused group discussions (over Skype) as budget limitations restricted further visits by the evaluator. The selection of these sites was developed through a consultative process with RGSI implementers.

Skype interviews with other stakeholders provided an overview of activities in other countries and the limitations of doing so are recognized. In order to overcome these limitations, maximum efforts were made to triangulate findings across stakeholders and with the use of documented evidence. Evaluation findings recognize the limitations of the data collected and only where applicable have generalized to cover all five countries since the project activities were the same but recognize that extrapolation to countries elsewhere may be difficult.

Requests were made for interview with EU responsible person but no response was obtained.

Since the program was being implemented by multiple actors (UNICEF, REF, ISSA, OSF, others), the evaluation findings cannot be attributed to any one organization but represents the cumulative effects of various efforts of RGSI partners.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were addressed in the following ways: a) children were not interviewed b) the adults who were interviewed were informed in advance about the evaluation and the evaluation questions c) the evaluator’s approach was respectful in the language used and in listening to the different views and perspectives of stakeholders. This was important as the project was about inclusion of Roma, a community that is discriminated and stigmatized and d) those being interviewed were provided the opportunity to candidly express their views. UNICEF and UN Norms and Guidelines were used as benchmarks.
3. FINDINGS

3.1. Related to Relevance

The relevance of this program is analyzed by considering the extent to which the objectives of the RGSI are consistent with national and international partners’ policies and priorities including MDGs, Roma Decade (2005-15), EC supported Roma platform, structural funds and national plans on Roma inclusion; international rights instruments such as CRC and CEDAW; and UNICEF’s MTSP, HRBAP and RBA. Questions related to relevance may be found in Annex One and Seven.

3.1.1 The RGSI resonated with the EU’s and UNICEF’s Commitment towards Roma Inclusion, national plans and international and global rights based initiatives.

Since 2005, with the support of the European Commission, and in partnership with the World Bank, UNDP, OSF and Roma civil society organizations, twelve countries in Central and South East Europe joined the Decade of Roma Inclusion. UNICEF became a formal member of the Decade in 2007. By joining the Decade, UNICEF was afforded the opportunity to collaborate with development partners to bring children to the forefront of policy attention, to mainstream children and young people across all areas and member countries of the Roma Decade and to highlight their potential as agents of change.

On the basis of the work of the Roma platform and of the Roma Task Force set up by the Commission on 7 September 2010 to analyze the use and effectiveness of EU and national funds by all Member States for Roma inclusion, the Commission pledged to support EU member states through the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency to develop an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. These strategies feature in each country’s national reform programs supported by the structural funds provided by the EU to member countries. The European Commission also expects Member States to be explicit and ambitious about Roma inclusion when setting their national Europe 2020 targets in the fields of poverty reduction, employment and education. 2010 was declared as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Numerous EU documents highlight the importance of ECD for Roma children. In line with the December 2008 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision, the European Parliament emphasized that it is necessary to provide and guarantee equal access to high-quality services and to promote early education for Roma children, as an instrument for preventing social exclusion and marginalization. The March 2009 resolution on The social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labour market in the EU, the European Parliament specifically noted that the unequal access to services and the socio-economic disadvantages faced by Roma children put early development and high-quality education out of their reach, affecting negatively their cognitive, emotional, social, physical and personal development.

UNICEF policies related to Roma inclusion are guided by the CRC and CEDAW conventions, the Declaration and Plan of Action of “A World Fit for Children”, the UN Declaration on Minorities and UNICEF’s 2006-2009 Medium-term Strategic Plan (MTSP) (extended to 2012). The RGSI has synergy with UNICEF’s global efforts to address economic and social inequities, secure child rights and reach the most

vulnerable and disadvantaged children. UNICEF’s experience has indicated that the strategies to promote the inclusion of Roma children must sensitively address the inclusion and role of Roma young mothers in ECD as there are critical connections between the social and psychological wellbeing of mothers and the survival, growth and development of their young children.

In 2010, UNICEF prepared, with the inputs of key Roma and non-Roma partners, a Regional Position Paper on a Human Rights-based Approach to Roma Education. UNICEF has been active in promoting a focus on the inclusion of Roma children within the framework of UN coherence in the CEECIS region, in particular with UNDP and the World Bank. UNICEF is leading the effort of crafting a paper on behalf of the Regional Directors Team on the role and position of the UN with regard to Roma inclusion.

3.1.2. RGSI responded to various EU social inclusion initiatives as well as other international rights based frameworks, principles and programs

RGSI is in synergy with various ongoing research and policy efforts. Pre-accession and structural funds clearly indicate the EU emphasis of Roma inclusion and RGSI emphasized the ECD component of Roma inclusion. The EU Decade for Roma Inclusion (2005-15) supported the RGSI focus on ECD. This connection was perceived by the participants of RGSI.

An important use was the development of a policy paper on ECD and Roma Inclusion using the data gathered in the RECI studies. Most policy recommendations are for Education and Roma inclusion but this was the first time that the emphasis was on ECD.

The Serbian decision maker, the Pedagogical Adviser in the Ministry of Education and Science mentioned that RGSI contributed to 2014 being the year for ECD strategy as part of the Decade for Roma Inclusion.

RGSI also synergized with other donor funded country level initiatives indicating coherence. In Serbia, RGSI ‘fit’ with World Bank initiative on Delivery of Integrated Services at Local Level where one component is Education for the Roma community. RGSI data and recommendations will be fed directly into this component. Other initiatives such as UNICEF’s ‘KG without Borders’, OSF’s ‘Parenting: Strong from the Start’ and REF and UNICEF’s joint initiative on Empowering Mothers dovetails into RGSI efforts to raise advocacy for early development and learning with a focus on Roma children.

At country level, Romania has introduced from 2011 (operational from 2012 school year), a per capita model for calculation of student cost where special equations have to be factored for factors such as urban-rural and working with vulnerable children (most of whom are Roma). RGSI including the RECI studies found synergy with these country efforts.

28 MTSP Focus Area 5: A Fair Chance for Every Roma Child: UNICEF and ECD in CEECIS 2012-2014, Natcom Donor Toolkit Regional Approach
29 MTSP Focus Area 5: A Fair Chance for Every Roma Child: UNICEF and ECD in CEECIS 2012-2014, Natcom Donor Toolkit Regional Approach
RGSI came as a logical continuation, usually we focus on elementary school but now it is early years. For Ministry of Education, ECD is now a priority.

Decision maker, Serbia

We have been trying to get attention to early years so RGSI ‘was like a present’.

NGO, Serbia

RGSI fits with the ‘Decade of Roma Inclusion’ and the various official documents and national laws that have been developed around the Decade.

Decision maker, Ministry of Education, Romania

Internationally, RGSI synergy with CRC, MDG and the completion of primary schooling as well as rights based focus (with focus on role of young Roma mothers) was evident to RGSI partners. (Also see Related to Rights Based below)

3.2. Related to Effectiveness

For this evaluation, effectiveness refers to the extent to which the objectives of the RGSI are achieved or expected to be achieved, bearing in mind their relative importance. It has examined RGSI’s achievements from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives in terms of quality of achievements, contribution of the achievements to the situation and advancement of ECD for a marginalized group, the Roma. The findings are related to the questions as posed in the TOR. Please see Annex One and Seven for specific questions.

3.2.1 RGSI clearly contributed to the three result areas: there was better understanding among key stakeholders regarding progress achieved, successful strategies and remaining challenges; there was better capacity of local authorities and Roma CSO to strengthen or expand ECD; and there was better capacity of stakeholders and service providers to include Roma children in ECD and related activities.

There is considerable evidence in each of the three result areas across countries and stakeholders to substantiate the above.

RGSI partners’ interviews indicated that, in the case of RGSI, it was the right participation at the right time when most countries were either formulating or revising existing education strategies, policies and laws that would affect the inclusion of early development and learning and Roma children. Hence the various advocacy, communication and capacity building activities came at the right time. What was also unique was a) the linking of research results coherently with advocacy messages providing an evidence base and b) to communicate these advocacy messages through print and audio-visual means. The combination of all three components – research, advocacy and communication strengthened the results of the project.

There were many contributing factors that supported achievement of the key results. Including the voice of the Roma in all these events (also as local researchers, where available, for the RECI study) was critical to produce the intended changes in stakeholders’ knowledge, attitude and practice. The multidimensionality of the RGSI regional and international partners ensured complementarities of expertise and a unified voice expressing international priorities for focus on early development and learning and special focus on Roma children. These voices were expressed in unison with EU and international social inclusion policies. Participation of key and diverse stakeholders at different events ensured cross-learning and utilization. What was important was to bring grassroots voices to discussions. One example was of that of
Roma women’s voices via video to selected forums and another was that of sharing lessons on social inclusion in early learning from multi-functional children’s centres.

It may be mentioned that the key result areas overlap and evidence for any one may be applicable to others as well.

i) **Better understanding of key stakeholders regarding progress, successful strategies and challenges**

Research (the RECI and Costing studies) and their validation at national consultations and discussion at the policy round tables informed participating stakeholders of the status about early development and learning policies and practices in their country as well as what has worked, what has not and what challenges exist. Cross-sectoral representation and the presence of diverse key stakeholders at these national consultations led to greater awareness, sensitization as well as the development of recommendations that holistically addresses ECD issues with Roma children. Roma NGOs helped to identify a wider representation of Roma civil society organizations particularly at the grassroots for the national consultation and capacity building events.

Interviews with decision makers, NGOs including Roma, UNICEF RO and country offices, REF representatives and RECI researchers indicated that the joint thinking, dialogue and discussion led to inclusion of concrete recommendations as Chapter 5 to the RECI reports. Clearly, those who participated owned the recommendations. Evaluation reports of the consultations and meetings indicated that participants from various sectors learned that they could and should coordinate their work. A recommendation came from Serbia to involve more policy makers and teachers responsible for higher school education so that they also understand the importance of ECD.

The capacity building events such as expert lectures and education in social justice and empowerment also included a diverse range of key stakeholders enabling a broad based sensitization and understanding about importance of early development and learning and Roma inclusion.

Interviews with participants regarding the expert lectures and national consultations as well as FGD with those who attended the ESJ training in Serbia and Romania indicated that they clearly understood the importance of early development and learning especially 0-3 years for Roma children. The discussion of the research studies at the consultations provided a snapshot of the progress (or lack of it) in ECD. Participants at these events (who were key stakeholders in government and non-government institutions) stated that their knowledge had increased regarding how late school entry such as in preparatory classes (5 to 6 year olds), adversely impacted the social and intellectual development of children. The importance of quality services was also understood especially in a context where Roma children are often placed in ‘special’ schools because of teacher bias and/or enrollment by parents to secure subsidized education related expenses.

