

Evaluation report for Children's Government in the districts of Dibër, Gjirokastrë, Korçë, Elbasan, Durrës and Vlorë

Introduction

Child participation is one of the rights provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children's participation is a concept that lies on several levels and is often used to describe processes which differ a lot from one another. It is often defined as: "*...the exchanging process related to the decisions that affect the life of individuals and of the community they live into. It represents the way democracy is built and a standard towards which it should be measured...*" Child participation is one of the main pillars of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. From this point of view, all the rights provided in this Convention must be analyzed and implemented taking into account the fulfilling of this principle. The observance of this right cannot take place if children are not involved in the decision-making processes. Following the 2010 National Strategy for Children, children's participation in decision-making processes has improved, especially in school environments. Children's Governments are independent structures within the school which, not only are increasing in number but also are expanding the types of issues they address.

School, as a basic institution to the character forming of children, must continuously promote the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this context, the child participation principle not only must be adhered to, but also must become the key principle at all decision-making levels. Children spend a lot of time in school and it is very important for them to exert their rights on issues that directly or indirectly affect their lives. Children need to be involved in issues of their concern also because this enables them to understand the abuse of people who neglect or infringe in different ways their rights.

Children's right to participation has been often ignored in Albania. For that reason, Save the Children implemented a project which aimed at strengthening Children's Governments structure, independence and effectiveness in increasing child participation in the 9-year education system. Children's Governments indicate an increase of child participation in decision making within the school as well as an increase of the education quality, the promotion and education of democratic values in the school life and the building of life skills.

The aim of the project implemented by Save the Children was the increase of children's independence and participation through the supporting of Children's Governments in 60 rural and urban schools in 6 regions: Dibër, Durrës, Elbasan, Gjirokastrë, Korçë and Vlorë. The evaluation of this project focused on the following issues:

- Children's enterprise for the organization of extracurricular activities with the participation of marginalized groups

- Children's decision making together with adults on the 4-year School Development Plans
- Inclusion of children's views in the free time curriculum
- monitoring and reporting of the various cases to the REAs by children themselves

Children's Government is a phenomenon of the last years in Albania, conceived as an independent structure that allows children to express their preferences regarding the existing formal education. Children's structures that existed during communism were totally controlled and were used for ideological purposes. These structures had very little space to work independently. School authorities (the school director and teachers) had full control on them, while on the other hand the school staff was under the control of the governing party.

20 years after the fall of the communist regime, a number of reforms had place in the education sector and now all the 9-year schools in Albania have their Children's Government. However, Children's Government is a structure that needs to be strengthened in order to increase its independence and participation in decision-making within the school.

Based on the data of the baseline carried out in 2010, a number of changes and achievements are observed in the structure of Children's Governments of the schools where the project has been implemented. While at the beginning Children's Government was mainly focused on the development of cultural and sports activities, now a more expanded focus and a bigger diversity is noticed in the organization of activities. And, what's more important, the Children's Government itself is the initiator, creator and implementer of these activities. There is an increased initiative and trust from the side of teachers in letting children develop activities their way. On the other hand, children have gained more skills and experience in organizing activities and have a higher self-esteem.

Children's Government is a stable structure within the school. The elections process is carried out rigorously and carefully by children themselves: "*We are demanding in order to carry out elections qualitatively.*" A functioning model of Children's Government has been established in the schools supported by the organization "Save the Children".

While in 2010 the number of activities carried out independently by Children's Government was very low, now there is an increase in the number of activities developed by them, in addition to the compulsory ones required by the Ministry of Education. Children's Governments have mostly carried out activities focused on the inclusion of Roma children. Besides the recreational activities, they have also organized educational and Roma community rights protection activities such as: Knowing the culture and traditions of minorities; Fundraising to support Roma children; Week against discrimination; Exhibition on racial equality; Cultural diversity; Getting to know minority rights, dramatizations on children's rights "Let's meet on stage", "Ethnic, cultural and linguistic minorities, all with equal rights".

Children's Governments still do not have any information on the 4-year Development Plan; the same goes for most of the interviewed teachers. The collected data show that there have been no discussions about this plan in schools during these years.

Compared to 2010, when Children's Governments had little information and a limited participation in the School Board meetings, an increase of their participation in the meetings of this Board is now observed. Children's Governments have continuously participated in these meetings expounding their problems and interests. The issues raised by children were related to the problem of the uniforms, the missing of the long break and the obligatory school cleaning. In one of the meetings of a School Board in the Vlora district there have been discussions on the punishment to be given to some problematic students for misbehavior and one of the parties which were listened at was also the Children's Government. The suggestion of the Children's Government was to give support to these problematic children and the School Board accepted this proposal that children justified.

In some of the schools, there have been no suggestions on school regulations by Children's Governments because they have not seen any necessity as all the rules are applicable. In one of the schools of the Gjirokastra district, children wanted to include the uniform part in the regulations but they weren't able to do so because they did not have the support of the School Board. The Children's Government of the "Kushtrimi i Lirisë" School in Durrës has made changes in the school regulations in issues related to the maintenance of the school premises (this has been included both in the school regulations and in the Children's Government one). As reported, on 2010, 12 Children's Governments have proposed an average of two rules per school, depending on the needs by them identified, and these has been accepted and supported by the School Board.

Free hours are still being planned by teachers. Free hours are discussed in class by subject. Part of them is used to develop projects and teaching classes at school and the rest to carry out activities at school level. The suggestions made in class about free hours are also discussed with the Children's Government, mostly those regarding activities that involve the whole school. The way free hours will be organized is also discussed with Children's Governments. Children present their projects according to the previously established topics and are helped by teachers to develop these projects. There is an increased participation of the Children's Government in the discussions about free hours as well as an increase of children's skills in conceiving and developing projects, assigning responsibilities and interacting successfully in the group. It is reported that, in 2011, 520 children, members of Children's Governments in 4 regions, have drawn and run extracurricular activities where about 5800 children out of which 260 children coming from marginalized groups participated.

An increase of the collaboration of Children's Governments with the REAs is observed. From the data collected, we notice that there are more identified cases in which the Children's Government itself has addressed to the REA to discuss about problems that have not find any solution in their schools. The REA has served as a connecting bridge to support and refer the complaints of Children's Governments to institutions such as the municipality, the police, the prefecture, etc. The Children's Government of "Urani

Rumbo” School in Gjirokaštër which had problems with the water supply has asked for the solution of this problem at different levels. Firstly they addressed to the School Directorate, then to the REA and afterwards to the Municipality. After a missed reaction from the part of the Municipality, the Children’s Government also raised the problem in the media, until getting a response.

The “S. Qirjazi” School in Korça also had problems with a violent student who caused problems and troubles to the rest of the students. The Children’s Government took the situation under its control and organized meetings with the parents, the school director and the REA, helping the problematic child and helping also the rest of the class in accepting and supporting this child in order for him not to feel different. Depending on the type of the problem, the Children’s Government, with the support of the teacher coordinator, decides either to submit the problem to the School Directorate or to the REA.

Methodology

In this evaluation report we have used the qualitative method of data collection through semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers-coordinators and representatives of the REAs and through focus groups organized with representatives of the Children’s Governments. The qualitative research tries to explore and explain the world through the experiences of the social actors (Mays & Pope, 1995) bringing to light data that cannot be very easily accessed through a quantitative research. The qualitative research has become a very useful tool through which we can highlight the experiences of people who undergo through changes in the context of development (Tinker, 1990).

6 focus groups with representatives of the Children’s Governments have taken place, 1 for each region. In each region, students from 4 schools (2 urban schools and 2 rural ones) were selected to participate in the focus group. This selection enabled us to have a larger representation of the schools that have been part of the Save the Children project. 5 interviews were conducted in each of the regions, 4 interviews with the teachers coordinators of the Children’s Governments from which children were selected and 1 interview with the REA representative.

Findings of the evaluation

- There is more awareness, both within the school and outside of it, about the importance of Children’s Government for a better participation and engagement of children, which increases the quality of teaching in schools and forms responsible citizens. This awareness is evident in the schools that have been supported by the project and in the schools not supported by the project that have formal structures which are not included in the organization of activities in school and are not supported by the school director and teachers.

- Children apply accurately the procedures and regulations in order to carry out successfully the Children's Government election process.
- Trainings and the different activities carried out with children have played a role not only in the improvement of the quality of Children's Government work but also in the increase of the demand children have towards themselves and in the tasks they take the responsibility to carry out. As a result of the continuous support of Save the Children, children know their rights better and ask for the adults to know and respect them as well. Children are more involved and participate more in the discussions on issues that have to do with children's interests.
- The Children's Governments have a better knowledge on the structures functioning within the school as well as on their rights. This has increased the action force within the school and has provided them with more possibilities to participate and show their skills and qualities.
- The results of the work of Children's Governments are much more visible and concrete compared to 2010. (Children's Governments have their activity corners which change every month reflecting the activities they organize all along the academic year).
- The level of acceptance and information of teachers and school directors towards this structure has increased. There is more trust in the positive changes that can occur within the school with a better participation of children and other community stakeholders. Participation in various seminars and trainings organized in the framework of the Save the Children project has helped teachers understand the role and responsibilities of Children's Government.
- Children and teachers coordinators also report cases of unsupportive teachers and school directors towards Children's Governments. This is due to an underestimation of this structure from their side and the little trust they have in it.
- The Children's Government has created a positive model in schools because it helps the other structures of the school address the different problems and needs that arise during the year and has increased the trust of the students of the school in this structure. The number of children that express their interest in being part of this structure has increased.
- Children's Governments of the schools that have been part of the project have worked in a network and this has helped them during their work because they have been able to share their experiences, have organized joint activities, have helped each other and have had a broader effect also at city or region level.
- Parents have more information on Children's Government. They have cooperated with and supported their children in being important actors in the implementation of activities. Trust in parents and in the community has also increased.
- The impact of Children's Governments activities has been noticed also in the community. The response of the community and the way it supports Children's Governments has also improved. *"The community responds when the Children's Government asks for support"*
- The Children's Government is more focused on its activity, more of a recreational and formative nature than of a didactic and educational one. Children are much

more interested in activities than in the didactic part, this also according to their skills.

- The support provided by the REAs and the teachers-coordinators is very important for the success of the Children's Government. The regions of Gjirokastra, Dibra, Elbasan and Korça report better results in the work of Children's Governments. There is continuity in these regions for what concerns the organizing of the various activities and the strengthening of Children's Governments. The support of REAs has been continuous and has facilitated the process of the functioning of Children's Governments in schools and supported the teachers coordinators in successfully carrying out the activities planned by Children's Governments.
- In all the regions there are initiatives for the inclusion and integration of Roma children or children belonging to other marginalized groups. Roma children continue to be more in a passive position, waiting for the others to plan and carry out activities for them. There are sporadic cases of their involvement together with the rest of the children.
- The level of trust among Roma children has increased. There are also cases in which they have suggested activities. It's easier for them to express their opinion and be active within their classrooms and there are fewer initiatives of activities organized at school level.
- There are changes in the attitudes children in general have towards Roma children and children of other marginalized groups. Children are more open to include and support them in the various activities.
- The participation of Roma children has been bigger in recreational activities; this has also to do with the talents of these children.
- The Children's Government participates in the meetings of the School Board. In most of the cases they report to be more present as listeners than to really get involved in discussions and decision making. Some School Boards (in Gjirokastrë, Dibër, Durrës and Korçë) have made efforts to include and listen at the opinions of Children's Governments.
- In some cases, the Children's Government has reported its concerns and problems in the School Board meetings. If children's suggestions are supported also by teachers and parents, it is easier for them to be supported and approved by the School Board afterwards.
- Children are not informed on the 4-year school development plan. This plan has been presented to and discussed with teachers, but has mainly remained at a theoretical discussion level.
- Free hours are planned by teachers and this planning is part of teachers' tasks being asked to them at the beginning of the academic year, before the Children's Government is elected.
- Several teachers ask for children's opinions about the free hours used for the development of projects.
- The opinion of Children's Governments is asked about free hours that are used for activities at school level. The Children's Government discusses on the way free hours shall be organized.
- Free hours are not discussed with the School Board.

- There are also children who think that free hours have not improved their school experience because there are repetitions of the same activities year after year.
- In most of the schools, there have not been suggestions of Children's Governments on changes to the school and Children's Government regulations.
- In some of the schools, the school regulations are discussed with the School Board.
- Adults and teachers have not made suggestions on changes to school regulations.
- The Children's Governments have undertaken various initiatives to address several problems in school. In some cases, with the support of teachers coordinators and REA facilitators (in the regions of Gjirokastra, Dibra and Korça), they have expressed their concerns also to higher levels such as the municipality, the police, etc.

Elections in the Children's Governments

The Children's Government is a well-established structure that knows very well its duties and responsibilities. Children participating in Children's Governments are very well-motivated in offering their contribution: *"it is a stronger structure, we get more involved and teachers take us more into consideration."*

Children follow rigorously the rules and procedures in order to have a transparent and open voting process where children who better represent the interests of their class are elected. *"We are demanding in order to carry out elections qualitatively."*

Children know very well the procedures that are necessary to be elected in the Children's Government. They identify carefully all the steps the Children's Government election process has to follow. This process is carried out by children and they always refer to the previous experiences of Children's Government. Children are the main actors in this process, taking over the key roles in organizing and implementing it, in order to be the most transparent and inclusive possible. Teachers play more the role of facilitators, while children lead and implement the process.

The criteria applied to elect a member of the Children's Government are:

- To be good in communicating with others
- To be in good relations with their classmates
- To have leading skills
- To be obedient and respectful
- To have skills in organizing various activities and skills in raising their voice in relation to the needs of the school
- To solve problems within and out of the class
- To represent the class dignifiedly
- To express their opinion and speak freely
- To be able to give and get opinions within the Children's Government
- Not necessarily be an excellent student as all must have the possibility to be part of the Children's Government

A large number of children express their interest in being part of the Children's Government year after year. The work of Children's Government has increasingly become more visible and children have started to appreciate it and understand the potentials of this structure and the benefits that may come from being part of it.

Children have received more training and gained very important skills that are useful to them not only within the Children's Government but also in other levels, at home, at school and in the community as citizens that want to build a healthy and safe future for everybody.

The engagement of teachers-coordinators is evaluated as very positive as they have built experience and have some expectations from the task they carry out. Many of the Children's Government have their settings within the school and this facilitates the possibilities to meet continuously and feel equally important towards the rest of the school's management staff.

In the schools supported by "Save the Children" a model of Children's Government has been created. A practice has been established, laying the fundamentals for this structure to work increasingly better within the school. Children's Governments that have been part of this project have more thorough information on the way the election process and the planning and implementation of activities are carried out.

Roma children and other marginalized groups

Roma, Egyptian and Aromanian/Vlach children have also been and continue to be part of the Children's Government. These children are part of Children's Governments because they have the necessary skills to be part of the structures and its one of the rights they equally share with all other children. As these children represent different minorities, they have to tell which the needs of these communities are.

Roma students who have been elected in the Children's Government or as protagonists in various activities, have been chosen because they meet the conditions and have the necessary abilities. *"There has been no favoring for any of the parties."*

Interviewees in general reported that they have Roma or Egyptian children in their Children's Government. There are also schools which report they do not have any participation of Roma and Egyptian children in their Children Government. This is due to the fact that there have not been Roma children in their schools or their number has been very low and they have been mainly concentrated in the elementary classes.

Cases in which Roma children have run for the membership but have not been elected because they did not meet the conditions and requirements set by the class for the candidate for senator are also reported.

Children state that they have organized activities focused on children of Roma, Egyptian and other marginalized groups. Children have organized an average of 3-4 activities in each school. These activities have been mainly organized in the Roma day, as for example "Roma culture and tradition", collection of humanitarian aids for Roma children and children coming from poor families as

well as visits and exchange of experiences in the “N. Frashëri” School in the region of Korça (a school composed mostly of Roma students). Activities have been mainly recreational as this is the type of activities in which Roma children feel more at ease. In the Korça region, in one of the 6th grades, there has been an initial non-acceptance towards children with disabilities as result of which children organized an activity called “Accepting each other for what we are”. After that, they also organized a dramatization on children with disabilities aimed at understanding the consequences of exclusion and of inequality. This helped children understand the special needs of children with disabilities and be open to accept them just as the rest of their mates.

Children say that they have organized activities that Roma and Egyptian children like and prefer since these children are also themselves initiators of the various activities within the school. Activities have mainly been recreational ones, such as Knowing the culture and traditions of minorities; Fundraising to support Roma children; Week against discrimination; Exhibition on racial equality; Cultural diversity; Getting to know minority rights, dramatizations on children’s rights “Let’s meet on stage”, “Ethnic, cultural and linguistic minorities, all with equal rights”, Workshops in all the schools, Cultural Diversity does not make us unequal towards human rights, Standard-bearers Activity.

They have carried out activities promoting the rights of Roma children and children of other marginalized groups, which have mainly been of a supporting type, e.g. something from the school budget have been donated to poor children; gifts are offered to Roma children from the funds collected by the Children’s Government; an exhibition on gender equality has been organized with posters and drawings. Roma children help in the implementation of these activities and are mainly in the role of helpers, performers and less frequently in the role of leaders. These children are more involved in acting, singing and dancing activities. E.g. in “Selim Alliu” School, a boy from Roma community is the head of the organization of **mini-maturity** for his class. Roma children usually play secondary roles because they do not always want to take over responsibilities. Roma children are only partially involved, as they are rather waiting for what others will do than engaging themselves in activities that are in their interest.

Roma children are one of the priorities of the Children’s Government and a lot of work has been done for their inclusion and participation in activities. Activities have been organized on racism, Roma children’s rights, how students and pedagogical staffs should behave with Roma children, organizing of visits in Roma families to get to know their traditions and way of living and artistic activities aimed at highlighting the consequences of discrimination.

In the region of Durrës, children have organized several activities at school but not any special activity for Roma children. Activities they have organized have been focused on the promotion of children’s rights including Roma children and children with disabilities. Roma children and children with disabilities help in these activities but do not have leading roles. In some cases, they are indifferent and need to be encouraged to participate. They rather wait for the others to do something for them than do something themselves. *“They do not know much how to fight for their rights.”*

In the region of Vlora, children state that the rights of Egyptian children are respected but these children are not very involved themselves and do not express their opinion; they are quite withdrawn. Children's Government has carried out activities that Egyptian children prefer. These have mainly been recreational activities such as karaoke party, fairs, the health day, etc. Egyptian children have been involved in all the activities organized at school. Egyptian children do not have special requirements; they are involved just as the rest of the children. Roma and Egyptian children help in the implementation of activities together with the other children. They take over equal roles. In "Lef Sallata" School, an Egyptian child has prepared the set for a dramatization about the Independence Day and another Egyptian child has prepared the choreography. They have also organized for one week various activities focused on the needs of children with disabilities. Since there are not many Roma, Egyptian or other marginalized group children in the school, children think that special activities would make them feel different from the rest. Being part of what happens in school, they understand that the proposals that are mainly supported are those approved by the majority of children and marginalized children must be part of these majority decisions. In some cases, it is the Roma parents themselves who do not accept the organization of special activities for Roma children because it seems that the child gets labeled and this makes him/her feel different.

Roma children have helped in organizing activities but, in most of the cases, they take secondary roles and are not the organizers. Roma children mainly wait for the others to involve them and do not take themselves the initiative to get involved. Generally, proposals for activities come from groups of students and not by one student. Schools have tried to provide Roma and other marginalized group children with the possibility to get involved. Their participation in activities also depends on the type of activity that is being organized.

An important element that affects the level of Roma children participation is also the level of education, which hinders or facilitates the possibility of these children to get involved. Children of Roma community may not find themselves at ease in the activities carried out at school level but can feel perfectly at ease in those organized at class level.

We cannot say that Roma children are the same as the rest of the children as the starting point of these children has been different from that of the rest. *"They have been transformed from isolated children into active children; they run for senators and are elected."* Changes in these children are evident; they are not self-isolated and self-prejudged anymore.

The level of self-confidence among Roma children has progressively increased. Roma and Egyptian children trust in themselves when it comes to make proposals, especially in the schools in which these children are part of the Children's Government. There is a better support and cooperation from the side of other children. They are more open to accept the opinions and ideas of Roma children and to develop with them various activities within the school. There is a small group of children who have the confidence to make proposals; there are others who are still withdrawn, but if you solicit them, they are able to give opinions and be part of the decision-making. Roma children's proposals have

mainly been about recreational activities where their talent is also more visible. Children's Governments, teachers-coordinators and REAs have paid attention to including these children, regardless of how productive they are, in the projects, especially in cultural activities thus stimulating their skills.

Children state that Roma children and children of other marginalized groups have been considerably involved in the activities, in some cases being also the initiators. In these last years, the inclusion of marginalized groups has given some results:

- They are involved in the decision-makings that have to do with the class
- They have better relations and cooperate with the other students in the class
- They are interested in getting involved in activities
- Trainings have influenced a lot: teachers do not differentiate or offend them
- Their self-confidence has increased and they find it easier to express their opinions

There is a better awareness among Roma children. *"The number of children who attend the middle-level of basic education and who better know and ask for their rights has increased."*

In less frequent cases, Roma and Egyptian children have submitted proposals on special activities to the REAs. Proposals have reached the REAs in different ways: they have sporadically come from students, from the teacher coordinator after discussing them at school, from the school director but also from occasional meetings with Roma parents. Their proposals have been on the 8th of April, the International Roma Day. The activities proposed have been about their inclusion, nondiscrimination, equality and diversity as well as sports activities.

Participation of Children's Government on decision-making in school

The Children's Government participates in the meetings of the School Board. In these meetings they exchange opinions, ask for support, ask for permissions to organize activities, participate in the drawing of the school annual plan, transmit students' suggestions, discuss on the various problems and discuss on the semester analyses and on what they can adjust and improve.

In most of the schools where interviews were conducted, children were informed on the School Board meetings. They are notified approximately 2-3 days in advance, but there are also cases in which they are notified the very day of the meeting. In most of the cases, the Children's Government does not have a specific position on the issues discussed since the notifications do not explain the reason of the meeting and the time available is not always sufficient.

In some schools Boards are not very strong and do not function according to all the regulations. On the other hand, the Children's Government is a much more organized and strong structure as it works within the school and children are continuously participating in it.

Children who participate in the Board meetings are mainly listening at what it is talked about, but there are also cases in which they give their opinion. E.g. in

“Stavri Themeli” School, in Korça, the Children’s Government has discussed with the Board about the use of the uniform. In “Sevasti Qiriazhi” School they have discussed with the Board about uniforms, quiet during classes, cleaning and about the case of a problematic child.

In the “Sohodoll” School, in Dibra, the School Board has assigned a symbolic amount of money to the Children’s Government. In “Demir Gashi” School as well the School Board has supported Children’s Government in opening a bank account and has discussed with them about the budget.

Some of the problems the children of Elbasan region have discussed with the School Board have been: the problem of the uniform and the problem of the long break which led to an acceptance of children’s proposal to have a long break.

The students of “Kushtrimi i Lirisë” School in Durrës have asked for the support of the School Board in buying a stereo and the School Board has offered part of the amount necessary to buy it. In “Q. Mici” School, in Durrës, the Children’s Government has asked for the support of the School Board for the preparation of a mega poster on independence and the Board has supported them. The Board generally responds also to new and unforeseen needs that may arise during the year. The School Board listens at and supports both the proposals of children and those of adults, as they are in function of one another, aimed at making the school become a high-quality environment for children’s education. Adults have raised the problem of bathrooms in the School Board meeting and thanks to this 6 bathrooms were built in “V. Haradinaj” School in Durrës.

In the Vlora region, in one of the School Board meetings there have been discussions about punishing some problematic students for misbehaviors and one of the parties whose opinions were listened at was Children’s Government. The suggestion of the Children’s Government was to give support to these problematic children and the School Board accepted this proposal that children justified. In another school, the Board supported the proposal on school’s 50th anniversary and provided funds for the school to organize activities.