Historically, the 0-3 years population has been positioned within the health sector. The national consultations brought different sectors that work with this age group – decision makers from government departments of health, education and social welfare (who run crèches for children of working parents); local authorities that support 0-3 years early learning multi-functional centers that promote desegregation through the inclusion of Roma children (subsidized by the local authorities); Roma NGOs, other NGOs, educators and researchers. This allowed for building alliances.
among different government sectors as well as government and non-government organizations.

We were shocked to see how the NGO sector was changing (responding to Roma needs) but that systemic change in social welfare, protection had not taken place and that they need to work with NGOs.

*FGD of participants at expert meeting and ESJ training, Serbia*

Stakeholders indicated in their interviews and FGD that for the first time, they had clearly understood the need to address early development and learning 0-3 years but that the challenge was how to integrate sectors (responsible for young children) bringing synergy among health, education and social welfare.

The new education law includes 0-3 for the first time and at the round table, we were able to discuss with colleagues from Health, Protection and Social Welfare how they could contribute and when backed with expert lectures, it helped to confirm the importance of ECD. This was important as traditionally the focus of 0-3 is purely health.

*Participant Round Table, Romania*

By sitting at the national consultations as equal partners, Roma NGOs shared their problems and challenges as well as what strategies have worked or can work. Also, videotapes of Roma voices (and not just NGOs representing Roma women) and the participation of grassroots Roma organizations at the Round Tables provided an authentic understanding of problems and solutions.

Interviews with Roma participants from the national consultations in Serbia and Romania indicated that the primary data obtained from RECI influenced the Roma NGOs to work on early development and learning. Many of the Roma NGOs traditional focus is human rights issues.

Though they (*sic* Roma NGOs) have influence and many Roma are employed in government, the understanding from videos of Roma women wanting quality education for their children, their own aspirations was educative to Roma NGOs as well.

*Decision makers, Serbia*

Respondents noted that in the consultations, the contribution of Professor George Sarau in Romania, an authority on Roma culture, led to better understanding by key stakeholders present of challenges facing the Roma community and strategies for their redressal. Professor Sarau was also responsible for disseminating the RECI reports to 53 Roma related e-Groups (separately for directors, inspectors, issue based such as school non-attendance), to build awareness.

**ii) Better capacity of local authorities and Roma CSOs to strengthen or expand ECD**

ISSA, while organizing national consultations, worked with Roma NGOs to include appropriate representation. The participation of Roma NGOs (including grassroots NGOs) along with others national and sub-national at these consultations and other capacity development events built their capacity to introduce or strengthen ECD programs. Interviews with REF and Roma NGOs indicated that ECD had not been a focus area for them while working with Roma children and that the various consultations and capacity building events had resulted in greater awareness and desire to introduce ECD related programs and especially those for early development and learning.
We have after RGSI developed proposals on ECD – this is a new priority of work for us.

*Roma NGO, Romania*

In some of the RECI studies as in Romania, Roma origin researchers were included in the team. This inclusion built capacity of Roma and non Roma researchers and brought greater sensitivity to data analysis regarding early development and learning and Roma children. RECI researchers – Roma and non Roma mentioned the value of this inclusion to understand issues of ECD and challenges faced by Roma children.

In Serbia, national consultation participants validating the RECI studies mentioned that a) Local authorities will use recommendations for their own ECD plans b) Strategic partnerships were developed between MoE, Health and other sectors as a result of discussion at the round tables and c) RGSI materials were used for training of Educational Inspectors regarding the importance of early development and learning, as their focus of support is usually elementary school.

In Romania, Mayors in Romania’s decentralized political structures have shown intent of introducing multi-functional centers in their towns. MoE Romania organized a national meeting for Inspectors where RECI and other materials from RGSI were shared. MoE used RGSI communication materials for the development of curricula, methodology and standards for 0-3 years. Roma NGOs have developed proposals for ECD and used materials and data for project justification. The NGOs have also participated in Roma grassroots networks and other donor supported meetings and advocated for early development and learning.

At the MFC or multi-functional center we demonstrate that quality early learning, health and nutrition are linked and that *social inclusion* of Roma is an important component for civic integration. Traditionally, 0-3 years is the responsibility of MoH and now we are placing emphasis in MoE. The MFC is possible only if the local authorities support us. In Magidia, the Mayor and the local council supports five Roma children for their education at the MFC, a huge step for the local community. The MFC demonstrates that collaboration among different authorities at the local level is possible.

*Staff meeting, MFC Magidia, Romania*

**iii) Better capacity of stakeholders and service providers to include Roma children in ECD and related activities**

Participants of the capacity building events such as expert lectures and ESJ training (provided by ISSA) have clearly indicated that there was a change in attitude which challenged their stereotypes about Roma regarding value for education, early learning and social inclusion.

Participants in capacity building events mentioned their efforts to bring change on their return to work:

In Serbia

- A supervisor in social services influenced case managers to review Roma cases more carefully and take action instead of closing cases prematurely because of the common stereotype of ‘Roma culture’s’ disinclination to use the state benefit.
- A KG pedagogue intended to organize ESJ training for other teachers
• A NGO staff plans to use the ESJ exercises to build awareness with her colleagues who ‘think they are perfect’

In Romania
• All staff at multi-functional centers (socially inclusive early learning centers for 0-3 years) were trained because the participant really understood what ‘bias’ and stereotypes is.
• The carers in institutions were trained about what discrimination ‘feels’ like and why it is important to talk to parents of children who are in institutions
• The Methodological Commission introduced ESJ concepts to teachers from different KG and county officials involved in educational assistance
• ESJ ideas were discussed with different types of schools – special school, pre-school, County Council of Educational Assistance

We have become tolerant and explain why others (Roma) react in different ways.

Discussed with Methodological Committee and teachers why children from vulnerable families (mostly Roma) were dropping out and because of our attitude change, enrollment increased from 7 children to 24.

We talked to parents who did not want their children to ‘mix’ with Roma and said we cannot exclude Roma…. We taped the activities of the children at Christmas and showed the parents – they were surprised to see that Roma children are so clever and sing so well. Their attitude changed and some brought clothes to school for the Roma children.

I go on home visits and told my colleagues that if we communicate better they will trust us.

I mediated with the medical assistant as he/she did not want to receive the Roma child because of lack of cleanliness. So I solved problem by asking child to wash at the Center.

The discussion with the local authorities such as Mayors on the first day of training helped us understand that we don’t need money only willingness – we got practical solutions to involve Roma children in early learning.

FGD, ESJ participants Romania

ISSA and UNICEF Serbia are planning a new project on early learning for disadvantaged children including Roma. ISSA will be using the various materials developed during RGSI for other projects it is involved in. ISSA also got the opportunity to emphasize one of its key messages – quality in ECD is important. UNICEF has used RECI data for a new proposal with IKEA called ‘KG without Borders’.

3.2.2. The quality of capacity building events was seen to be high and to contribute to increased awareness and understanding to strengthen or expand ECD services especially for Roma children.

There were two types of capacity building events – expert lectures (including advanced seminars and public lectures) and ESJ training.

FGDs in Serbia and Romania as well as interviews with participating stakeholders indicated that the expert lectures by internationally renowned researchers and ESJ
training were appreciated for the high quality of the sessions as well as the materials provided. The ESJ training modules were developed by ISSA and aimed to bring deep transformation regarding personal stereotypes and how discrimination works. The ESJ training also demonstrated how individuals could take action and seek allies. The materials included translations of latest research, posters and CRC. The participants stated that they had used all the materials and implemented various exercises used in the training in their own spheres of work.

We have used everything – separately and combined. The quality of the materials was technically very good.

We have not attended any project like RGSI with the emphasis on early learning and Roma children. No one targets this age group for learning.

Other projects target older children 3-6 years or other problems of Roma but here I understood why early development and learning is important and its holistic nature.

FGD Serbia

There were suggestions from ESJ participants in Serbia to have greater mix of stakeholders, to increase the training days (the ESJ training is usually conducted in several phases but because of fewer funds, the training was made concise over one phase), have a database of all ESJ participants and to expand coverage so that others could benefit as well.

ISSA mentioned that bringing high quality international experts to deliver lectures in the RGSI countries not only brought visibility and credibility to the field of ECD but also to the organizing partners.

Capacity development quality was enhanced by the inclusion of the Roma Women’s Network who brought a ‘grassroots’ voice to the Serbian consultations, indicated the aspirations of Roma mothers for their children and helped to break biases. It had a very powerful impact on both well-established Roma NGOs and other non-Roma stakeholders.

We learned from each other, had a deeper understanding of the obstacles and challenges in each sector and what to do together…

FGD of participants at expert meeting and ESJ training, Serbia

3. 2.3. The quality of the research and communication materials – print and video – was considered to be excellent and was widely accepted.

The quality of the research and various communication materials – international research on early learning, posters and communication materials – were appreciated across stakeholders in Serbia, Romania, FYRoM, Hungary (interview with ISSA) and in interviews with international partners. The logos of multiple, well-known and well-regarded international organizations on the materials were powerful symbols indicating their commitment to ECD and Roma issues and influenced national stakeholders.

In Serbia, the video of Roma Mothers discussing ECD and their aspirations for their children had a profound influence on the participants. Evaluation reports of the consultations and meetings indicated that participants appreciated the high quality of selected materials provided to them such as Lancet articles, importance of neuro-
science in early development and learning, role of parents, teachers and other providers for an interdisciplinary approach to early development and learning.

The RECI research reports are the only one of its kind that in one place brings cross-sectoral (education, health, social welfare, protection) information about ECD and Roma. Information is available on immunization, nutrition, employment, and access to education services but not related to early development and learning. RECI faced many challenges in collecting data – for example, in Romania it was difficult to get nationally disaggregated data on ethnicity and project information on Roma participation was dependent on self-reporting. Different sectors – health, education, and social services – realized who is collecting more data on Roma (usually the education sector) and the value of data collation.

RECI put ‘all the elements of the puzzle together’!
‘Feed with more materials while we are hungry’ – we need more and wider dissemination. (Decision maker Serbia)

There was huge interest as the topic was ‘new’ and it brought an economic argument and not just human rights angle – why it is important to focus on early years of children. (Roma NGO, Romania)

Our earlier research ‘Roma School Participation, Non Attendance and Discrimination in Romania’ for all levels of education provided a lot of data for RECI. A prominent Roma researcher was involved in this study as well as the RECI and so we could build on our earlier work for RGSI. (UNICEF country office)

RECI brings all the data in one unique place for all to use – across ministries. (MoE Participant at national consultation, Romania)

RECI provided the needed data for policy documents, as MoE did not have data across all sectors for the below 5 age group. (National consultation, Serbia)

I was able to provide a lot of information on ethnic data, which was used in the RECI. (Thought leader and head Dept. for Minority Languages, Romania)

Communication materials both print and video were validated in workshops and indicated how important it was for Roma community to be involved and have access. We in turn learned of the diversity of the community. (UNICEF FYRoM)

The book on Mothers – Childhood was useful but because it was in English and there were few copies, the reach was limited.