Children state that, in most of the cases, they have not been part of decision-making in the School Board meetings. They have mainly expressed their concerns and listened at the various issues discussed in these meetings. The Children’s Government has given opinions regarding the conditions of school premises, problematic students, etc.

Adults present proposals in the School Board meetings and most of the children think these proposals are more easily accepted because “*they are older, more mature and give better opinions.*” Children’s proposals are also accepted but it always depends on what it is discussed about. There are issues in which it is given priority to children’s opinion and other in which priority is given to adults decisions. If children’s proposals are supported also by teachers and parents, their approval by the School Board is easier. Since adults are more rational and persuasive, proposals that are also supported by them are more easily accepted.

A lower number of children believe that children’s and adults’ opinions are equally considered in the School Board meetings. Children transmit their direct

experiences since they have to do with their daily needs and reality. But, on the other hand, opinions parents express in the Board meetings are actually a result of children's concerns. Adults' proposals have been related to transport, school timetable and crossing the road when finishing school.

Children are not informed on the 4-year school development plan. This plan has been presented to and discussed with teachers but has mainly remained at a theoretical discussion level. There are also teachers who report they do not have information or have not heard about the 4-year school development plan. There are also less frequent cases in which it reported that, in specific schools, parents' opinion on the 4-year school plan has been asked too. In all the schools, the Children Government has been involved in the one-year school plan.

Inclusion of Children's Government in discussions on free hours

Free hours are planned by teachers and this planning is part of teachers' tasks being asked to them at the beginning of the academic year, before the Children's Government is elected. 1/7 of this plan is composed of free hours. 2/3 have to be distributed along the plan, 1/3 is placed at the end and is used for consolidation. Each teacher uses free hours for what he/she needs the most. Free hours are planned at the beginning of the academic year, before the Children's Government is elected. Children's Government does not make any proposals on free hours. Free hours are discussed at department and school level. There may be changes of the topics of free hours depending on the needs raised during the year. Students' opinion is asked on free hours used for projects. Children have mainly proposed thematic projects such as road accidents, music instruments, literary chats and environment protection.

Free hours are discussed within the classes and by subjects. Part of the free hours is used for the development of projects and didactic classes in school; another part is used for activities at school level. Proposals made in the classes on free hours are also discussed with the Children's Government.

Part of the free hours are used for activities organized at school level (e.g. 28th and 29th of November celebrations, sports and cultural activities) and the activity part is the one that is mainly discussed with Children's Governments. For the activities at school level they also cooperate with the Place of Culture and the local government. Free hours are also developed as competitions and projects, e.g. projects on environment protection, language projects "The time of Iliad", English competition; dramatizations, etc.

The way free hours are organized is discussed with Children's Government. Children present their projects according to the previously established topics and are helped by teachers to develop these projects. Students of Children's Governments are involved in projects because they have acquired more skills than the rest of the children as result of their participation in various trainings and seminars.

Free hours are not discussed with the School Board; they are just developed by classes.

Free hours have improved children's experience in school as children are involved, have the possibility to get more information, develop their communication and cooperation skills, point out school's most concerning needs and try themselves to find solutions to these problems. Teachers state that it is very important to ask more for children's opinion when free hours are planned.

There are also children who think that free hours have not improved their school experience because there are repetitions of the same activities year after year.

Children state that they would like the discussions on free hours to be more inclusive and allow the problematic children to participate and discuss as well. However, they say they are happy with their teachers for being open in reflecting children's proposals.

In some regions, the REAs have distributed some questionnaires in order to get children's, teachers and parents opinions on free hours. All actors have made efforts to get as much as possible children's opinions about free hours discussion and organizing.

Children think it would be good to have free hours only for Children's Government.

It is important to organize more activities during free hours and not only as a consolidation of the didactic classes. Activities enable the inclusion of a greater number of children, generate a stronger effect on children's behavior and attitudes, children like them more and have better results in receiving and reinforcing the didactic information.

Inclusion of Children's Government in the discussions on school regulation

The Children's Government can make proposals on school regulation, just as parents and teachers. In most of the schools there have not been proposals from Children's Government on school regulation because they have not seen any necessity as all the rules are applicable.

In part of the schools, the school regulation is discussed with the School Board at the beginning of the academic year. This discussion varies according to the school since the commitment of School Boards also varies from school to school. In one of the schools of the Gjirokastra district, children wanted to include the uniform part in the regulations but they weren't able to do so because they did not have the support of the School Board.

The Children's Government of the "Kushtrimi i Lirisë" School in Durrës has made changes in the school regulations on issues related to the maintenance of the school premises (this has been included both in the school regulations and in the Children's Government one).

The Children's Government regulation has not been changed in most of the cases as new regulations were based on the previous year ones. In the region of Dibra, the Children's Government has added rules on cleaning and environment; they have added sanctions in order for the common areas to be better protected.

According to the children, the rules by them proposed make their life better because “since *we are children, we say what we feel is better for us.*”

“Kushtrimi i lirisë” School has made changes to the Children’s Government regulations, adding issues such as the following:

- Meetings should be held once a week and when needed even more frequently.
- Each decision taken by the Children’s Government will be transmitted to the School Directorate in order to also get the approval of this structure.

The rules proposed by the Children’s Government are considered important since they help in the progress of this structure and are related to needs identified in previous periods.

In the “Hamit Mullisi” School, in Elbasan, the drawing of the class regulations has been part of the program; the rules and punishments proposed by students have been placed in the notice boards of every classroom. This has worked very well, especially in the lower-level classes. The implementation of the class rules has not allowed teachers to punish with a bad grade the students who break them; children themselves have proposed punishment measures and it has not been necessary for the teacher to intervene.

Adults have not made proposals for changes in the school regulation either. Parents are not involved in the discussions on school regulation. When encountering problems, teachers add rules to the school regulation which have not been actually proposed.

The Children’s Government regulation derives from the school regulation. Teachers-coordinators support the regulation’s discussion and modification process if needed in order for children’s proposals to conform to what foreseen by the normative dispositions.

Children have more spaces and possibilities to be important actors in the discussions and decision-makings that have to do with them in school and at home.

Problems identified by the Children’s Government

The Children’s Government, during the last year has identified about 4-5 problems. The problems identified and solved have been related to various issues:

- Hygienization of the school environment
- Problematic students
- The conditions inside the classrooms at the beginning
- Lack of water in school
- Transport problems
- Hitting problems
- Complaints for the problem of facebook
- School’s enwall
- Lexicon students use in school
- Problems between teachers and students related to violence
- Problems of the grade and its psychological pressure
- Conflicts between students
- Students’ school dropout

- Damages caused to the school premises
- The problem of not wearing the uniform

There has been one problematic case in the “Asdreni” school, a debate between a teacher and a student. The teacher stated the student had offended her, the girl believed the opposite. The Children’s Government acted as an intermediary in this case. In the “S. Qirjazi” School there has also been a problem with a violent student who caused problems and worries to the rest. The Children’s Government took the situation under its control and organized meetings with the parents, the school director and the REA, helping the problematic child and helping also the rest of the class in accepting and supporting this child in order for him not to feel different.

The Children’s Government of “Urani Rumbo” School in Gjirokastër which had problems with the water supply has asked for the solution of this problem at different levels. Firstly they addressed to the School Directorate, then to the REA and afterwards to the Municipality. After a missed reaction from the part of the Municipality, the Children’s Government also raised the problem in the media, until getting a response.

The REA has served as a connecting bridge to support and refer the complaints of Children’s Governments to institutions such as the municipality, the police, the prefecture, etc. In the Gjirokastra region, the REA has documented all the problematic presented by the Children’s Governments of 10 schools (14 cases in total). There are records of problematic cases with a defined structure: the type of request, which institution it is addressed to, the date of the request, the date in which it was solved, comments and the way it was solved.

In some regions, REAs have carried out trainings with the vice directors and teachers-coordinators of the 10 pilot schools, in which it has been discussed on the importance of the Children’s Government and their continuous and not merely formal engagement.

Depending on the type of the problem, the Children’s Government, with the support of the teacher coordinator, decides either to submit the problem to the School Directorate or to the REA. The cases that are submitted to the School Directorate are those that cannot be solved by the Children’s Government. The Children’s Government thinks that reporting to the school director helps the problem solution and improves the situation.

Children’s problems and concerns have mostly been addressed in time by the school directorate. Children consider the School Directorate as an important partner who helps them in addressing the various problems and who supports them in being a structure with equal rights within the school. The support of the School Directorate is very important because it creates the possibility “for this structure to be taken more seriously by the rest of the teachers.” In less frequent cases, there are also children who report that the School Directorate, in some cases, has addressed the problems slowly. “This is due to the fact that the director is busy with more important tasks, sees our problems as secondary and does not take into account our opinions.”

Teachers-coordinators of Children's Governments serve as a connecting bridge between the Children's Government and the other teachers. The teachers-coordinators help children address the problems by them identified in time and often serve as a communication bridge between them and other structures. Teachers-coordinators are more open in accepting the complaints of Children's Government and understanding their specific needs as they follow this structure in every step and support it in order for it to function in the best way within the school. The Children's Government, the School Board, the teacher coordinator and the school director must work closely as children's problematic is related to parents and teachers and it is important for all the partners to cooperate between each other. "Within its structure, the Children's Government functions very well, but in relation to teachers it does not because some of them do not totally accept it as a structure."

Meetings have been held at the beginning of the school year with Children's Governments, directors, parents and teachers in order to discuss about the importance of the cooperation between these actors.

There has been a formal communication channel between the Children's Government and the Regional Education Authority consisting of:

- Discussions on various problems
- Invitations in various activities
- Reporting
- Activity Plan
- Statistics
- Presentation of the Children's Government annual plan
- Organizing of summer camps
- Supporting with material stuff

Problematic is transmitted to the Regional Education Authority mainly by the teacher coordinator and by the school director. Generally problems that have been transmitted have been related to discipline, conflicts, abusing with grades and so on.

The Children's Government has documented its activity and has actually established a practice of documentation of the various activities they carry out in school. Teachers-coordinators support children in preparing these reports. The Children's Government together with the teacher coordinator has prepared monthly reports that have been submitted every month to the REA (the REA of Gjirokastër has prepared a standard reporting form for the 10 schools).

Supporting of Children's Government by teachers

Teachers' evaluation towards Children's Government has improved and they do not treat students as little children anymore. "*By accepting students' opinion, teacher will have better results.*" Teachers also benefit from the open and continuous cooperation with children. Luljeta, a teacher in Korça, has tears in her eyes when she tells about the wonderful experience she had with the students of the Children's Government on the 7th of March celebration. She received lots of emotions and pleasure from her work with the Children's Government. "*Not only*

we get students' opinions but also we learn from them." The motto of the Children's Government of "Stavri Themeli" School is: *If you are in a hurry for something, remember it can always wait but do not say "tomorrow" to a child, his name is "today."*

Participation in various seminars has helped teachers learn a lot about Children's Government and properly understand how this structure works; they have put every day into practice the new information and skills they have received in these seminars. *"It started with receiving of information, gaining awareness and then practically implementing and fulfilling the new roles."*

More importance is given to the Children's Government and it is seen as a significant structure within the school. Students discuss their problems with the senators and are more confident in their solution (while before they had to talk about these problems to the responsible teacher). At the beginning it was difficult, even a kind of taboo, for children to complain about their teachers, while now teachers' tolerance in accepting children's complaints has also increased. The number of teachers who take Children's Government seriously has increased. *"In the beginning, teachers just thought 'here there are some students who gather between each other'".* Teachers do listen more at the Children's Government but feel bad if contradicted by them or if they are supported by the teacher coordinator.

Many teachers have realized that Children's Government serves to help them in their work.

There are also some teachers who continue not to take into consideration Children's Government because:

- Children do not have the ability to give arguments for the proposals they make
- Teachers are not supportive towards them
- The conditions and facilities may lack
- Parents in some cases are not supportive towards them either

"Not all the teachers are supportive at the same level; especially teachers of exact sciences see the commitment of children in the Children's Government as a waste of time."

Teachers in some cases do not allow the members of Children's Governments to take part in the meetings because they think that the classes are more important. *"Teachers must understand Children's Government more; the more they understand it, the more functional it will become."*

A significant difficulty in the work with teachers and school directors has been the change of mentality. *"Breaking their mentality has been difficult: teachers who had been working in the education field for years and who could not accept children giving them suggestions and advices because they considered themselves too academic."*

The legislation portfolio must be implemented accurately, which means the law on pre-university education, the normative acts and the various MoES guidelines that have to do with the Parents Board, free hours and so on and that require the unquestionable presence of Children's Government and define its role and function.

“Different teachers do not respond when children ask them for help but only when they are required to by school directors.” The teacher coordinator of one of the schools in Vlora states: *“In some cases I feel bad from the discussions with my colleagues. I feel discriminated; they do not know the importance of and do not value Children’s Government.”*

Teachers-coordinators of the Children’s Governments in Gjirokastër are recognized the extra work with Children’s Government and are paid for this workload (this was achieved as result of the lobbying of the project facilitator with the heads of the REA of Gjirokastra).

Teachers-coordinators think that Children’s Governments must be more decision-making, more trustful: *“students hesitate when a teacher opposes them and do not implement the decisions taken in the Children’s Government. Students are still submissive in front of the teacher’s figure while they should feel freer.”* The support of Save the Children with different trainings and activities, both for children and teachers, has been very important in overcoming these difficulties. *“The various trainings provided to them by Save the Children are very useful because children come with another spirit afterwards.”*

Teachers-coordinators have helped children in different ways:

- They have guided, coordinated and oriented them towards their responsibilities *“They point us out the big responsibilities we have.”*
- *“They have protected and supported us front of the other teachers because not all of them listen at us.”*
- *“They keep us united, because opinions may collide and the teacher coordinator is the axis that keeps us together.”*
- *“The teacher-coordinator is the only person who reflects students’ values to the other teachers.”*
- *“The same as we are the voice of our class, the teacher-coordinator is the voice of Children’s Government.”*

There is a visible difference for what concerns Children’s Governments in the schools supported by Save the Children as compared to the schools that have not been supported by the project. The difference is observed in:

- the way they organize activities
- the way they expose problems
- the way they solve problems
- the way they build the structure
- the way they organize elections
- how much they are involved (in some of the schools that have not been supported by the project the Children’s Government has never held any meeting)

Participation in Children’s Government has made children believe that they are more:

- able to ask for their rights
- able to communicate
- able to think openly *“We are not afraid of the punishment we might get.”*

and that they have more:

- organizing and leading skills
- knowledge on their competences and on where to raise their voice and where to ask for problem solutions
- capacities in implementing in practice what they read and what they have learned on paper
- capacities in being open in expressing and discovering their talents
- *“We now know who has the competences for what; before we thought it all depended on the School Directorate.”*

Some of the changes identified in Children’s Governments are:

- The quality of the activities they carry out has improved as result of their participation in many seminars and trainings that have increased and improved their capacities. *“Compared to the beginning, when the Children’s Government did not have any space dedicated to it in school, things have improved as now it has its board that changes every month reflecting the activities organized and when we do not change it, they bring us to account.”*
- The Children’s Government carries out activities and takes over responsibilities.
- They are open to involve other children.
- Children have started to take the initiative to write various projects according to the needs they identify themselves.
- There is a greater number of children participating in the Children’s Government (fifth and sixth grades are now included too). The Children’s Government has changed year after year. *“At the beginning we did not know how it worked; now children know previously that they are part of this structure as it is an active structure that brings changes within the school.”*
- They find it easier to discuss and express their opinions with teachers.
- Teachers support them more and are more communicative.
- They are taken more seriously by the school directorate too.
- The various activities entrusted to Children’s Governments are supported by the majority of teachers and school directors.
- They are more able to present their work, a request or a right.
- There have a stronger support by parents and a more open parent-child communication.
- They make efforts to cooperate with the community as well (for the waste collection in the community, the collection of various aids, etc.).
- *“In the beginning, the Children’s Government organized shows, now they organize activities of amore educative nature.”*
- The REA has often addressed to the Children’s Government as an important actor for the implementation of activities in schools. The children participating in the Children’s Government have built an experience thanks to their commitment and participation in seminars and trainings and it is now easier for them to take over roles and responsibilities in planning and implementing activities.

Differences between the Children’s Governments that are part of the projects and those that are not part of it are really visible. *“The faces of the 10 Children’s Governments are different but, working as a network, none of them is merely formal.”* In the schools that are not part of the project, Children’s Government is a formal structure. *“We found Children’s Governments merely formal; it required a lot of work to make them become active.”*

According to children, the difficulties and the elements that help them during the implementation of activities are as follows:

Difficulties	Resources/Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited Funds - Unsuitable settings - Limited participation - Bad weather - Manipulation of senators’ elections in classes. Good students are privileged. - Lack of infrastructure - Lack of students’ contribution - Students being unprepared - Lack of material basis - The will of too many students to be part of the Children’s Government. - The insufficient time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The help from the Children’s Government of the previous year - Participation of all the students - The help of teachers and students in the activities - The contribution of Children’s Government - The contribution of the school with funds - The help of students with funds - The acceptance of results by everybody - Facilitation of activities by teachers - The support of teachers-coordinator and of the director - The adaptation of the environment - The inclusion of professionals

In the discussions with teachers, they outlined some difficulties and facilities/resources they encounter during the implementation of activities, which are as follows:

Difficulties	Resources/Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The support of the staff is missing - The Children’s Government has problems in reporting activities - Sixth grades do not have any information on the CG structure - Students have no initiative; they need encouragement - Children have no information to conceive activities (they are not creative) - They have no activity-planning and self-organizing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The experience of some students - The support from the school directorate - The access and facilitation of REAs allowing the shortening of classes when activities are organized - The repeated daily activities becoming a tradition and children being more sensitized - The raising of children’s awareness - The raised teachers’ initiative - The material basis

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They do not have a material basis - The school hours are incompatible (Some schools have shifts and they can find no free hour to make rehearsals for the activities) - There is lack of coordination - Spaces in school are missing - There is lack of funds - Children are not active - There is lack of equipments and of material basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The support of Save the Children - The experience of teachers-coordinators - The cooperation with various actors according to the needs identifies by the Children's Government itself
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Strengths and weaknesses of Children's Government

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous communication and free expression of opinions. Children's communication both with their peers and with adults has improved - The support of the directorate, school board and teachers - Good cooperation with the teacher-coordinator - Skills in addressing specific issues - Skills in planning and developing activities - Inclusion of all students in the various activities - Skills in identifying and solving problems within the school - Active participation in the activities organized by the school - Continuous cooperation and ability to work in group - Being open to learn from the experience of older people - Collection of various information from the many activities carried out in schools - Funds given by Save the Children - Solution of issues and problems between the school directorate and the Children's Government - Full representation of students and increase of cooperation between them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neglecting of activities by some members of the Children's Government. - Frequent incompatibility of timetables hampering the gatherings to discuss about specific issues - Lack of material basis - Lack of budget - Lack of support from other teachers - Insufficient support by the School Directorate - Lack of cooperation with the Children's Governments of different schools - Opinions' gap due to the age - The one-year mandate of the senator causing difficulties because the child is prepared for one year and in the following year cannot be elected anymore

<p>and the school bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collection of funds from various sources - Working in a network of schools for the activities coordinated by the REA - Knowing the rights, tasks and functions of the Children's Government - Having learned how to draw projects and having gained skills that will be useful to them also in the future - Strengthening of some good qualities among children such as courage, nondiscrimination, accountability, lack of prejudice - Having gained self-confidence and taking over more responsibilities 	
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Recommendations

- There should be a better activating and engagement of Children's Government in didactic and educative activities
- There should be a more thorough discussion on free hours with children
- Children must be included in activities in which they can share experiences with each other
- Children must learn more about the duties resulting from having and implementing their rights, as lately there has been a larger focus on children's rights
- Children's Government must be more responsible of its position, both at individual and group level
- Children's Government must be an independent structure. When working with adults, there is always the risk they impose their opinions and decisions to children. Adults must support children on decisions they cannot make on their own. Cooperation is necessary because children need adults' experience. However, Children's Government must have its independent opinions.
- The teacher-coordinator must be given some specific hours to work with Children's Government
- There are no specific guidelines for Children's Government. It needs to be formalized as a structure. A presentation of the Children's Government must be made at the beginning of the academic year with teachers, parents and all the rest of the school, in order for all parties to get to know this structure as they know the school directors and academic staff. Children's Government must not be seen only as an obligation; it must also be part of the decision making.
- Children's Government must take part in the drawing of interdisciplinary curricular projects

- Teachers and the school staff must be more aware of the role of Children's Government. The number of teachers participating in trainings aimed at raising the level of information on Children's Government and children's rights and of cooperation with this structure must be increased
- More support must be given from school directors and teachers. Children's Government must be an important structure within the school since it represents the interests of a huge group as are children
- Tools and resources that will be needed during the academic year must be identified since the beginning of the year in order to have a longer-term activity planning and more opportunities to be creative and focused on school's specific needs
- Continuous trainings must be carried out with children in order to develop their capacities both at a theoretical and practice level, as year after year different children are elected as senators of Children's Government
- The School Directorate and the School Board must allocate part of the yearly budget to the Children's Government
- A stronger cooperation with other schools is needed, both at national and international level
- Children's Government must cooperate closely with the School Board, the School Director and the teacher-coordinator
- Children's Government skills in identifying and addressing problems within the schools must be further developed. Support from the organization Save the Children must continue as this is a new structure which still needs to be supported and strengthened. "We are in the process of awaking; we are not ready to be left by Save the Children"
- Cooperation with community and parents must be strengthened. A stronger support by parents and by the community will increase the power of Children's Government within the school also at a decision-making level. "We keep parents out of the school; we have placed a wall in front of parents."
- Successful models of Children's Government must be piloted
- There should be more publications based on successful stories and experiences built in years
- Children's inclusion in activities focused on curriculum processes and issues related to teaching must be increased as well, as during this last period the focus has been more on the inclusion of Children's Government in artistic and sports activities
- Children have been trained on project writing so they can write proposals and address them to the various donors in order to raise funds for the planned activities
- Human capacities that have been built in every school (among teachers-coordinators and Children's Government representatives) must be used to support the Children's Governments that will be created in the following years
- The strengthening process of Roma children and children of other marginalized groups must continue

- The inclusion of Roma children must be increased also in activities at school level. They should be assisted and monitored by Children’s Government and teachers when taking leading roles in activities
- A formal presentation of the Children’s Government must be made to the School Board in order to make them realize the importance and role of this structure within the school
- Capacities of Children’s Government in sharing problems and developing discussions (providing arguments) during the School Board meetings and cooperating with other actors out of the school (local and central government institutions, NGOs) must be increased
- Children’s Government must be involved in the discussions on the development of free hours
- Children’s knowledge on the aim and organization of free hours must be increased.
- More activities must be organized during free hours, as it would bring a larger participation of children, a stronger effect in their behaviours and attitudes and would help them consolidate the varied didactic information.
- Children’s Government must be more involved in school issues, as it is a body which represents the largest and main part of the beneficiaries (children) of the education process.