The website is under construction and includes almost all materials developed within RGSI.

The costing studies in Serbia, FYRoM and Romania were heavily influenced by inputs from national consultants or feedback bringing contextual relevance to the international expert’s inputs. In many cases, this caused a protracted exchange but has resulted in useful information regarding costing for ECD services for limited hours of early learning facilities. Limitations regarding availability of ethnic data were recognized.
3.3. Related to Efficiency

This section assesses to what extent resources (time, funds, etc.) delivered the results. Besides exploring how cost effective RGSI was (within the limitations identified, see section 2.5), it asked the question whether the relationship between the program costs and program outputs was reasonable, what were the measures taken for the efficient use of resources and the timely delivery of outputs. Other questions addressed were how efficiently available resources were used by the implementing partners and the managerial and operational efficiency of the RGSI. This section also attempted to answer whether the partner organizations had exercised leadership in the interventions.

3.3.1 The partnership enabled a cost effective RGSI program.

RGSI was supported by the EU (core funding of Euro 424,747) and co-financed by UNICEF (Euro 106,187). Funds were utilized adequately and efficiently and included partner contribution in the RECI. ISSA contributed 24,332 Euros and REF and OSF did not respond to queries by the evaluator. It may be stated that the available RGSI funds mentioned above were utilized in full and implemented within the given budgetary limit be it direct cost, administrative cost or total cost. In addition to the utilization of the funds, there have been long term gains such as increased capacity of implementing partners and participants. Also the inputs provided during the program period were intensive and rigorous to ensure sustainability and were effective in doing so.

3.3.2 Targets for communication products and services, research studies as well as advocacy and capacity building events were either exceeded or met, with the exception of one costing study

The number of communication products and services (website) exceeded targets. Advocacy and capacity building events also exceeded targets. (Please see list of events and list of materials Annex Four and Five). Instead of the planned 18 events, 25 (21 events and 4 additional meetings/presentations) were completed and against the planned 18 print and visibility materials, 40 (34 print and 6 reports) were developed. A folder was developed to serve as a communication kit for distribution at the various events and included Human Interest stories, CRC translated in the local language, literature on early development and learning, and other reports as applicable. The micro-website www.romachildren.org went live in March 2012.

Research products were completed: RECI reports were or are being finalized, including translation; costing studies with one exception (Czech Republic) are available.

There were problems related to the financing and costing studies as it was extremely challenging to find reliable data on Roma children and provide relevant costing scenarios. The ECD Costing and Financing Study for Romania is close to finalization and the report provides costing scenarios (for example, one scenario was cost of government supported four hour duration kindergartens) for consideration by the government of Romania to address ECD services for all children including Roma, ages 0-6. Initial research findings were presented for validation to national stakeholder groups in Bucharest who provided their comments and inputs to the researcher.

In view of the experience in Romania and before embarking on full-scale studies in
Czech Republic and Serbia, it was planned to conduct brief feasibility studies to assess the availability of data and information and the extent to which certain analyses are possible. The report for Serbia is completed.

3.3.3 RECI studies of four countries (from a previous project) were not available at the start of RGSI affecting the timelines and perhaps compromising the possible larger impact of RGSI.

The synthesis report was to be available, based on RECI studies in Czech Republic, Romania, Serbia and FYRoM, for wider dissemination. However, since the country RECI studies had not been completed, (the Hungary RECI report was to be commissioned under RGSI) the timelines outlined in the proposal could not be adhered to. Although the consistent efforts of the Program Manager and the cooperation of the stakeholders ensured that both the national RECI and synthesis reports were completed during the project period, there is a conjecture that early planned availability of the RECI studies could have had more impact than they did in their draft form.

3.3.4 The costing study in Czech Republic was delayed. Costing studies in other countries had difficulty in collecting data, were redesigned as feasibility studies and hence the planned synthesis report was not available.

The research in Czech Republic was delayed for several reasons. Overall policy and political changes in Czech Republic resulted in dissolution of the education section that addressed Roma concerns in the Ministry of Education and excluding the use of the term ‘Roma’ itself! Another issue was related to logistics and management. Because OSF had a full-fledged office in Czech Republic, UNICEF requested assistance. The research on financing and costing was included in the Project Cooperation Agreement between UNICEF and Open Society Foundation. Interviews with OSF, UNICEF RO and email mining indicated that for various reasons it was not possible to match schedules of responsible people in Open Society Foundations, local researchers and the lead researcher Dr. Jan van Ravens. There were also certain difficulties associated with language/translation, as one of local researchers didn’t speak English. Because of all the above-mentioned reasons, it was not possible to conduct the research in Czech Republic. OSF is committed to the costing study and intends to include it as part of another initiative on education costs in Czech Republic. However, the timeline for this activity will be after the completion of the RGSI deadline.

3.3.5 Deliverables were many in a short timeline of 15 months, costs underestimated but efficiently managed by UNICEF RO and partners to meet project needs and targets. Each partner contributed their resources and showed leadership in the organization of events and production of resources.

UNICEF RO and country offices and its implementing partner, ISSA mentioned that the RGSI proposal was ambitious with multiple events and products in different languages for six countries within a 15 month period and involving a number of partners at different levels - country, regional and international. The Inception Report (Pg. 25) had recognized the complicated ‘operationalization’ of the project, as it was multi-country, multi-activity and multi-stakeholder.

The amount of funds for 18 events was relatively small according to the UNICEF RO RGSI manager (72,000 Euros or 4000 Euros for each event), but creative management enabled completion (and exceeding) the target. Similarly, funds for videos were considered inadequate (18,000 Euros for 12 videos) and adjustments
were made to creatively and efficiently use existing videos and photos as well. Each partner (UNICEF, REF, and OSF) contributed to their own expenses for the Spain visit.

3.4. Related to Potential Impact and Sustainability

The short implementation period of 15 months has limitations for the measurement of impact and only a few findings were available. It is also difficult to assess impact against other initiatives as RGSI was one among many ongoing advocacy attempts in countries. In such cases, it is widely accepted practice to mention contribution of the current initiative (RGSI) rather than attribute impact.

Similarly, sustainability as reference to continuation of benefits after project completion was not possible, since the evaluation was commissioned immediately after the completion of RGSI. With these limitations, the evaluation tried to find out if there had been any attempt to introduce or change policy to support Roma children, their social inclusion and in implementing ECD. Similarly, sustainability with reference to continuation of the project beyond its time span has been partially addressed in the effectiveness section where there are examples of continuing advocacy and capacity building. However, it must be cautioned that it is difficult to assess whether such initiatives will continue in the long term. One of the sustainability questions in the TOR relates to whether RGSI has helped to place young Roma on the national policy agenda. This impact level question has been addressed within the limitations mentioned earlier.

3.4.1 There is some evidence of use and influence of the research (RECI mainly and where applicable the costing study) and capacity building activities (expert lectures, national consultations, ESJ training) towards policy change.

Interviews and available minutes and reports indicate that there has been spontaneous use of the learning through research and the capacity building activities. The use and influence of the RECI studies (and to a smaller extent, the costing information) recommendations indicates that the process contributed to the immediate and spontaneous use and influence of data by those who participated even though the reports were yet to be finalized and published. A word of caution is that the evidence for impact is one of intent as the timeline for the evaluation did not allow confirmation about whether policy change did take place and if so, what were the changes.

In Serbia:
- In Serbia, participants in the national consultations mentioned that the consultations came at the right time since recommendations from the research were included in the national strategy and action plan document being developed for the inclusion of Roma. Specifically, RECI contributed to indicators for early learning; self-evaluation indicators for social inclusion for educational institutions, strategic planning at local level and so on. The presence of Roma teaching assistants (now called pedagogical assistants for vulnerable groups), in Serbia was validated through RGSI. The OSF project - Roma Education Initiative introduced this cadre for the first time in 2005 and the government subsequently absorbed them officially in their cadre. RGSI clearly demonstrated the usefulness of and justification for this human resource.
• Research for the costing study was useful during the development of the Serbia educational strategy and contributed to the preschool section and the need to include Grade Zero as preparation for primary school

In Romania:
- In Romania, RGSI provided input into the secondary legislation (operationalization) of the new education law, which included ECD and 0-3 years for the first time. Also, the RECI data will help both central and local level to support measures to roll out services especially for 0-3.
- County School Inspectors usually provide technical support to schools but will now extend their work from 3-6 years to 0-6 years. MoE influenced by RGSI will be providing inputs to these Inspectors not only for 0-3 learning but also for the inclusion of Roma children.
- The RECI studies and conclusions were shared with the management of the Directorate for Child Protection Romania for policy inclusion. The current strategy till 2013 includes ECD and parenting but for 2014-20 strategy being developed, there will be a greater emphasis on education and will be including policy recommendations for vulnerable children (including Roma) from RECI.
- REF has included ECD as one of four priorities in its Advocacy Plan for government. It manages 14 million Euros from the Structural Funds and with 2013 being the end of this cycle, have the opportunity to influence the 2014-20 plans. REF is developing an ECD position paper regionally.
- Economic and Policy Dept. UNICEF provided information for the Roma Inclusion Strategy for Romania and Bulgaria regarding inclusion of ECD and civil society which was incorporated in the strategy in Dec. 2011 and will be used to advocate to the EU.
- Structural fund partners have used RGSI data

The MoE formulates policy and ensures program quality while local authorities finance pre-school education. RGSI has given us data and ideas to influence local authorities and to plan their capacity building. (Decision maker, Serbia)

The Directorate of Child Protection supports services such as day care to ensure that children are not separated from the families. In the integrated services for health, nutrition and care available for day care, we now understand the importance of early learning. Small projects of good practice by NGOs need to scale up and reach the government and RECI has ‘seized the moment’ and having international agencies who are experts in ECD, consult with government has great relevance to move the (sic government) system. (Decision maker, Romania)

RECI was a ‘gift’ to Romania since the MoE has embarked on a huge reform of ECD. There is no other research or evidence on Roma such as this. We too used the data for advocacy and because the govt. contributed to recommendations through RGSI consultations, they took ownership as well. (Local partner, REF, Romania)

Interview with UNICEF FYRoM indicated that the costing study developed earlier was used in the national consultation along with RECI for discussion and especially promoted a system wide approach to resolve Roma inclusion in ECD. FYRoM is chairing Roma Decade in 2012 and a number of advocacy events such as RECI dissemination, ECD conference and other events are scheduled. Based on RECI
and the costing study, ECD laws are under revision significantly changing the way funds will flow to municipalities.