Annex

List of participants involved in the evaluation

Region: Durrës

No.	Name Surname	Institution	Position
1	Mirela Shala	REA	Specialist
2	Diana Halucaj	“V. Haradinaj” School	CG coordinator
3	Ermira Zhiti	“Q. Mici” School	CG coordinator
4	Donika Vila	“K. Lirise” School	CG coordinator
5	Ermira Pervizi	Xhafzotaj School	CG coordinator
6	Resmija Balla	“V. Haradinaj” School	Senator
7	Anxhela Gerguri	“V. Haradinaj” School	President
8	Ardiola Lika	“V. Haradinaj” School	Vice Senator
9	Sara Hyseni	“Q. Mici” School	President
10	Alesia Halilaga	“Q. Mici” School	Vice Senator
11	Olivia Shaulli	“Q. Mici” School	Vice Senator
12	Arjola Bushkolaj	“Q. Mici” School	Senator
13	Uendi Gjoni	“K. Lirise” School	President
14	Andi Kovaci	“K. Lirise” School	Secretary
15	Xheri Tola	“K. Lirise” School	Senator
16	Bjorna Shala	“K. Lirise” School	Vice Senator
17	Arlis Shala	“K. Lirise” School	Vice Senator
18	Melisa Troplini	Xhafzotaj School	Senator

19	Irisa Daja	Xhafzotaj School	President
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Region: Vlorë

No.	Name Surname	Institution	Position
1	Miranda Hasanaj	“I. Qemali” School	CG coordinator
2	Lenica Gjikota	“Lef Sallata” School	CG coordinator
3	Blerta Haluli	“Balil Pelari” School	CG coordinator
4	Virjon Osmenaj	“Eqerem Beqiri” School	CG coordinator
5	Leonora Nuredini	“I. Qemali” School	President
6	Kristi Shehu	“I. Qemali” School	Senator
7	Romina Ramaj	“I. Qemali” School	Senator
8	Megi Barokaj	“I. Qemali” School	Senator
9	Desara Troqe	“I. Qemali” School	Senator
10	Onkel Petriti	“Lef Sallata” School	Senator
11	Alma Brahimaj	“Lef Sallata” School	Vice Senator
12	Kaltra Musta	“Lef Sallata” School	Vice President
13	Anisa Riepaj	“Lef Sallata” School	Senator
14	Uendi Kozheli	“Balil Pelari” School	Senator
15	Enida Kalaj	“Balil Pelari” School	Senator
16	Gani Gjipali	“Balil Pelari” School	Senator
17	Fabiano Guraj	“Eqerem Beqiri” School	Senator
18	Ledjo Agaraj	“Eqerem Beqiri” School	Senator

Region: Gjirokastrë

No.	Name Surname	Institution	Position
1	Manjola Islamaj	Ura e Kardhiqit School	CG coordinator
2	Anila Braja	“Lunxheri” School	CG coordinator
3	Shaze Shehu	REA	Specialist
4	Alketa Rami	“Urani Rumbo” School	CG coordinator
5	Livianda Hasho	“N. Frasheri” School	CG coordinator
6	Euklid Avdalli	“N. Frasheri” School	Senator
7	Efstathia Bixhaku	“N. Frasheri” School	Senator
8	Sara Mene	“N. Frasheri” School	President
9	Katerina Thanasi	“Urani Rumbo” School	President
10	Albi Toro	“Urani Rumbo” School	Vice President
11	Jola Makri	“Urani Rumbo” School	Senator
12	Vasilika Kazo	“Bilal Golemi” School	Senator
13	Esmeralda Halo	“Bilal Golemi” School	Senator
14	Gazmend Haruni	“Bilal Golemi” School	Senator
15	Spiro Tare	“Lunxheri” School	Senator
16	Romina Guri	“Lunxheri” School	Senator
17	Marjolin Jahja	“Lunxheri” School	Vice President

Region: Elbasan

No.	Name Surname	Institution	Position
1	Albana Zejnelhoxha	REA	Specialist
2	Anila Cota	“Hamit Mullisi” School	CG coordinator
3	Aurora Keraj	“Fadil Gurmani” School	CG coordinator
4	Shkendi Xhyra	“Sulejman Ranci” School	CG coordinator
5	Florida Paja	Kuqan School	CG coordinator
6	Sara Koci	“Fadil Gurmani” School	President
7	Arjosa Calladej	“Fadil Gurmani” School	Secretary
8	Denisa Shabani	“Fadil Gurmani” School	Senator
9	Albana Pisha	“Hamit Mullisi” School	Senator
10	Argita Mema	“Hamit Mullisi” School	Senator
11	Fjorela Mema	“Hamit Mullisi” School	Senator
12	Sabrina Duka	“Sulejman Ranci” School	Chief of CG
13	Albana Duka	“Sulejman Ranci” School	President
14	Marsida Ballkoci	“Sulejman Ranci” School	Financier
15	Majla Qosju	Kuqan School	Secretary
16	Marisa Kuqi	Kuqan School	Senator
17	Glorina Roci	Kuqan School	Financier

Region: Dibër

No.	Name Surname	Institution	Position
1	Margarita Markja	REA	Lawyer
2	Erlanda Shahu	Sohodoll School	CG coordinator
3	Adela Puca	“Demir Gashi” School	CG coordinator
4	Selvie Murrja	“Selim Alliu” School	CG coordinator
5	Festime Qoku	Pocest School	CG coordinator
6	Erblin Shehu	“Demir Gashi” School	President
7	Andi Bardulla	“Demir Gashi” School	Secretary
8	Enrik Xhediku	“Demir Gashi” School	Senator
9	Ilda Kadria	Sohodoll School	Senator
10	Ilsada Istrefi	“H. Stermilli” School	Secretary
11	Redon Veliu	Sohodoll School	Chief of CG
12	Petrit Veliu	Sohodoll School	Senator
13	Endri Cibaku	Sohodoll School	Senator
14	Greta Zili	“Selim Alliu” School	President

Region: Korçë

No.	Name Surname	Institution	Position
1	Marinela Malaveci	“S. Qiriazhi” School	CG coordinator
2	Luljeta Kapedani	“S. Themeli” School	CG coordinator
3	Gentiana Mborja	Maliq School	CG coordinator
4	Dorina Hyka	“B. Pojani” School	CG coordinator
5	Jorgjeta Babliku	REA	Specialist

6	Drita Hoxhaj	“S. Qiriazhi” School	President
7	Kostina Veshi	“S. Qiriazhi” School	Secretary
8	Rebeka Shkurti	“S. Qiriazhi” School	Chief of CG
9	Xhoela Ramadani	Maliq School	Chief of CG
10	Avdylyke Shahini	Maliq School	President
11	Sara Katudni	Maliq School	Financier
12	Landa Mehmeti	“S. Themeli” School	Chief of CG
13	Kostanca Balliu	“S. Themeli” School	President
14	Dorjana Frasheri	“S. Themeli” School	Secretary
15	Rudina Lengu	“B. Pojani” School	Senator
16	Irisa Hoxha	“B. Pojani” School	Senator
17	Vasil Vaska	“B. Pojani” School	President

Findings of the city of Korça

- Two of the teachers interviewed had a 3-year experience as teachers-coordinators of the Children’s Government and the other two a 1-year experience.
- Children know very well the procedures needed to be elected in the Children’s Government. They identify carefully all the steps of the Children’s Government election process. Children carry out this process on their own based always on previous experiences of the Children’s Government.
- The criteria on which a member of the Children’s Government is elected are:
 - To be a student with good academic performance
 - To be good in communication
 - To be in good relations with classmates
 - To have leading skills
 - To be obedient, respectful
 - To have organizational skills in the implementation of various activities and the ability to raise their voice for the needs of the school
- One of the four schools that participated in the focus group has a Roma girl as a member of the senate in the Children’s Government. She plays the role of the secretary in the Children’s Government. In the other schools there is not any Roma or Egyptian student in the senate as the number of children belonging to these minorities is very low and the election of the senator is made by the class.
- Children state they have organized the type of activities Roma children prefer. These activities have been mainly organized in the Roma Day, as for example “Roma culture and tradition”, collection of humanitarian aids for Roma children and children coming from poor families as well as visits and exchange of experiences in the “N. Frashëri” School (a school composed mostly of Roma students). Activities have been mainly recreational as this is the type of activities in which Roma children feel more at ease
- The proposals submitted by Roma children to the REAs have also been mainly on recreational activities. Roma children are in general part of the working groups and are also supported by the rest of the children. In some way, Roma children have acquired self-confidence. In the beginning, when trainings with Children’s Government were

organized in REAs, parents did not allow them to participate; now there are not such problems anymore as parents have got used to their involvement.

- Roma children are more at a stage in which they need to be more united to and receive more support by the rest of the children rather than be left apart as this later attitude would create more difficulties in these children's inclusion.
- Children and teachers state that they have organized activities promoting the rights of Roma or other marginalized children. These have been informative activities, photo exhibitions, etc.
- Roma and other marginalized children take also part in other activities as activities organized at school are inclusive and they receive an equal treatment.
- In some cases, it is the Roma parents themselves who do not accept the organization of special activities for Roma children because it seems that the child gets labeled and this makes him/her feel different.
- Roma children have helped in organizing activities but, in most of the cases, they take secondary roles and are not the organizers. Roma children mainly wait for the others to involve them and do not take themselves the initiative to get involved. (In the Pojan School, Roma children have made a proposal on sports activities which has been supported by other children as well) Roma children mainly give complementary ideas for the activities.
- Generally, proposals for activities come from groups of students and not by one student. Schools have tried to provide Roma and other marginalized group children with the possibility to get involved. Their participation in activities also depends on the type of activity that is being organized.
- An important element that affects the level of Roma children participation is also the level of education, which hinders or facilitates the possibility of these children to get involved.
- Children of Roma community may not find themselves at ease in the activities carried out at school level but can feel perfectly at ease in those organized at class level. In June, in one of the classes the birthday of a Roma child will be celebrated. Roma children are much keener at making proposals for activities at class rather than at school level. They express and discuss their ideas in class and have the support of their peers.
- In one of the 6th grades, there has been an initial non-acceptance towards children with disabilities as result of which children organized an activity called "Accepting each other for what we are". After that, they also organized a dramatization on children with disabilities aimed at understanding the consequences of exclusion and of inequality.
- Children have been informed on the School Board meetings. They are notified approximately 2-3 days in advance, but there are also cases in which they are notified the very day of the meeting.
- In most of the cases, the Children's Government does not have a specific position on the issues discussed since the notifications do not explain the reason of the meeting and the time available is not always sufficient.
- School Boards are not very strong and do not function according to all the regulations. On the other hand, the Children's Government is a much more organized and strong structure as it works within the school and children are continuously participating in it.

- Children who participate in the Board meetings are mainly listening at what it is talked about, but there are also cases in which they give their opinion. E.g. in “Stavri Themeli” School, Children’s Government has discussed with the Board about the use of the uniform. In “Sevasti Qiriazzi” School they have discussed with the Board about uniforms, quiet during classes, cleaning and about the case of a problematic child.
- Adults present proposals in the School Board meetings and these proposals are more easily accepted because they are older, more mature and give better opinions. Children’s proposals are also accepted but it always depends on what it is discussed about. There are issues in which priority is given to children’s opinion and others in which priority is given to adults decisions.
- There is not any formal relation between the Children’s Government and the School Board. The Board is mainly supporting the activities organized by the Children’s Government each time it is necessary and may also become a partner. In villages, the cooperation with the School Board is stronger because the community is smaller.
- Children do not have information on the 4-year school development plan. This plan has been presented to and discussed with teachers. The midterm plan has not been discussed also due to the fact that children change year after year.
- The Children’s Government is more focused on its activity, more of a recreational and nature than of a didactic and educational one. Children are much more interested in activities than in the didactic part, this also according to their skills.
- The Children’s Government makes her working plan and gives opinions on the school activity plan in order for the activity plan of Children’s Government to be included in the school activity plan.
- Free hours are discussed in classrooms and they also depend on the subject. Teachers submit a plan of the free hours to the School Director. Part of the free hours is used to consolidate knowledge and the rest for activities.
- Part of the free hours is used for activities at school level (e.g. the celebrations of November 28th and 29th). For activities at school level they also cooperate with the Palace of Culture and the local government.
- Free hours are also developed as competitions and projects, e.g. projects on environment protection, language projects “The time of Iliad”, English competition; dramatizations, etc.
- Free hours are not discussed with the School Board.
- Free hours have improved children’s experience in school as children are more involved and have the possibility to get more information and to develop their communication and cooperation skills. There are also children who think that free hours have not improved their school experience because there are repetitions of the same activities year after year.
- REA has issued a guideline about the development of free hours as curricular projects. In the structure of the curricular project it is also foreseen the participation of the department, the teacher, the Children’s Government, the School Board and the School Directorate in the discussion on free hours.
- Students are much more open to speak, are more creative and there is a greater predisposition to listen to them. Trust in parents and in the community has also increased. Children’s Government activities have had an impact also in the community.

- The Children's Government has drawn attention to the use of technology; they have used technology during their classes and this was by children's initiative.
- Teachers' evaluation towards Children's Government has improved and they do not treat students as little children anymore. "By accepting students' opinion, teacher will have better results." Teachers also benefit from the open and continuous cooperation with children. Luljeta, a teacher in Korça, has tears in her eyes when she tells about the wonderful experience she had with the students of the Children's Government on the 7th of March celebration. She received lots of emotions and pleasure from her work with the Children's Government. "Not only we get students' opinions but also we learn from them."
- The motto of the Children's Government of "Stavri Themeli" School is: If you are in a hurry for something, remember it can always wait but do not say "tomorrow" to a child, his name is "today."
- The Children's Government can make proposals on school regulation, just as parents and teachers. There have not been proposals from Children's Government on school regulation.
- They have not changed the regulation of Children's Government because they based on the regulation of the previous year.
- The Children's Government regulation derives from the school regulation. Teachers-coordinators support the regulation's discussion and modification process if needed in order for children's proposals to conform to what foreseen by the normative dispositions.
- Children have more spaces and possibilities to be important actors in the discussions and decision-makings that have to do with them in school and at home.
- The Children's Government has identified during the last year about 2-3 problems (conflicts between students, conflicts between teachers and students, students' school dropout, damages caused to the school premises, etc.). There has been one problematic case in "Asdreni" School, a debate between a teacher and a student. The teacher stated the student had offended her, the girl believed the opposite. The Children's Government acted as an intermediary in this case. In the "S. Qirjazi" School there has also been a problem with a violent student who caused problems and worries to the rest. The Children's Government took the situation under its control and organized meetings with the parents, the school director and the REA.
- Depending on the type of the problem, it is decided either a case should be submitted to the School Directorate or to the Education Authority. The cases that are submitted to the School Directorate are those that cannot be solved by the Children's Government.
- Children's problems and concerns have mostly been addressed in time by the school directorate.
- Teachers are not happy when the Children's Government addresses to the School Director for issues that have to do with them. These situations must be handled very carefully by the directorate.
- There has been a communication channel between the Children's Government and the Regional Education Authority consisting of:
 - Discussions on various problems
 - Invitations in various activities

- Reporting
- Activity Plan
- Statistics
- Presentation of the Children's Government annual plan
- Organizing of summer camps
- The Children's Government has documented its activity
- Teachers-coordinators of Children's Governments serve as a connecting bridge between the Children's Government and the other teachers.
- The communication of the Children's Government with the various institutions (e.g. local government) out of the school is not always taken seriously.
- The Children's Government loses its independence when it comes to finances; a special fund must be allocated to it in the school budget
- There are many opportunities to collaborate with Children's Government but the time is very limited
- Teachers in general may feel offended if there are complaints from the side of students but it is very important to give all parties the possibility to tell how they feel and what they think in such situations
- The response of the community and the way it supports Children's Governments has also improved. "The community responds when the Children's Government asks for support"
- Children's Government still needs to be strengthened. It is very important to empower teachers-coordinators and school directors.

Some of the changes identified in Children's Government:

- The quality of the activities they organize has improved as result of their participation in many seminars and trainings that have increased and improved their capacities.
- Children's Government carries out projects and takes over responsibilities.
- They are open to include other children.
- There are initiatives from children to write various projects in accordance with the needs they identify on their own.
- There is a higher number of children participating in the Children's Government (now fifth and sixth grades are included too).
- It is now easier for them to discuss and express their opinions with teachers.
- Teachers support them more and are more communicative.
- They are taken more seriously even by the School Directorate.
- The various activities that are entrusted to the Children's Government are supported by most of the teachers and school directors.
- They are now able to present their work, a request or a right.
- There is a greater support from parents and a more open communication between parents and children.
- There have been efforts to cooperate also with the community (waste collection in the community, collection of various aids, etc.)

- “In the beginning, the Children’s Government organized shows; now the activities they carry out are more educational.
- The REA has often addressed to the Children’s Government as an important actor for the implementation of activities in schools. The children participating in the Children’s Government have built an experience thanks to their commitment and participation in seminars and trainings and it is now easier for them to take over roles and responsibilities in planning and implementing activities.

Recommendations

- The Children’s Government should be more active and engaged in didactic and educational activities.
- Free hours should be discussed with children more in detail.
- Children should be involved in activities that allow them to share experiences with each other.
- Children should learn more about the obligations arising from the enjoyment and implementation of their rights as lately there has been more attention on children’s rights.
- The Children’s Government should be more responsible for its position, both at individual and group level
- The Children’s Government must be an independent structure. When working with adults, there is always the risk they impose their opinions and decisions to children. Adults must support children on decisions they cannot make on their own. Cooperation is necessary because children need adults’ experience. However, Children’s Government must have its independent opinions.
- The teacher-coordinator must be given some specific hours to work with Children’s Government
- There are no specific guidelines for Children’s Government. It needs to be formalized as a structure.
- Children’s Government must take part in the drawing of interdisciplinary curricular projects
- Teachers and the school staff must be more aware of the role of Children’s Government.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Children’s Government

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous communication and free expression of opinions - Support of the directorate, school board and teachers - Good cooperation with the teacher coordinator - Abilities in addressing specific issues - Abilities in solving the various problems of the school - Cooperation of everybody in specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neglect of some members of the Children’s Government in some activities - Frequent incompatibility of timetables hampering the gatherings to discuss about specific issues - Lack of material basis - Lack of budget

situations - Inclusion of all students in specific activities	
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Findings of the region of Elbasan

- Children have very good knowledge about the procedures to be followed in order to be elected in the Children’s Government. They say they are very careful in applying these rules in practice as well and they react when teachers do not apply them.
- The criteria based on which the members of the Children’s Government are chosen are:
 - Polite
 - Witty
 - Communicative
 - Responsible
 - Altruist
 - Trusted by others
 - Friendly
 - Modest
- Of the schools in which interviews were conducted, only one refers to have Roma children in the Children’s Government. This is due to the fact that the number of Roma children in middle-level grades of 9-year schools is very low compared to that of the rest of the students. The criteria that children have to meet in order to be in the Children’s Government are not always met by Roma children.
- Roma children are one of the priorities of the Children’s Government and a lot of work has been done for their inclusion and participation in activities. Special activities have been organized for these children but they have been also included in various other activities organized by the school. There have been activities on racism, on Roma children’s rights, on how other children and the pedagogical staff must behave with Roma children; there have been also visits in Roma families in order to get to know closely their tradition and way of living and arts activities which aimed at highlighting the consequences of discrimination.
- Roma children have mainly had supporting roles in the organization of these activities. They have been involved in activities but have not had any role in organizing or conceiving them. Roma children are not too much involved in the organization of activities; this is due to their skills and to the level of trust they have in their classrooms and in the society.
- Activities on other marginalized children, children with disabilities and children coming from poor families have also been organized.
- Children have organized activities promoting Roma children’s and other marginalized children rights such as support from the school psychologist for children with disabilities; informing on how to treat children with disabilities, where each classroom had its own stand with information on CWD; open topics: “Dignity of children with disabilities and Roma children”; collection of aids for students with disabilities; getting to know the rights of children with disabilities; support for children coming from

divorced-parent families; purchasing of cards prepared by children with Down syndrome, etc.

▪ Children say that Roma children have been highly involved in activities, in some times being the initiators. During the last years the inclusion of Roma children has given some results:

○ They have been involved in the decisions that have to do with the class

○ They are in good relations and cooperate with the other students of the class

○ They are interested in getting involved in activities

○ Trainings have influenced a lot teachers' behaviour ; they do not make a lot of discriminations and do not offend them anymore

○ Their self-confidence has increased and it's easier for them to express their opinions

▪ Roma students who have been elected in the Children's Government or as protagonists in the various activities have been chosen because they meted the criteria and had the necessary skills. "No favouring has been made for any group".

▪ Roma children's proposals have been mainly on recreational activities where their talent is also more obvious. Roma children have made 3-4 proposals for activities, which have also been supported by the rest of the children.

▪ There is a better support and cooperation from other children; they are more open in accepting Roma children's opinions and ideas and in developing with them various activities within the school.

▪ Roma children have a higher level of awareness (e.g. the number of children attending middle-level grades has increased, they know their rights better and fight more for them)

▪ Roma children, in cooperation with other children, have submitted proposals to the REA. Their proposals were related to the 8th of April, the International Roma Day. The activities proposed were on inclusion, non-discrimination and equality.

▪ Roma children have not gained the necessary skills to design projects yet. "Members of this community have difficulties in adapting to the school life or spending the whole time in school; they have learning problems because they leave the school too frequently"

▪ Roma and Egyptian children have self-confidence when it comes to propose any project, especially in the schools in which they are part of the Children's Government

▪ The School Board does not function regularly. Only in one of the schools the Children's Government is invited to participate in the meetings of the School Board (in the three other schools they are not invited). The school President is notified about the meetings of the School Board. The Children's Government is notified 1-2 days before the meeting.

▪ The Children's Government does not always previously discuss on if a specific problem will be raised by them during the School Board meeting.

▪ The Children's Government is mainly listening during the School Board meetings but they feel free to express their opinions. Some of the problems they have discussed with the School Board are:

○ The problem of the uniform

- The problem of the long break which led to an acceptance of children's proposal to have a long break
 - Children and teacher think that, in many of the cases, adults proposals are given priority as they are able to provide more convincing arguments; however, the level at which they conform to the curriculum is also taken into account.
 - The Children's Government does not have any information on the 4-year school development plan. The draft of this plan has been formally introduced only to teachers.
 - Free hours are planned by teachers and this is one of their tasks which they are required to accomplish at the beginning of the academic year, before the election of the Children's Government. Free hours are discussed at department and school level. There can be modifications in the topics of the free hours during the year depending on the needs arisen. Students' opinion is asked on free hours that are used for projects. Children have mainly proposed thematic projects such as road accidents, music instruments, literary chats and environment protection. Free hours are discussed at class level. They are not discussed with the School Board.
 - Children think it would be better to have specific free hours for Children's Government.
 - Changes proposed by the Children's Government on free hours have improved their school experience. Teachers state that it is very important to ask more for children's opinion when planning free hours.
 - The number of teachers who take Children's Government seriously has increased. There are many teachers who have realized that Children's Governments can help them during their work.
 - There are also teachers who continue not to take into consideration Children's Government because:
 - Children do not have the ability to give arguments for the proposals they make
 - Teachers are not supportive towards them
 - The conditions and facilities may lack
 - Parents in some cases are not supportive towards them either
 - The school regulation is drafted by adults who refer to the Normative Dispositions. The Children's Government has access to modifications. There have not been changes suggested by the Children's Government in the school regulation.
 - In the "Hamit Mullisi" School, the drawing of the class regulations has been part of the program. These regulations included the rules and punishments proposed by students and were placed in the notice boards of every classroom. This has worked very well, especially in the lower-level classes. The implementation of the class rules has not allowed teachers to punish with a bad grade the students who break them; children themselves have proposed punishment measures and it has not been necessary for the teacher to intervene.
 - The Children's Government has its own regulation and this year has not made any modification to it.
 - The Children's Government has reported about 4-5 problematic cases. The opinions box has served to collect data on the various problems identified by children.
 - The problems presented by the Children's Government have been related to the:
 - Relations between teachers and students

- Budget transparency
- Organization of activities
- Changes in activities
- Problems identified by the Children’s Government have been discussed with the school directors who have addressed their concerns in time. “If the current moment passes by, no intervention has any value anymore; new problems may arise.”
- The Children’s Government thinks that reporting to the school director helps the problem solution and improves the situation.
- When complaints are made by children of the Children’s Government, teachers-coordinators feel proud because it indicates the level of freedom and responsibility they have been able to develop in these children contributing in their upbringing.
- The Children’s Government has not reported any problem to the REA as there has not been any necessity; problems have been solved within the school.
- There has been a formal communication channel between the REA and teachers-coordinators, who have submitted monthly reports, work plans, invitations to activities, etc.
- The REA has organized trainings with the vice directors and teachers-coordinators of the 10 pilot schools where they have discussed on the importance of the Children’s Government and their continuous and not merely formal engagement.
- The REA has provided material support, has coordinated joint activities and has facilitated the Children’s Government in all problems and difficulties.
- In order for the Children’s Government to be taken seriously by the rest it is necessary:
 - to increase children’s own initiative to act
 - for them to have the support of the responsible teacher
 - to train the teachers on the role and importance of the Children’s Government “as they live the entire burden to the teachers-coordinators.”
 - for the teacher coordinator to be elected by the children themselves (it does not always occur).
- Some of the skills children believe they have gained being part of the Children’s Government are the following:
 - They know much better how to manage problems
 - They are more demanding with regards to the activities they organize in order to have high participation of students.
 - They know better how to reflect the work of Children’s Government.
 - They have gained the trust of the other students
 - They have practical skills in complying with the various tasks
 - Teachers trust them more.
 - They are able to take care of themselves and of the others.
 - “There have been cases in which teachers-coordinators have left us manage the whole program in order to see how we would make it.”
 - They have a very good cooperation with the teacher-coordinator.
 - Parents are more informed on the role of the Children’s Government and provide a better support.
 - The community is more cooperative with the Children’s Government (the community has joined children’s activities related to the cleaning of the environs).