3.5. Related to Coordination

Coordination questions related to what were the effects of coordination among different stakeholders at regional and national levels.

3.5.1 Coordination and consensus-building slowed down implementation but was considered valuable.

Achieving consensus on products was painstaking also because the UNICEF Manager was dealing with translations and comments in multiple languages and from many different stakeholders. This required meticulous follow up and consensus building, all of which was extremely time-consuming. (Also see Related to Results Based Monitoring) There were several consultations – within country and with regional and international offices to reach consensus and since every change had to be validated by other partners (and sometimes translated), the process was laborious.

Serbia country partners mentioned that UNICEF RO contributed greatly to organizing meetings, developing concept notes, developing participation criteria and this was done in an open communication style encouraging country partners as well as RGSI partners to contribute.

Country partners interviewed in Serbia, Romania, FYRoM and Hungary mentioned that they in turn had excellent local cooperation from agencies working on ECD and Roma NGOs – all of whom clearly ‘owned’ the organizing process. This testimony indicates the facilitative and not controlling role of UNICEF RO.

RECI studies (and costing studies where available) were validated and recommendations developed at the national consultations. These were included as Chapter 5 of the RECI report. The comments of diverse stakeholders were translated, included and circulated for consensus. This again was time consuming and a challenge in coordination for the UNICEF RO Manager. However, interviews with decision makers, Roma NGOs, country organizers (UNICEF where available, ISSA, Step by Step partner NGOs, REF) indicated that the process, acknowledged as slow, was recognized as very valuable. The findings of the report were being used spontaneously so although finalization for publishing was long-drawn, in practice it was not viewed as a hindrance.

3.5.2 Sharing and coordination at multiple levels was important for research, capacity building, organizing events and providing feedback on documents and research.

Interviews with partners in Serbia and Romania clearly indicated that at country level, REF, Step by Step, ISSA, OSF, UNICEF (either country offices or National

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31In many cases reports were written in one language, translated for review and then reviewers’ comments and inputs were translated back into the original language for incorporation. This process often went through two or three such cycles, involved up to 15 different individuals, creating a multitude of drafts and the need for meticulous follow-up and quality assurance mechanisms.
Committees)\textsuperscript{32} collaborated closely and cooperated with varied roles and responsibilities. ISSA was seen by UNICEF RO as an excellent partner for implementation – to coordinate programs for dissemination, advocacy and capacity building - especially in Serbia, Romania and Hungary. The country organizations are linked to international partners – for example, ISSA receives funding from OSF and these links contributed to a coordinated response at the country level. ISSA stated that its capacity to organize high profile events and to cement local alliances was strengthened by RGSI.

The close partnership also ensured that international experts were brought to the region and importantly, delivered content that was relevant and useful. For example, interviews in Romania with UNICEF, Step by Step, REF and with international offices of REF and UNICEF indicated that the costing study in Romania received feedback in a number of areas indicating the high level of ownership, use of data and concern for country needs and sensitivities.

The reports of the RGSI advocacy national consultation meetings (also called Round Tables or Policy meetings) and interviews with RGSI partners indicate that these meetings were well-coordinated and effective as they involved diverse and relevant key stakeholders – government and non-government, such as civil society NGOs and especially Roma NGOs. The partners were able to draw on their own networks to identify the right people to attend these meetings. For example, UNICEF was able to draw on its collaboration with government and media, REF with Roma NGOs and OSF with ECD related NGOs and experts.

\textbf{3.5.3. The Spain study visit was useful to build capacity of RECI partners, OSF, REF and UNICEF RO to ensure a coordinated response in RGSI.}

Spain has demonstrated the best integration/inclusion of Roma in Europe and the Government has a comprehensive Roma Inclusion policy and plan. One of the biggest Roma organizations – Fundacio Secretariado Gitano [http://www.gitanos.org/](http://www.gitanos.org/) has tremendous influence and experience of advocating for the Roma. RECI partners’ joint visit included meetings with the Ministries of Health and Education, local authorities, schools, Gitano partner organization, NGOs etc to understand their experience in social integration.

The Interim Report, Interviews with UNICEF RO and written communication from REF indicated that the Spain visit helped RECI partners learn about approaches and strategies on Roma Inclusion in basic services, different social sectors and in mainstream society in general. According to OSF, it provided the main agencies with an opportunity to understand how an EU country with very different experiences than those in CEE address policy and practice issues regarding Roma.

\textbf{3.5.4 Overall, international/regional partners’ support was highly valued at the country level; at regional level some partners expectations did not synergize.}

The three partners’ (OSF, REF, UNICEF) joint presence (all logos on documents, representation at events) in RGSI activities raised the profile of the issue of early development and learning and Roma early childhood inclusion with decision makers, country partners and stakeholders.

\textsuperscript{32} UNICEF has country offices in Romania, Serbia and FYRoM and National Committees in Hungary, Czech Republic and Spain.
Involvement of such powerful regional and international organizations at country level helped to focus efforts on ECD and Roma.

NGO Serbia

Of the two partners, REF appreciated the opportunities provided by RGSI. REF considered their contribution regionally and through their country offices as useful to place ECD on the research and political agenda in country and more widely through the region. REF also found value in the coordination and management role of UNICEF RO. In the evaluation query via email (dated Jan. 30, 2012), REF noted “we were consulted in several decisions related with ECD book translations, internet website, advocacy actions and roundtables with policy actors that followed up national consultations on country reports. We were also invited to comment and contribute on draft concepts of the roundtables and to press releases related with the event and inviting the stakeholders to participate. I gave feedback on costing report for Romania. Our local staff in Romania, Serbia, FYRoM and Hungary was involved in co-organizing the events and insured logistics related with translation of some of the materials. We were invited to comment about Education for Social Justice agenda and to bring in our stakeholders. We disseminated information about RECI and RGSI on our website.”

UNICEF RO was also appreciative of the partnership, stating that ‘one voice’ for ECD and early development and learning for Roma children has resulted from this collaboration. Networks and contacts of REF helped to strengthen the Roma voice in RGSI. However, OSF has felt marginalized and not being considered as ‘equal’ partners. It may be stated that in RECI, there were three organizations equally involved (in funding and implementing) – UNICEF, REF and OSF. In the case of RGSI, UNICEF was the implementer and accountable to the EU being the managers and receiving funds. The other partners, OSF and REF, were technical and advisory partners, not supervisory. Triangulation of OSF’s perception of marginalization was sought through email mining and interviews with RO, which however indicated a high degree of dialogue and cooperation from both organizations. It is possible that OSF’s feeling of not being equal partners may be because of assumptions regarding their role and responsibility in the RGSI. The Project Advisory Group (PAG) constituted with UNICEF RO, OSF, REF, ISSA and country UNICEF partners only served an advisory function and did not address such operational issues.

For example, UNICEF RO sent the inception report to UNICEF Brussels prior to sending it to partners REF and OSF for comments (although partner inputs had been added to the inception report after face to face meetings and email exchange). The intention was that after receiving comments from UNICEF Brussels, UNICEF RO would circulate the Inception Report to its partners REF and OSF for comments before final submission to the EU. However, UNICEF Brussels found the report satisfactory and submitted it to the EU. UNICEF RO CEECIS did as part of its coordinating role, solicit comments from REF and OSF and considered the inception report a work in progress.33

The local level partners of the international and regional NGOs have built better relationships and synergy with government regarding ECD, other activities and Roma children. An example is REF Romania being supported by MoE to select sites for new ECD projects and greater access to State Secretary of Education. The flip side was delay in consensus building.

33Interview with UNICEF RO RGSI Manager and ECD Advisor; OSF
3.6. Related to Results Based Management

RBM refers to whether all available financial and human resources were able to support the planned results. It asked the question whether the RGSI was designed, implemented and monitored applying RBM principles.

3.6.1 RGSI largely used the RBM for planning, designing and implementing the program.

The proposal was developed by UNICEF RO in consultation with potential partners and once approved, has further involved partner organizations and other stakeholders such as Roma NGOs and civil society. With the assistance of UNICEF RO, result oriented planning was done by analyzing the problem to be addressed, identifying partners, involving them in identifying objectives and designing the various strategies and interventions to meet the results identified by the program. Reporting progress by relevant stakeholders was done in more or less a timely manner and they compared achieved results against the set targets. However, in the absence of a formal log frame or theory of change indicators, reporting was intervention based. The time of reporting and the format used varied among partners. This indicates that the RGSI program used RBM principles in planning well but there were differences in reporting practices.

3.6.2 Close monitoring by UNICEF RO led to completion of most targets; UNICEF RGSI manager played a key role in coordinating with all stakeholders to monitoring progress

The Inception Report, Interim Report and event-based reports provide information about RGSI’s systematic monitoring. ISSA indicated that UNICEF RO sent regular updates to all partners.

Documentation, evaluation forms, reports, email exchanges indicate that the project was vigorously monitored and there is evidence of adjustments made as a result of information received. (Please see 1.2.7 Changes in Implementation for evidence) For example, the costing studies were redesigned to become feasibility studies. In the case of the costing study in Czech Republic, there is email evidence of continuous attempts to organize the international and national consultants in cooperation with OSF. For various reasons this study did not take place, but it was not because of a lack of monitoring and follow-up.

Evaluation feedback from advocacy and capacity development events informed future project design. Emails and conversations with partners locally and regionally were continuously used to monitor the situation on the ground. The budget was particularly challenging and inadequate for the large number of activities planned in the short 15 months and the fact that these activities were largely completed is also a testimony for the well-coordinated management and monitoring.

The monitoring was the responsibility of one Program Manager (supported by the UNICEF ECD Advisor) located in UNICEF RO CEECIS and though there was a technical support multi-partner group (Project Advisory), there was no multi-partner management group to support operational management of such a complex project. This required a very high involvement of UNICEF in management.
3.7. Related to Rights based approach

This section explores whether there was a clear articulation in RGSI of the problems of inclusion, gender and discrimination. An attempt was also made to understand the changes that have occurred in the RGSI program area of ECD as well as Roma perspectives.

3.7.1 RGSI goal expressly states inclusion and ECD as an entry point to mainstream Roma children; evidence was brought through research and capacity building regarding the need and benefits of doing so.

The project document clearly identifies Roma as the main target group and the plans and strategies developed to enhance their entitlement for early development and learning. Human and child rights such as educational rights and the right to social inclusion as well as the specific attention needed for the most discriminated groups has been clearly identified and aligned with in the program.

Content analysis of the evidence gathered for RECI studies and the various policy meetings have indicated the need to protect the inclusive rights of children for education, especially if they are marginalized. The RGSI objectives, agenda items and reports of the various events discuss Roma inclusion and ECD as a right and not a ‘problem’ (traditional perceptions). Further, various messages relate to mainstreaming Roma children and discuss the arbitrary enrolment of excessive numbers of Roma children into special schools – clearly indicating the slant of the messages towards rights and protection. The training on empowerment and social justice to decision makers and service providers is evidence of rights based approach as well.

3.7.2 Inclusion of Roma NGOs such as REF and local NGOs and researchers indicate a rights based approach in design

The inclusion of Roma NGOs and researchers in RGSI is another piece of evidence indicating commitment to a rights based approach. Interviews with decision makers and participants at the various events indicated that their presence made a substantial difference. One of the decision makers mentioned that the first person videos (see Gender below) was a powerful way to express Roma children’s right to early education and inclusion.

3.7.3 First person video accounts of the importance and aspirations of mothers in ECD sensitized decision makers deeply; this was more ‘real’ than the advocacy of Roma NGOs or print material.

Typically, there are no significant gender differences in young Roma children’s (poor) access to early development and learning services. However, gender differences do exist in who cares for and rears young children. Primary caregivers are most often mothers. Just like their children, Roma mothers face discrimination and social exclusion by mainstream society, on a daily basis (Women, Motherhood & Early Childhood Development, 2011). The stereotype about the Roma community is that

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34 In fact, the conceptual framework for the RECI studies (as presented in the Terms of Reference) highlights Human Rights as the first priority, stating that, “the effort will be to understand and elucidate gaps in the capacities of various duty bearers, principally the State and its organs including local authorities, communities/families, and service providers, to recognize and act upon their obligations to the youngest rights holders, especially Roma young children” (p.4, ToR, 2009).
they do not value education and that caregivers (almost always mothers) do not understand the importance of learning. In an effort to dismantle this gender stereotype, a series of first person interviews and discussions with Roma women were aired during various events and the aspirations of Roma women for their children’s education helped to break stereotypes. Usually, Roma advocacy is through Roma NGOs but this audio-visual, first-hand experience proved to be very powerful as expressed in the FGD and interviews. The videos have been uploaded on the website.

The participation of Roma women was very important. We learned that they were very interested in ECD and that their situation was complex - they need support from social welfare for the education of their children.

We had insights into our own beliefs.

As Einstein said, ‘it is easier to break an atom than it is to break bias’.

FGD of participants at expert meeting and ESJ training, Serbia

Information on the importance of mother’s contribution to ECD was emphasized in various expert lectures and specifically through the book ‘Women Motherhood Early Childhood Development”. However, this was available only in English and without translation the reach appeared to be less than the videos as expressed in the interviews and FGDs.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The conclusions are based on the findings outlined above against each evaluation criteria and discuss the factors that enabled reaching (or not) the various criteria. Lessons Learned follow the conclusions where applicable indicating a wider use of the conclusions beyond the project itself.

4.1 Relevance

It may be stated with confidence that RGSI was relevant to the EU, UNICEF, REF, OSF, national government and civil society. It resonated with EU membership requirements and policies regarding social inclusion as well as UNICEF’s MTSP plans. RGSI extended the relevance criteria since early childhood development and especially early development and learning (0-3 years) was not considered an educational priority by any of the stakeholders. Hence, RGSI was timely since it contributed greatly to national strategies and plans and even sensitized Roma NGOs regarding relevance of early development and learning (most Roma NGOs have worked on human rights issues but not on early development and learning). The voice of Roma mothers and grassroots voices amplified the relevance of RGSI.

Lessons Learned: Synergy with ongoing efforts and identifying gaps in information that are of value increases acceptance from all stakeholders.

4.2 Effectiveness

Evidence gathered as part of this evaluation indicates that, RGSI contributed to the three result areas – there was better understanding by key stakeholders in each country regarding challenges and progress about early development and learning
and Roma children and some indications regarding better capacity to expand ECD and include Roma children. RGSI benefited from the right participation at the right time when most countries were reviewing their strategies and policies concerning the inclusion of Roma and early development and learning. A number of contributing factors enabled achieving of the key results such as inclusion of Roma voices in all RGSI activities, participation of key and diverse stakeholders to enable cross-learning, unified voice of RGSI regional and international partners for quality ECD and Roma inclusion and the linking of research evidence to development of print and video advocacy messages. The capacity building events not only increased knowledge but also challenged deep seated bias and stereotypes about Roma community. The high quality of capacity building events resulted in increased awareness, knowledge and capacity to initiate changes for Roma children inclusion in early development and learning.

Lessons Learned: Stakeholders are able to overcome bias, increase understanding, enhance capacity and take action if supported by high quality research, expertise, advocacy and dialogue with a cross-section of relevant stakeholders including diverse decision makers, NGOs and marginalized voices.

4.3 Efficiency

RGSI was clearly efficient as a large number of deliverables were completed within cost in only 15 months of implementation involving multi-country and multiple stakeholders at the international, regional and national levels. Except for one costing study, all other deliverable were completed in time. The delay in the RECI studies (from a previous project) pushed back timelines for country and synthesis reports and possibly affected larger impact.

Lessons Learned: Building on or piggybacking on the deliverables of an earlier project provides for valuable synergies but there are also risks. Delays in the earlier project can affect the current project’s timelines and potential to deliver. Constraints of time and money can be overcome with good management but it is important to plan and budget realistically.

4.4 Potential Impact and sustainability

Impact and sustainability could only be partially measured as a) the implementation period was short b) the evaluation was commissioned as soon as the project was completed c) the scope of work did not enable comparison with other initiatives nor intended to assess impact. What was possible was analysis of RGSI’s contribution (and not attribution) towards importance of early development and learning and inclusion of Roma children. It can be stated with confidence that in this regard, RGSI did contribute to policy change because a) RGSI resonated with other policy initiatives, helped to reinforce them as well and b) was positioned at the right time addressing an emerging (and felt) gap of early childhood learning among Roma as a means to address inclusion from the very beginning. Although impact was evident in policy, one cannot say with certainty that this was translated into action.

Lessons Learned: The right issues expertly addressed at the right time involving the right people in an inclusive approach are important contributing factors to achieve impact. However policy change is slow and long-term requiring sustained advocacy efforts and difficult to attribute to any one intervention. At best one can only assess contribution to impact
4.5 Coordination

Coordination and consensus building at international, regional and country level was recognized as essential but time consuming. It was possible because of intensive follow-up by UNICEF RO. Multi-language translation (into several languages) and editorial changes on multiple drafts of documents slowed down processes. However, the transparency and sharing was highly valued.

Lessons Learned: Coordination is critical in multi-country projects with multiple stakeholders but it is important to not only clearly delineate roles but also to assess and address expectations to ensure a common understanding among those involved.

4.6 Results Based Management

The RBM approach was useful to track and monitor the various deliverables of RGSI. The multi-country, multi-stakeholder effort which included capacity building, policy briefs and the development of print and audio-visual media was meticulously tracked by project management using reports, feedback and documentation to ensure that targets were met or exceeded in most cases. The monitoring enabled adjustments such as substituting costing studies with costing feasibility studies because of lack of data and using photo essays instead of videos for advocacy communication because of high costs of production.

Lessons Learned: Complex multi-country, multi-stakeholder projects must have efficient systems and human resources to track progress and make adjustments as needed.

4.7 Rights Based Approach and Protection

By focusing on ECD in Roma communities, RGSI (in line with the CRC and General Comment No. 7 on the CRC and young children’s rights) implicitly and explicitly reinforced young Roma children’s right to start life on a level playing field with their mainstream peers; this included, importantly Roma young children’s rights to health care, appropriate nutrition, positive parenting, protection from neglect, violence, injury, abuse and institutionalization as well as their right to be “ready” to participate in quality mainstream schooling rather than being “ghettoized” in so called “special” schools.

The long-term benefits for Roma children as well as the prevention of stigma and discrimination through access to quality early childhood education were clearly understood and appreciated by participating stakeholders. Roma NGOs and grassroots voices, including Roma mothers, were included in RGSI activities of research, advocacy, capacity building and communication. By focusing on ECD (one of the first rights of children) plus for a marginalized group, RGSI was clearly responsive to Convention for the Rights for Children (CRC). RGSI was action oriented, engaging key and diverse stakeholders to strengthen programs, systems and policies that would protect Roma children from being excluded from early learning and other services available to mainstream communities. Experiential training such as that provided by Education for Social Justice, enabled stakeholders to examine their own biases.

Lessons Learned: The voices and participation of marginalized communities (including importantly poor and marginalized women who are key ECD stakeholders) together with those of international expertise are critical to implement a rights based approach. Early learning opportunities and inclusion of marginalized children not only
provide a head start for learning but also protect them against stigma and discrimination.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations have been identified for each stakeholder group and provide clear action points in descending priority.

Regional and international organizations involved in ECD and Roma issues

1. UNICEF, OSF, REF and ISSA brought to RGSI many years of experience and expertise in early development and learning and Roma inclusion. It is recommended that, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of RGSI, there be an extension of the RGSI to consolidate gains made (having had a short 15 month duration) and that it be designed to align and synergize with other Roma initiatives both policy (EU, regional and country level) and program (one such example is the ‘A Good Start’ which is a community level project supported by UNICEF partners in these countries). The partner organizations can play an important role in providing an effective bridge between international and European child rights instruments and their translation into country level policy making, planning and implementation. It is recommended at periodic intervals (e.g. five years), to repeat the RECI studies to plot change and ensure up to date information availability and use, especially since baseline data is now available for comparison; regional partners should provide/make available technical support to country level counterparts in this process.

2. In RGSI, the participation of diverse stakeholders and decision makers from various sectors in different activities sensitized them about the holistic needs of young Roma children and critical benefits of early development and learning. It is recommended that to maintain momentum and ensure sustainability regarding the importance of early development and learning for Roma, regional partners support government to develop and strengthen intersectoral policies and systems across health, education, protection and social services to ensure that early development and learning is holistically addressed during planning and implementation. It is recommended that policy changes be monitored and expert inputs provided as needed to ensure the early development and learning inclusion of Roma children.

3. The RGSI partnership indicated that the coordinated response amplified the importance of ECD issues for Roma and there was perceived value of the materials and capacity building. It is recommended that international agencies harmonize and align early development and learning and Roma inclusion messages and drive the agenda in a targeted advocacy to achieve stronger results.