- Teachers-coordinators have supported the Children’s Government “with all their heart”; they have respected their opinions and proposals with lots of enthusiasm and dedication.
- Children who are part of the Children’s Government are more educated compared to the rest.
- There is an evident difference between the Children’s Governments of the schools that have been supported by Save the Children and those of the schools that have not been supported by the project. These differences are noticed in:
 - the way they organize activities
 - the way they expose problems
 - the way they solve problems
 - the way they build the structure
 - the way they organize elections
 - how much they are involved (*in some of the schools that have not been supported by the project the Children’s Government has never held any meeting*)

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Children’s Government

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students have gained skills in managing situations. - Students have gained skills in raising and solving problems. - They have skills in organizing activities. - Some good qualities (such as courage, non-discrimination, non-prejudgment and responsibility) have been strengthened among children. - Children have become better organized. - Children’s communication both with their peers and with adults has improved. - ‘Only during this year, the Children’s Governments may have received 3-4 monitoring and evaluation teams and donors and have been perfectly able to organize their work (“H. Mullisi” School)’ - They have gained skills in prioritizing things. - They share the information received in trainings with the rest of the students. - The support both of directors and of teachers has been continuously increasing. - They have better capacities in planning activities. - They know Children’s Governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They do not have time to carry out activities - Infrastructure is missing (in 2 of the schools there is no room for the Children’s Government). Spaces for the implementation of activities are limited. - “The one-year mandate of the senator causes difficulties because the child is prepared for one year and in the following year cannot be elected anymore.” - There is no budget for the implementation of activities. - Children should be more active, despite the difficulties they may come across due to the mentality.

rights, tasks and functions. They have learned how to develop projects and have gained skills that will be useful to them in the future. Children are more free and able to speak	
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Suggestions

- A specific time for the Children’s Government meetings must be planned in order for students not to have to skip classes.
- Teachers abilities in developing and discussing free hours must be increased.
- Capacity building of teachers-coordinators and children of the Children’s Government who change every year must continue.
- A lower number of classes must be assigned to the teacher coordinator of the Children’s Government.
- More support by the School Directors must be given to the Children’s Government and to the teacher-coordinator in order for it to be perceived as an important and serious structure.
- There should be continuity in the support of Save the Children as the Children’s Government is not a very strong structure within the school yet. “Save, don’t go!”
- There must be a supporting literature on the functioning of Children’s Governments.
- Experience exchanges are very important to develop new patterns and to increase children’s motivation.
- Trainings must be provided to children and teachers as well as support in the implementation of various activities in school.

According to children, the difficulties and the elements that help them during the implementation of activities are as follows:

Difficulties	Resources/Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited Funds - Unsuitable settings - Limited participation - Bad weather - Manipulation of senators’ elections in classes. Good students are privileged. - Lack of infrastructure - Lack of students’ contribution - Students being unprepared - Lack of material basis - The will of too many students to be part of the Children’s Government. - The insufficient time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The help from the Children’s Government of the previous year - Participation of all the students - The help of teachers and students in the activities - The contribution of Children’s Government - The contribution of the school with funds - The help of students with funds - The acceptance of results by everybody - Facilitation of activities by teachers - The support of teachers-coordinators and of the director - The adaptation of the environment - The inclusion of professionals

According to teachers' presentations, some of the difficulties and facilities/resources they encounter during the implementation of activities are as follows:

Difficulties	Resources/Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The support of the staff is missing - The Children's Government has problems in reporting activities - Sixth grades do not have any information on the CG structure - Students have no initiative; they need encouragement - Children have no information to conceive activities (they are not creative) - They have no activity-planning and self-organizing skills - They do not have a material basis - The school hours are incompatible. Some schools have shifts and they can find no free hour to make rehearsals for the activities) - There is lack of coordination - Spaces in school are missing - There is lack of funds - Children are not active - There is lack of equipments and of material basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The experience of some students - The support from the school directorate - The access and facilitation of REAs allowing the shortening of classes when activities are organized - The repeated daily activities becoming a tradition and children being more sensitized - The raising of children's awareness - The raised teachers' initiative - The material basis - The support of Save the Children - The experience of teachers-coordinators

Findings for the region of Vlora

- Children know very well the procedures that are necessary to be elected in the Children's Government and they say they also apply them in practice and ask for adults' support in order to be successful.
- The criteria applied to elect a member of the Children's Government are:
 - To have communication skills
 - To solve problems within and out of the class
 - To represent the class dignifiedly
 - To express their opinion and speak freely
 - To be able to give and get opinions within the Children's Government
 - To have leading skills
- From the interviews conducted, we found out that there are no Roma children in none of the schools which mean in none of the Children's Governments either. There are schools which have Egyptian children, who are also part of the Children's Governments. In one of the schools there are 2 Egyptian senators and in another one there is one.
- The rights of Egyptian children are observed but they, on their side are, not very involved and do not express their opinions; they are quite withdrawn.

- The Children’s Government has carried out activities that Egyptian children prefer. These have mainly been recreational activities such as karaoke party, fairs, the health day, etc. Egyptian children have been involved in all the activities organized at school. Egyptian children do not have special requirements; they are involved just as the rest of the children.
- Since there are not many Egyptian children at school, children think that special activities would make them feel different from the rest. Being part of the decision-making that occurs in school, they understand that the proposals that are mainly supported are those approved by the majority of children and Egyptian children want to be part of these majority decisions.
- Egyptian children help in organizing activities together with other children. They take over equal roles. In “Lef Sallata” School, an Egyptian child has prepared the set for a dramatization about the Independence Day and another Egyptian child has prepared the choreography.
- The Children’s Government has also carried out activities for children with disabilities. They organized for one week various activities focused on the needs of children with disabilities.
- Egyptian children have not made any proposals for specific activities; they are somehow more withdrawn than other children; they do not take leading roles but play more supporting ones. These children are self-stigmatized and self-prejudged while attention and support towards them has been continuous.
- In several activities, Egyptian children have mainly made suggestions in relation to specific parts of the activity, which have been accepted by the rest of the children.
- The Children’s Government participates in the School Board meetings and in the school semester and annual analysis.
- In general, the Children’s Government is notified about the School Board meeting 1-2 days before it takes place.
- The Children’s Government mainly expresses various spontaneous opinions during the School Board meetings as they do not always have sufficient time to hold meetings before the School Board meeting.
- In one of the School Board meetings there have been discussions on punishing some problematic students for misbehavior and one of the parties which were listened to was also the Children’s Government. The suggestion of the Children’s Government was to give support to these problematic children and the School Board accepted this proposal that children justified. The School Board supported the proposal on school’s 50th anniversary and provided funds for the school to organize activities.
- The Children’s Government is mainly listening during the School Board meetings but, when asked, they also give their opinions. They have mainly given their opinion on:
 - Problematic students who skip classes
 - The punishment for misbehavior
 - Various school activities
 - Environmental issues
- If children’s proposals are also supported by teachers and parents, their supporting and approval in the School Board meetings is easier. Since adults are more able in giving arguments and more convincing, their proposals are more easily accepted.

- Children do not know the 4-year school development plan and there is no 4-year school development plan yet.

Free hours

- 1/7 of a plan is composed of free hours. 2/3 have to be distributed along the plan, 1/3 is placed at the end and is used for consolidation. Each teacher uses free hours for what he/she needs the most. Children's Government does not make any proposals on free hours. Free hours are planned at the beginning of the academic year, before the Children's Government is elected. Children participate in free hours but are not part of the decision-making. Free hours are used for consolidations of knowledge or for various projects according to the subjects and the Children's Government may be involved in their discussion.

- It is important to organize more activities during free hours and not only as a consolidation of the didactic classes. Activities enable the inclusion of a greater number of children, generate a stronger effect on children's behavior and attitudes, children like them more and have better results in receiving and reinforcing the didactic information.

- Teachers take the opinions of Children's Government seriously. "In the beginning, teachers just thought 'here there are some students who gather between each other'". Teachers do listen more at the Children's Government but feel bad if contradicted by children or if the later are supported by the teacher-coordinator.

- Teachers sometimes do not allow the members of Children's Government to take part in CG meetings as they think classes are more important. "Teachers must understand Children's Government better; the more they understand it, the more it becomes functional."

- The Children's Government has not made any changes to the school regulation. They have made some proposals in relation to the school uniform and they have suggested the allowance of mobile phones during the classes but, as many teachers do not allow them, this suggestion was not approved.

- They have not made any changes to the regulation of Children's Government either as they have not considered it necessary.

- Adults have not made proposals for changes in the school regulation either. Parents are not involved in the discussions on school regulation. The School Board does not function as it should and has not been involved in the discussions on the regulation. When encountering problems, teachers think of adding rules to the school regulation but they have not actually made any proposal.

- During the last year, the Children's Government has identified about 4-5 problems. Some of the problems identified were:

- Students who do not wear the uniform
- Students coming late at school
- Conflicts between students and teachers
- Braking of the school windows
- Blocking of the classroom doors

- "Different teachers do not respond when children ask them for help but only when they are required to by school directors." The teacher coordinator states: "In some cases I feel bad from the discussions with my colleagues. I feel discriminated; they do not know the importance of and do not value Children's Government."

- The Children's Government thinks that the school director has addressed problems in time. The Children's Government tries to solve problems on its own and only addresses to the School Directorate when not able to do so. The Children's Government thinks that reporting problems to the school directors helps in solving problems and improving the situation.
- Teachers-coordinators report that the Children's Government must cooperate very closely with the teacher-coordinator, the School Director and the School Board. "Within its structure, the Children's Government functions very well, but in relation to teachers it does not because some of them do not totally accept it as a structure."
- There has been a formal communication channel between the Children's Government and the REA. It has mainly been the teachers-coordinators who have submitted to the REA information in Children's Government such as monthly reports, activity plans and invitations in activities. Various problems have been raised such as the time in which Children's Government meetings shall take place (teachers had suggested for these meetings to be held during the long break, which contradicts with the right of children to rest) and the workload of teachers-coordinators.
- Teachers-coordinators think that Children's Governments must be more decision-making, more trustful: "students hesitate when a teacher opposes them and do not implement the decisions taken in the Children's Government. Students are still submissive in front of the teacher's figure while they should feel freer."
- The Children's Government has gained some skills:
 - They have more leading skills and ability to express more clearly
 - They deal with more problems and solve them more easily
 - They have a stronger relation with the school staff and the directors
 - They have gained self-confidence and take over more responsibilities
- The exchange of various experiences, the seminars, the trainings and the various activities have helped children gain various skills that are very important for their development in other important areas of life as well.
- The quality of the activities they carry out has improved as result of their participation in many seminars and trainings that have increased and improved their capacities.
- "Compared to the beginning, when the Children's Government did not have any space dedicated to it in school, things have improved as now it has its board that changes every month reflecting the activities organized and when we do not change it, they bring us to account."
- The Children's Government has changed year after year. "At the beginning we did not know how it worked; now children know previously that they are part of this structure as it is an active structure that brings changes within the school."
- Children have learned how to respond to the various problems.
- More importance is given to the Children's Government and it is seen as a significant structure within the school.
- Students discuss their problems with the senators and are more confident in their solution (while before they had to talk about these problems to the responsible teacher).
- Teachers-coordinators have helped children in different ways:
 - They have guided, coordinated and oriented them towards their responsibilities "They point us out the big responsibilities we have."