4. RGSI successfully completed a large number of diverse deliverables in a short time frame with multiple partners and stakeholders in different countries supported by strong management and monitoring. It is recommended that roles and responsibilities of multiple stakeholders and/or partners be clearly defined in letters of agreement, realistic plans be made and a management group meet face to face a couple of times during the duration
of the project to discuss operational issues such as time and work plans and realistic deliverables (not technical as in Project Advisory Group).

**For country decision makers**

1. Decision makers and implementers had expressed that RGSI had sensitized them to the value of ECD and Roma children inclusion. However, downstream advocacy was not part of RGSI. **It is recommended** in the next phase to build on RGSI success with upstream advocacy and **advocate early development and learning and Roma inclusion at multiple levels**. Some examples for expansion to other implementation levels are – at grassroots to increase access and quality of early learning facilities through education (e.g. multi-functional centers) with the involvement of local authorities, parenting education and the training and use of health visitors (part of the system that works with 0-3 years but whose focus is only on physical health issues); at county levels to enable local authorities to invest in early development and learning services for Roma and integrate them with mainstream; to support school mediators and lastly, to sensitize local decision and policy makers to collaborate across sectors.

2. Currently, countries are grappling with a number of issues for Roma inclusion, several of which have common elements. The Spain study visit enabled RGSI partners to be introduced to effective and comprehensive policies and strategies of social inclusion within and across a variety of sectors pertinent to young children. Therefore, the recommendation is in the next phase or in new programs to extend beyond individual country experience. **It is recommended** in the next phase for countries to have a **regional perspective and consultation** so that countries can share data, best practices and lessons learnt with regard to policies and programs.

To summarize, RGSI piggybacking and extending the work of the RECI studies (though the studies were delayed) has clearly helped to advocate for ECD and especially yearly development and learning from 0-3 years in the context of Roma children. The products developed as a result of the RGSI were found to be useful and the participation of key stakeholders at the country level, partnership of international organizations renowned for their work on ECD and Roma community and the management from the UNICEF RO office of this complex, six country, multi-stakeholder initiative contributed to achieving results in spite of complex challenges in coordination and insufficient budget demonstrating the use and usefulness of the RGSI.
6. ANNEXES

Annex One: List of Materials Developed

List of materials, print and visibility items, communication materials, reports, and videos delivered during project implementation:

Below is the list of developed visibility items, including **35 visibility and print items** translated and disseminated during Advocacy and Capacity Development events:

1. **A specially designed logo** reproduced on all products associated with RGSI
2. Four **banners** displayed during events (4)
3. **Press releases** associated with events
4. **Concept Notes** and **invitation letters** for the events
5. **Announcement poster** for Public Lectures by Prof. Stuart Shanker in three countries (3)
6. Seven **posters** displayed during events (7)
7. **Leaflet** “Roma Good Start Initiative” printed and disseminated in English, Hungarian, Romani, Romanian, and Serbian (5)
8. A **Human Interest Story** “Hearing Emanuel’s Story” printed and disseminated as leaflet in English, Romanian and Serbian (3)
9. Three **policy briefs** from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University - Early Childhood Program Effectiveness, The Science of Early Childhood Development, and The Foundation of Lifelong Health - printed and disseminated as leaflets in Hungarian, Romanian and Serbian (9)
10. **Folded posters** entitled “Competent Educators of the 21st Century” which focuses on the quality of teaching - printed and disseminated in English, Hungarian, Romanian, and Serbian (4)
11. **Micro Website**: [http://www.romachildren.com](http://www.romachildren.com)

Additional documents distributed during the events as a part of **Young Roma Children Communication Kit**:

1. **Concept Paper** “Preventing Social Exclusion through Europe 2020: Early Childhood Development and the Inclusion of Roma Families”
2. **Communication from the Commission** “Early Childhood Communication and Care” (COM (2011) 66) – in English, Hungarian, Romanian and Serbian
3. **Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee Of The Regions** “An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child” (COM (2011) 60) – in English, Hungarian, Romanian and Serbian
4. **GENERAL COMMENT No. 7** “Implementing child rights in early childhood” to the Convention on the Rights of the Child - in English, Romanian and Serbian

**Published Reports:**

1. Women Motherhood Early Childhood Development (in English)
2. Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Overview Report (in English)
3. Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Macedonian Report (in English)
4. Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Macedonian Report (in Macedonian)
5. Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Serbian Report (in English)

**Developed Reports:**
7. Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Romanian Report (in English)
8. Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Hungarian Report (in English)
9. ECD Financing and Costing Romanian Report (in English)
10. ECD Financing and Costing Serbian Report (in English)

**Developed Videos:**
1. 8-minute video “Roma women speak” from Mesed project
2. Video-presentation about RECI by John Bennett (planned to have long and short version)
3. 3-minute video about young Roma girls in FYRoM
4. 17- minutes video “Mothers speak” from Serbia (in English)
5. Short video “Mothers speak” about social protection issues in Serbia (in English)
6. Short video “Mothers speak” about education issues in Serbia (in English)
7. Short video “Mothers speak” about health issues in Serbia (in Serbian)
8. Short video “Mothers speak” about social protection issues in Serbia (in Serbian)
9. Short video “Mothers speak” about education issues in Serbia (in Serbian)
10. Short video “Mothers speak” about health issues in Serbia (in Serbian)

All the above mentioned products have been uploaded to the website. In addition, following documents are available:
- Power Point Presentations, photos and materials from all the events in English and local languages
- Brochure “Roma Good Start Initiative” translated in Czech
- The following documents from the *Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University* were translated and uploaded:
  - Five policy briefs were translated into Czech, Hungarian, Romani, Romanian, and Serbian languages:
    - Early Childhood Program Effectiveness,
    - The Science of Early Childhood Development,
    - The Foundation of Lifelong Health,
    - How Early Childhood Care Affects Later Development,
    - The Effects of Early Reading with Parents on Developing Literacy Skills.
- A publication by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University “A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy” was translated into Romanian and Serbian.
## Annex Two: List of Events

List of events within RGSI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Consultation Meeting</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>14/12/2010</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Consultation Meeting</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>15/03/2011</td>
<td>Total for both 83</td>
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<td>ECD Financing and Costing Research Validation Workshop</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>14/12/2010</td>
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<td>10/05/2011</td>
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<td>13/05/2011</td>
<td>Total for both roundtables 92</td>
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<td>07/05/2011</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Lecture on ECD</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>12/05/2011</td>
<td>Total for public lectures 205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Symposium</td>
<td>FYRoM</td>
<td>15/02/2011</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up meeting to the Hungarian EU presidency</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>23/02/2011</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Consultation Meeting</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>06/07/2011</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop Inclusion of Roma children in ECD Services</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>28/09/2011</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESJ training</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>29-30/09/2011</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert meeting Inclusion of Young Roma Children</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>01/11/2011</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESJ training</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>20-21/10/2011</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Focus Group Discussions with Roma mothers for video ‘Mothers speak’ in three cities</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>04-06/10/2011</td>
<td>Approximately 6-8 persons per FGD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kragujevac 04/10/11</td>
<td>Topic: Social Protection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subotica 05/10/11</td>
<td>Topic: Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nis 06/10/11</td>
<td>Topic: Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total all events</td>
<td>4 countries</td>
<td></td>
<td>850 pax in 21 events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally several events for awareness raising and capacity development were held as follows:

A partners’ meeting was held in FYRoM on the 17 of February, 2011. This meeting was held to build capacity of local researchers to enable them to improve and finalize the RECI Macedonian Report. There were 10 participants, including partner agencies, UNICEF, OSF, REF, SbS, local researchers and lead researcher Dr. John Bennett.

A partners’ meeting was held in Serbia on the 7 of July, 2011. This meeting was held to build capacity of local researchers to enable them to conduct research on costing and financing of ECD services in Serbia as well as share experience from similar research conducted in the region. There were 10 participants, including representatives of the Ministry of Education, Deputy Prime Ministers Unit for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction, partner agencies, UNICEF, 3 local researchers and lead researcher Dr. Jan van Ravens.

A presentation was organized for UNICEF and PFP staff members and consultants in Geneva on the 13 of September, 2011. The findings of the RECI Overview Report were presented by the lead researcher Dr. John Bennett. A total of 22 participants were briefed about the RGSI project and RECI research findings and recommendations.

A session on RECI research and presentation on RGSI project, in particular, the communication component, was organized during the EECERA conference (European Early Childhood Education Research Association), the largest early childhood research conference in Europe which was conducted in Geneva/Lausanne from 14 to 17th September, 2011. Seven posters and other communication materials were displayed during the session. A total of 10 participants took part in the discussion about challenges faced by young Roma children and their families.
Annex Three: Evaluation TOR

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Roma Good Start Initiative

Title: Evaluation of the EU-UNICEF Joint Management Project ‘Early Childhood Development (ECD) as an entry point to the social inclusion of Roma children (July 2010 – October 2011).

Background:
Across Europe, around five million Roma children continue to grow in situations of severe privation and face discrimination in their access to health, education and social protection services. The Roma Good Start Initiative (RGSI) project aims to address measures to promote Early Childhood Development (ECD) as an entry point for fostering the social inclusion of Roma children and focuses on the survival, development, protection and participation of Roma young children.

Since 2005, with the support of the European Commission, and in partnership with the World Bank, UNDP, OSF and Roma civil society organizations, twelve countries in Central and South East Europe joined the Decade of Roma Inclusion. UNICEF became a formal member of the Decade in 2007. By joining the Decade, UNICEF was afforded the opportunity to collaborate with development partners to bring children to the forefront of policy attention, to mainstream children and young people across all areas and member countries of the Roma Decade and to highlight their potential as agents of change.

UNICEF policies related to Roma inclusion are guided by the CRC and CEDAW conventions, the Declaration and Plan of Action of ‘A World Fit for Children’, the UN Declaration on Minorities, and the 2006-2009 MTSP (extended to 2012).

In line with the recent OSCE Ministerial Council Decision (December 2008), the European Parliament emphasized that it is necessary to provide and guarantee equal access to high-quality services and to promote early education for Roma children, as an instrument for preventing social exclusion and marginalization. The European Parliament, in its resolution on The social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labour market in the EU (March 2009), specifically noted that the unequal access to services and the socio-economic disadvantages faced by Roma children put early development and high-quality education out of their reach, affecting negatively their cognitive, emotional, social, physical and personal development. 2010 was declared as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

RGSI is in line with the September 29 EC decision about Roma policies, point 8:

“The multidimensional problems of the Roma minority will be dealt with in the context of the ten basic principles of the Communication for Roma Inclusion and within the frame of enhanced cooperation among all stakeholders. In addition, the EU Framework will seek to ensure a more efficient monitoring of and support to national and European efforts with regard to Roma integration. To that end, and in the frame of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Commission will invite Member States to present their own national strategies for the inclusion of Roma which could feature in their national reform programmes. The forthcoming flagship initiative on a "Platform against Poverty" will constitute an integrated framework of actions to support horizontal priorities such as the integration of Roma citizens. The European Commission also expects Member States to be explicit and ambitious about Roma when setting their national Europe 2020 targets in the fields of poverty reduction, employment and education.”

Overall goal of RGSI is to “foster comprehensive measures that address the rights of marginalized young Roma children and promote their meaningful and sustained social inclusion in Europe,” and specific project results are as follows:
- Improved understanding by key stakeholders of progress achieved, successful strategies and remaining challenges with respect to the importance of early childhood development and to addressing the rights of young Roma children

- Enhanced capacity of local authorities and Roma civil society service providers to strengthen and expand existing services to embrace and implement inclusive early childhood care and education approaches.

- Increased capacity of relevant stakeholders and service providers to include Roma children in early childhood interventions

**Activities** under the RGSI include:
- High-profile meetings and national roundtables to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the research

- Awareness and commitment raising, knowledge transfer, sharing of good practices

- Advocacy and capacity development of national and local policy makers, early childhood practitioners, NGO staff, and Roma civil society service providers

- Communication activities, addressing stigmatization and discrimination, awareness of importance of ECD for all children, especially for the inclusion of the most disadvantaged and marginalized, including Roma

RGSI has three Components: 1) Research, 2) Advocacy and Capacity Development, and 3) Communication and Information. It is being implemented in six countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Spain, and FYRoM.

**Purpose of the evaluation:**
- The EU-UNICEF Joint Management Project is funded by the European Commission and is covering a period from July 2010 to October 2011. It is important to have accurate data on the project progress, achievements and constraints, lessons learned conclusions and recommendations to be used for the final report to the EU as well as next possible steps.

- The evaluation report will be used by EU, UNICEF and project partners and stakeholders, including OSF, REF, ISSA and local Roma NGOs and government partners at national levels to address further work planning related to ECD and Roma inclusion.

**Scope and focus:**
Evaluation of RGSI will be covering six countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Spain, and FYRoM) during the period from July 2010 to October 2011. The project activities and results are aimed at raising awareness and are not to be viewed at the level of changing behaviors that require several years. Therefore, objectives of the evaluation exercise is to document project progress and analyze lessons learned on initial steps along the continuum of behavioral changes (awareness, interest, desire, change). It is not intended to look at behavioral changes to be finally achieved in a long-term. Thus, the evaluation should provide answers to the following questions:

1. Was the design of the intervention appropriate?
2. Did the intervention get delivered effectively?
3. Were there contextual factors that were important in making the intervention work or not?
4. Did the intervention alter the target audiences’ attitudes in ways that were expected?
Evaluation questions:
In evaluating RGSI and answering the above questions, OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and evaluation questions should be considered as follows:

- **Relevance:** What are the value of intervention in relation to 1) the national and international partners’ policies and priorities (including MDG, Roma Decade (2005-2015), EC-Supported Roma Platform, Structural Funds, National Action Plans on Roma Inclusion); 2) the global references such as the CRC and CEDAW; 3) the MTSP, HRBAP and RBM?

- **Efficiency:** Does RGSI use the resources in the most economical manner to achieve its objectives? Is funding roughly adequate to meet project needs? How many communication materials have been developed /published? How many advocacy events have been held? What is the appropriateness of the design? How has the project been implemented? How was monitoring used for further planning/adjustment of project?

- **Effectiveness:** Are RGSI’s activities likely to achieve satisfactory results in relation to stated objectives short and long term? What is the quality of the research? What is the quality of capacity development events? What is the quality of RGSI communication materials?

- **Impact:** What are the results of intervention in terms of raised awareness and increased capacity on individuals, communities, institutions? Specific questions for system-level interventions: Are there specific recommendations that can be made in relation to introducing/strengthening policies to support young Roma children and their families? What role did the project play in helping to formulate and start implementing ECD and Roma inclusion policies?

- **Sustainability:** What are people’s resources, motivation and ability to continue advocacy/communication campaigns on delivering messages of importance of ECD and Roma inclusion? Has the project contributed to placing Young Roma children on policy agendas at national levels?

Additional criteria to be used to the extent possible are as follows:

- **Coverage:** Which groups have been reached by RGSI and what is the different impact on those groups, i.e. women and men, Roma and non-Roma?
- **Coordination:** What are the effects of coordination among different stakeholders and donors at the regional and national levels?
- **Coherence:** What are areas and ways of cooperation with other donor agencies in regard to RGSI goals and objectives? Is there coherence across policies of different donor agencies and national stakeholders?
- **Protection:** Is the response adequate in terms of protection of children of marginalized groups? What measures/actions need to be taken to provide support systems for young Roma children?

**Existing information sources:**
- EC Project Proposal, Inception Report, and Interim Report
- Project documents, such as agenda for events, lists of participants, concept notes, etc.
- UNICEF publications and reports, such as Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI) Country Reports, Overview RECI Synthesis Report, Financing of ECD services in Romania, Roma Women Report, Starting at the Beginning, etc.
- Communication and Visibility materials, including press releases, posters, leaflets, human interest stories, etc. developed during the course of project implementation
- Trip reports of consultants and relevant UNICEF programme staff

**Evaluation process and recommended methodology:**
The evaluation process will be based on:
- desk review and analysis of existing project related documents listed above
- analysis of existing international and national policies/priorities
- development of questionnaires (and possibly quick on-line survey) with list of questions/indicators against set objectives
- field visit to one of the countries where RGSI is being implemented (to be defined). This may be substituted with video-conference and/or online surveys, etc.

During the filed-visit and meetings (if found necessary) and/or video-conference calls:
- structured interviews with key stakeholders, including government representatives
- structured observations of advocacy events within the project framework (depending on time and availability of this)
- structured interviews with project partners (REF, OSF, ISSA)
- focus groups with service providers (e.g. Roma health and education mediators, members of NGOs, etc.)

In case if country visit will be commissioned, suggested sampling size will be at least two focus group discussions with beneficiaries/service-providers, and 10 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders and partners. Otherwise, possibility of on-line survey and/or video-conference will be explored.

**Accountabilities:**
UNICEF RO ECD Specialist/RGSI Manager (ECD Specialist) jointly with relevant UNICEF programme staff will be accountable for coordination of stakeholders’ involved, organizing field-visits, focus groups, and other logistical issues. ECD Specialist will be accountable for reviewing/approving of intermediate and final evaluation results. The evaluator will be responsible for desk-review of the project, conducing in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions. The evaluator shall be independent in evaluation exercise, however taking into account sensitive issues which may arise during the course of assessment. There are no specific concerns related to conflict of interest.

**Qualification or Specialized Knowledge/Experience and competencies required:**
- University degree in Social Sciences/Economics and extensive experience, knowledge and expertise in M&E, in conducting research and different kinds of surveys, assessments, and evaluations
- Excellent analytical and report writing skills
- Experience in monitoring and evaluation of ECD/Communication/Advocacy programmes
- Previous experience working in CEECIS region is an asset
- Attention will be paid to the evaluator’s honesty and integrity for the entire evaluation process and ensure that contacts with individuals will be characterized by respect.
- Fluency in English
- Knowledge of one of the languages of RGSI countries is an asset

**End products:**
- The Evaluation Report, which should include executive summary, description of sampling and evaluation methodology used, data collection instruments, types of data analysis, assessment of methodology (including limitations), findings, conclusions, recommendations, lessons learned, attachments with developed list of indicators and questionnaires
- The report should be provided in electronic version in English in the required UNICEF format.
- Completed data sets (filled out questionnaires, records of individual interviews and focus group discussion, etc.)
- Assessment of evaluation methodology, including limitations of objectives-oriented approach
- The evaluation report will be required to follow and will be rated in accordance with UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standard, UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards and UNICEF Evaluation Technical Notes.
- Power point presentation on evaluation report- key findings and recommendations
- The evaluation report shall reflect the status of the programme in terms of its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact.
Deadline for submission: all end products to be submitted in 2 months after the start of the contract

Deliverables and timeframe:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks/deliverables</th>
<th>Number of days</th>
<th>Indicative timeline</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-line desk review</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dec 15-20</td>
<td>Documents will be shared on-line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation framework, including questionnaire for in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions/or on-line survey</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dec 21-23</td>
<td>8 days after signing the contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefing in Geneva</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jan 16-17</td>
<td>Briefing with ECD and M&amp;E Regional Advisors and ECD Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit to one of RGSI countries/or video-conference</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jan 18-20</td>
<td>In-depth interviews and focus group discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Draft Evaluation Report for comments</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jan 23-27</td>
<td>Report is to be sent for comments to partners and ECD and M&amp;E Regional Advisor (to be received by Feb 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Draft Evaluation Report &amp; power point on evaluation report- key findings and recommendations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>Report is to be reviewed/comments provided by partners and Regional Advisors by Feb 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Evaluation Report</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Feb 15</td>
<td>Payment to be made upon receipt of final product</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Travel:
- UNICEF will pay for the expert’s travel from place of residence to country destination and back. Travel will be undertaken only upon receiving an approved Travel Authorization from UNICEF. Air travel will be as per UNICEF rules: the most direct, most economical route.
- 80% of the Daily Subsistence allowance (DSA) will be transferred to the expert before the start of the travel. DSA is to cover expenses associated with the expert’s boarding, lodging and for travel days as per UNICEF rules. In the case that the expert incurs approved travel-related costs, such as for air travel, visas, etc., final settlements of these expenses will be made upon submission of all required travel related documents (including completed F-10 form, trip report, tickets and boarding passes, and any other invoices, e.g. for visas, etc.)

Any additional specific information regarding the time schedule, procedures, benefits, travel arrangements and other logistical issues will be discussed with successful candidate.

Estimated Cost of Consultancy:

The rate per day of professional fees for the international consultant will be in accordance with the complexity of the TOR and the level of the expertise required, which is estimated at P 5 level. UNICEF will pay for the consultant’s travel from place of residence to country destination and back, DSA for working days as well as for travel within countries (if required), as per UNICEF rules. Daily Subsistence Allowance will be provided for travel days as per UNICEF rules.

Payment schedule: 30% prepayment of the total contract fee for the field trip expenses and
70% for the consultancy fees after the receipt of final products.

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/outputs is incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines. Professional fees will be paid on the successful completion of specific tasks and the satisfactory submission of deliverables.

All materials developed will remain the copyright of UNICEF and that UNICEF will be free to adapt and modify them in the future. A special acknowledgement clause to EU will be used for all the publications, print materials and other audio-visual materials prepared as part of the project and during activities for which EU funds are used.
### Annex Four: Schedule of Evaluation

**Revised schedule for RGSI Evaluation**

**January 12, 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Comments/contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 29, 2011</td>
<td>Evaluation templates shared and discussed</td>
<td>ECD and M&amp;E Advisers, RGSI Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 14-16, 2011 (3 days)</td>
<td>Desk review</td>
<td>Project Proposal, Inception and Interim Reports shared by RO on Nov. 25; Additional documents will be shared during the evaluation exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 21-23, 2011 (3 days)</td>
<td>Evaluation matrix, results framework, methodology, questionnaires for FGD and in-depth interviews developed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15, 2012</td>
<td>Travel to Geneva</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 16-17 (2 days)</td>
<td>Work in UNICEF RO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/01 – 9:00-12:30</td>
<td>Meeting with RGSI Project Manager</td>
<td>Shakhlo A’s office, review of communication materials, reports, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/01 - 12:30 -13:30</td>
<td>Meeting/working lunch with ECD and M&amp;E Advisers</td>
<td>UNICEF 8-th floor cafeteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/01 – 13:30- 15:00</td>
<td>Meeting with RGSI Project Manager</td>
<td>Shakhlo A’s office, review of communication materials, reports, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/01- 15:00-17:00</td>
<td>FGD via video Skype with participants from ESJ training-Serbia</td>
<td>Zorica Trikic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/01 -17:00-18:00</td>
<td>Skype interview with Liana Ghent, ISSA Ex Dir.</td>
<td>Video-skye call-TBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/01 –9:30-10:30</td>
<td>Skype interview with Angelina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/01 -10:30-11:30</td>
<td>Skype interview with Zorica Trikic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/01-11:30- 12:30</td>
<td>Skype interview with Mihai Surdu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/01 -12:30-15:00</td>
<td>Conference/Skype calls with partners</td>
<td>To be arranged by Shakhlo A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/01- evening</td>
<td>Travel to Bucharest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 18-21 (4 days)</td>
<td>Work in Bucharest, Romania</td>
<td>According to separate agenda (sent by Luminita)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/01 –Saturday</td>
<td>Meeting with Prof. G Sarau and Report writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/01 -Sunday</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-27/01 (4 days)</td>
<td>Report writing and additional Skype calls</td>
<td>The first draft to be submitted on January 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/02</td>
<td>Feedback on report by RO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/02 (2 days)</td>
<td>The second draft of the report</td>
<td>This draft to be shared with PARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/02</td>
<td>Presentation is prepared based on draft evaluation report</td>
<td>This presentation will be used during Launch of Overview RECI Report in Brussels in February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/02</td>
<td>Feedback from PARC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/02 (2 days)</td>
<td>Final report based on feedback from PARC and RO</td>
<td>The Evaluation Report will feed into the Final Reporting to EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total 20 days</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, January 18</td>
<td>9:00-9:30</td>
<td>Meeting with UNICEF Romania – Luminita Costache, Social Policy Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:00-10:00</td>
<td>Interview with one of key decision-makers – Adina Codres, General Directorate for Child Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10:30-11:30</td>
<td>Interview with one of key decision-makers – Viorica Preda, Preschool General Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:30-12:30</td>
<td>Meeting with Roma NGO Romani CRIS, Magda Matache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13:00-14:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14:00-16:00</td>
<td>FGD with participants of ESJ training (6-8 participants of training)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16:00-18:00</td>
<td>Meeting with SbS team and Carmen Lica, Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, January 19</td>
<td>8:00-10:30</td>
<td>Travel to Magidia for field visit to one of the ECD multi-functioning centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Visit to the ECD MC Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
<td>Meeting the staff in ECD MC Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13:00-15:00</td>
<td>Idl with key person in local government office that developed local action plan addressing the needs of young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00-16:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Magidia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:00-18:30</td>
<td>Travel to Bucharest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday, January 20</strong></td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Individual with Agentia Impreuna, Ana Ivasiuc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:00-12:30</td>
<td>In-depth interview (IdI) with Prof. George Sarau, Counselor for Roma Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13:30-14:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, January 21</strong></td>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
<td>In-depth interview (IdI) with Prof. George Sarau, Counselor for Roma Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Report writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex Five: List of Documents Reviewed

2. RGSI Inception Report: Reporting Period July 1 – September 15, 2010
5. Report from ISSA on Events and Activities in Romania and Serbia, September – November 2011
6. RECI Reports Serbia and Romania
7. Draft Overview Report
10. Materials, Human Interest Stories on website www.romachildren.com (under construction)
11. E Mail Mining – Major threads reviewed related to implementation and partnership – about 75 emails reviewed.
Annex Six: Evaluation questions based on Theory of Change and Logical Framework

The RGSI Logical Framework and the Theory of Change is captured in the following representation and was used to develop key evaluation questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Theory of Change</th>
<th>Matching Level of Evidence</th>
<th>Evaluation Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. End Results</td>
<td>Measures of results of overall program, unintended effects, other consequences</td>
<td>To what extent was the program improved? To what extent were high quality decisions made?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Practice and behavior changes</td>
<td>New practices or other changes introduced</td>
<td>To what extent did intended use occur? Were recommendations implemented?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Knowledge, attitude and skill changes</td>
<td>Measures of changes in knowledge or attitude or practice</td>
<td>What did participants learn? How were attitudes and ideas affected?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reactions</td>
<td>What participants &amp; others say about program: satisfaction, interest, strengths &amp; challenges</td>
<td>How relevant was it? Its utility and credibility? Human rights based? CRC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Participation</td>
<td>Characteristics of participants: number, nature of involvement, background</td>
<td>Who was involved? To what extent were key stakeholders and decision makers involved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Activities</td>
<td>Implementation data on what the project actually does</td>
<td>What was the focus of the activities? The design? What happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Inputs</td>
<td>Resources – human, financial and technical</td>
<td>To what extent were resources sufficient and well managed? Timesufficient?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annex Seven: Interview Guide and FGD Questions

The review of RGSI across countries (Romania, Serbia, Hungary, Czech Republic, FYRoM and Spain) from July 2010 to January 2012 (extended from October 2011) intends to document project progress and analyze lessons learned from the initial steps. The purpose is to evaluate project progress, achievements and constraints and by doing so provide recommendations for the next steps. It is NOT an evaluation of impact.

The RGSI is a multi-country, multi-stakeholder collaborative effort between the EU, UNICEF, OSF, REF, ISSA, local Roma NGOs and national government partners addressing three components: 1) Research 2) Advocacy and Capacity Development and 3) Communication and Information.

The questions address these three components as well as the partnership collaboration and management (a key cross-cutting component of RGSI) and are for different audiences.

General Questions (For All)

A1 What is RGSI? Objectives? Activities? Who are the Sponsors? Do you think these activities (research, advocacy, and communication) will lead to greater awareness, capacities, program and policy change? What are your suggestions for the future?

Related to the RECI Studies (For All)

B2 What new information did you learn from the RECI studies? How are these studies different from earlier studies conducted for Roma children and especially in relation to ECD?

B3 Who have you disseminated findings to? Explain how and what resulted from it? Who else would benefit from the dissemination? Why? Explain how you can reach them?

B4 What findings and recommendations, if any, from the reports have been used? How? In building awareness and in use in other documents?

B5 Who supported country partners in dissemination and use of findings? Explain

B6 For the next phase, what would you recommend regarding a) topic of research b) who should be involved and c) dissemination and use

Related to Advocacy and Capacity Building (For All including FGD)

C1 Which advocacy/capacity building event did you attend? Did you think the right people participated? What did you learn? How relevant was it, was it sensitive to your context? What was the quality? If you have attended more than one, which was more useful and why?

C2 What difference has your participation in the advocacy or capacity development programs made to laws, policies, programs and services?
For service-providers- what changes it brought to your practice after your participated in training, and

For the decision-makers at local level- has there been any difference in provision of access to services + budget allocation. What was easier and what was difficult? Why?

C3. What difference do you see in the capacity of those who attended the workshop? How have they used it in practice? Who did they influence? Explain. How?

C4. In the future, what improvements should be made for the advocacy/capacity development?
   a) Content
   b) Participation
   c) Number of events
   d) Timing
   e) Quality
   f) Materials
   g) Follow up

C5. What kind of communication materials and documents were available during the events (i.e. Young Roma Children Communication kit)? Have you seen posters, human interest stories, policy briefs, EU Communication, CRC, banners? Have you used it? Why and why not? If used, what is the quality? What are suggestions for the future for this kit as well as others needed?

In the future what suggestions do you have for information and communication, not addressed in this project? What more is needed? What would you strengthen/remove from this phase of the project – website, videos, and kit?

For Managers, Partners (UNICEF, OSF, ISSA, REF) and Civil Society Organizations

D1. What is the value of RGSI with a) national policies (National Action Plans on Roma Inclusion) b) regional such as the Roma Decade (2005-15), EC Supported Roma platform, Structural Funds) and c) international policies such as MDG, CRC, CEDAW d) In your midterm strategic plans; in terms of human rights, protection of children and inclusion; and results based management of projects?

D2. Was funding adequate? Were available funds effectively and efficiently used?

D3. How are the efforts coordinated? With national policies and priorities? What has been UNICEF’s/others experience vis-a-vis other advocacy efforts?

D4. What was key in managing, coordinating this effort and worked out well? What did not work out so well? How effective was the monitoring? Did it help to review and change as needed? What could be done better? Who else should be included?
D5. How do you scale up and make it sustainable? What new management, coordination efforts and monitoring will be needed? What will be UNICEF’s role? EU’s role? Partners’ role? Government’s role? Other civil society or technical resources? Roma civil society organizations? What administrative mechanism is to be used?

D6. Were roles and responsibilities clearly defined? Explain. What contribution did the partners bring? How did it benefit being part of a joint effort? How effective was the communication and sharing between partners? What could be done better next time?

D7. How are goals and objectives of RGSI same as or different from other donors? Explain. How did RGSI cooperate with them?

D8. What value addition did Project Advisory Group bring?

D9. What specific inputs did the Roma civil society organizations bring to the table? How did they influence?

Concluding Questions (for all)

E1. Has RGSI reached its stated objectives? Explain
E2. What did RGSI contribute to or what change can be attributed to RGSI’s? Explain
E3. Was the effort enough to protect children? What measures need to be taken to ensure it happens?
Annex Eight: List of References


Monitoring and Indicators for Communication for Development: A Technical Guide, Danida 2005