- “They have protected and supported us front of the other teachers because not all of them listen at us.”
- “They keep us united, because opinions may collide and the teacher coordinator is the axis that keeps us together.”
- “The teacher-coordinator is the only person who reflects students’ values to the other teachers.”
- “The same as we are the voice of our class, the teacher-coordinator is the voice of Children’s Government.”

Strengths	Weaknesses
Abilities in developing activities Creation of a structure that has gained stability and will continue to exist in the future Their voice is listened more than it did before The force of opposition in some cases The representation of the Children’s Government in all meetings, gatherings and activities	Lack of funds (lack of sound equipment) Teachers not allowing students to go to the meetings which leads to the senators never being able to meet all together The insufficient time Teachers-coordinators not being recognized as a norm the workload related to Children’s Government Lack of spaces

Recommendations

- Free hours must be discussed with the Children’s Government before teachers prepare the plan
- The School Directorate and the School Board must allocate a fund to the Children’s Government
- A presentation of the Children’s Government must be made at the beginning of the academic year with teachers, parents and the whole school
- The Children’s Government must cooperate with all the actors in the school
- The effectiveness of this structure within the school must be increased, considering also the goal this structure has
- The teacher-coordinator must be recognized a minimum of 2 hours of workload spent for the Children’s Government
- The Children’s Government must be more involved in the discussions on the school plans related to various activities
- A more appropriate time for the meetings of the Children’s Government must be found
- Experiences must be shared with other schools as well
- Teachers and children must be more involved in seminars and trainings that help in the increase and strengthening of their capacities

Findings for the region of Durrës

- Children are informed on the procedures that are necessary to be elected in the Children’s Government. They say that they now know very well all the steps they have to

follow and at the beginning of each academic year this is a process that occurs very naturally.

- There are no Roma children in the Children's Government because the number of Roma children is very low compared to the rest and the children do not have the abilities a senator must have.

- Children have organized various activities at school but not special activities for Roma children. The activities they have developed have been focusing on the promotion of children's rights including Roma children and children with disabilities.

- Roma children and children with disabilities help in these activities but have not taken over any leading role. In some cases they are indifferent and need to be encouraged in order to participate. They rather wait for others to do something for them than do something themselves. They do not quite know how to fight for their rights.

- Roma children have not submitted any proposal for special activities; in most of the cases they have supported the activities organized by the rest and have been involved in these activities according to their interests.

- The President of the Children's Government participates in the School Board meetings.

- The Children's Government is notified about the School Board meetings 2-3 days in advance. The Children's Government discusses its problems in these meetings but it depends on the issue the Board meeting is about. The Board meets infrequently: when the budget is to be approved or when there is any emergency at school.

- The students of the "Kushtrimi i Lirisë" School have asked for the support of the School Board in purchasing a stereo and the Board has provided part of the funds. In the "Q. Mici" School, the Children's Government has asked to the School Board support in preparing a mega poster on independence and the Board has supported them. The Board generally responds also to new and unforeseen needs that may arise during the year.

- The School Board listens at and supports both the proposals of children and those of adults, as they are in function of one another, aimed at making the school become a high-quality environment for children's education. Adults have raised the problem of bathrooms in the School Board meeting and thanks to this 6 bathrooms were built in the school.

- The Children's Government does not know the 4-year school development plan. The discussion of the plan with the Children's Government will start this year.

- Free hours are not discussed with the Children's Government. The Children's Government is more involved in projects (on the use of alcohol, the environment, etc.) developed by each of the teachers according to their subjects. The children of the Children's Government are involved in projects because they have gained more skills than the rest of the children since they have participated in various trainings and seminars. The Children's Government does not make suggestions on free hours. Each of the teachers prepares the plan of free hours and discusses it in the department and then in the council of teachers.

- The way free hours will be organized is discussed with the Children's Government. Children present the projects according to the established topics and are assisted by teachers to develop them.

- Teachers are obliged to strictly comply with MoES guidelines. Material basis is needed in order to develop at the best the activities and projects planned for free hours.

- In “V. Haradinaj” School, some of the teachers and the school director do not see the Children’s Government as an important structure.
- Not all the teachers are supportive at the same level; especially teachers of exact sciences see the commitment of children in the Children’s Government as a waste of time.
- The Children’s Government has made changes in the school regulation on issues related to the maintenance of the school premises (this has been included both in the school regulation and in the Children’s Government one).
- The regulation is also approved by the School Board and is placed in the noticed boards of the classes.
- Changes have been made to the Children’s Government regulation, adding issues such as the following:
 - Meetings should be held once a week and, when needed, even more frequently.
 - Each decision taken by the Children’s Government will be transmitted to the School Directorate in order to also get the approval of this structure.
- The rules proposed by the Children’s Government are considered important as they help the progress of this structure and are related to needs identified in previous periods.
- During the last year the Children’s Government has identified 4-5 problematic cases. These problematic cases had to do with:
 - Children’s behavior and discipline
 - Uniforms
 - The non-organizing of activities
- The Children’s Government has had a formal communication channel with the REA which has been enabled through the teachers-coordinators. This communication has served to send monthly reports, plans and invitations to activities, to discuss various concerns, etc.
- The school presidents go once a week to the Cultural Centre for Children to discuss on the activities of their schools, exchange experiences and follow the activities of one another.
- “The various trainings provided to them by Save the Children are very useful because children come with another spirit afterwards.”

Strengths and weaknesses of Children’s Government

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It works well and all the actors of the school have become more aware of this structure - Children have become more responsible and more important. - They try to learn more, to be the best - They have got used to the spirit of collaboration - There is more inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are still some teachers who do not understand Children’s Government and whose awareness needs to be raised - Material basis is missing - A specific area for the Children’s Government is missing (in one of the schools) - We do not have access to parents’ opinion in the activities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Duties that are taken over are carried out accurately - There is respect for one another and for one another's opinion. - Problems are solved in the best possible way - The teacher coordinator is continuously consulted - Entertaining activities are organized for students - They finish all the tasks they start - They have the support of Save the Children in implementing activities 	
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According to children, the difficulties and the elements that help them during the implementation of activities are as follows:

Difficulties	Resources/Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulties in finding information - The insufficient time - Students' indifference - Lack of correctness in some students - Non-compliance with the timetable - Limited spaces which do not allow the participation of all the children - Bad weather - The very high number of children participating, which has made it difficult to manage them - Low participation of students - Problems in the organizing of activities - Students who do not accept to part of the activities - Lack of parents' participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Albanian language, History and Music teachers Equipment, video projector Students' preparation and engagement Talented children The teacher-coordinator The psychologist Previous senators Students of the Children's Government The School Directorate The REA representatives

According to teachers' presentations, some of the difficulties and facilities/resources they encounter during the implementation of activities are as follows:

Difficulties	Resources/Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of sound equipment - Lack of an activity room - Lack of spaces which limits children's participation - The non-flexibility of the director with regards to the timetable, which leads to the impossibility of teachers to participate all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The cooperation of CG - The participation of the REA and of other school directors - Children's works and engagement - Inclusion of various figures according to activities - Resources collected by the School Board

<p>together in activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers not being collaborative - Lack of stands where to expose students' works - The non-availability of the school equipment for the Children's Government - Lack of material basis - Lack of funds - Parents' and institutions (REA, Municipality) indifference in participating in the CG ceremony - Teachers not identifying students with various talents - 9th grade students not being interested in participating in activities - The insufficient time for the activities due to the classes - The indifference of some teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Children's Government Fund - The School Directorate (funds, flexibility in the timetable) - Parents complementing the material basis for the school activities - Cooperation with the traffic police for the implementation of an activity on the road traffic safety - The school psychologist - Cooperation with the school director - Cooperation with the general practitioner - Support from the CG of the previous year - Cooperation with children (assignment of responsibilities) - Cooperation with teachers (of music, drawing, history, etc.) - Arts groups created at school
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Suggestions

- The Children's Government must be supported and valued by the entire pedagogical staff
- The Children's Government must be involved in all the problematic of the school
- There must be a specific fund for the Children's Government which must be allocated by the School Board from the beginning. "We go around as beggars to collect little money, cents, for the activities of the Children's Government as we need sound equipment, microphone, etc. A financial support would make the plan of the Children's Government become more feasible.
- The Children's Government must get more involved in project outside and within the school.
- More training must be delivered and other teachers must participate in them as well in order for them to have more information on the Children's Government.
- Parents must be more involved in children's activities

Findings for the region of Gjirokastra

- The Children's Government is a consolidated structure within the school; children know very well all the steps the Children's Government election process has to follow
- Children comply rigorously with all the rules and procedures in order to have a transparent and open voting process where children who better represent the interests of their class are elected. "We are demanding in order to carry out elections qualitatively."
- A higher number of children express their interest in being part of the Children's Government year after year. The work of the Children's Government has increasingly become more visible and children have started to estimate and understand the potentials of this structure and the benefits that may come by being part of it.

- Children have received more training and have gained very important skills that are useful to them not only as part of the Children's Government but also at other levels such as at home, at school and as citizens of the community who want to build a healthier and safer future for everybody.

- Teachers are more supportive as they have realized the role of the Children's Government, a structure that helps and develop school's educative function.

- The criteria on which the members of the Children's Government are elected are:

- Leading skills

- Responsible for their tasks

- Problem-solving skills

- Communication skills

- Seriousness

- Not indispensable to be excellent students as all must be part of the Children's Government

- To be esteemed by other students of the school

- Roma, Egyptian and Aromanian/Vlach children have also been and continue to be part of the Children's Government structures. These children are part of the Children's Government because they have the necessary skills to be part of this structure and its one of the rights they equally share with all other children. As these children represent different minorities, they have to tell which the needs of these communities are. In "Çajupi" School, two Roma children and two Egyptian children are part of the Children's Government. One Roma child and one Egyptian child are part of the Children's Government in "Koto Hoxhi" School as well.

Children say that they have organized activities that Roma and Egyptian children like and prefer since these children are also themselves initiators of the various activities within the school. Children have carried out an average of 3-4 activities in each school. Activities have mainly been recreational ones, such as Knowing the culture and traditions of minorities; Fundraising to support Roma children; Week against discrimination; Exhibition on racial equality; Cultural diversity; Getting to know minority rights, dramatizations on children's rights "Let's meet on stage", "Ethnic, cultural and linguistic minorities, all with equal rights", Workshops with every school, Cultural Diversity does not make us unequal towards human rights, Activity of school standard-bearers from the Children's Governments, School to school handover of the mottos of the Children's Government, Activities for the 20th of November, Workshops on the "Role of the leader and of the teacher-coordinator in the Children's government, their advantages and duties" etc.

- The goal of the activities organized has been the promotion of Roma, Egyptian and other children's rights. Roma and other children have been included in these activities in different ways, telling stories from their lives, being active and playing different roles during their implementation; they have gained different prizes, have been creative and have expressed their talents, have expressed the will to be part of these activities and have had the support of the rest of the children.

- Children think that Roma, Egyptian and other children have been quite involved in activities. In some cases these children have been the initiators of activities and have been entrusted important parts of the work by the Children's Government.

- We cannot say that Roma children are the same as the rest of the children as the starting point of these children has been different from that of the rest. “They have been transformed from isolated children into active children; they run for senators and are elected.” Changes in these children are evident; they are not self-isolated and self-prejudged anymore.
- The level of self-confidence among Roma children has progressively increased. There is a small group of children who have the confidence to make proposals; there are others who are still withdrawn, but if you solicit them, they are able to give opinions and be part of the decision-making. REAs have paid attention to including these children as part of these projects, regardless of how productive they are, especially in cultural activities, thus stimulating their intelligence.
- Roma and Egyptian children have submitted proposals on special activities to the REAs. Proposals have reached the REAs in different ways: they have sporadically come from students, from the teacher coordinator after discussing them at school, from the school director (“Çajupi” School) but also from occasional meetings with Roma parents. These have mainly been activities for the collection of aids which have been subsequently distributed to these children, activities on diversity, exhibitions (a Roma student gained the first prize), celebration games, “We have different features but express ourselves in the same way through art”, workshops in the 10 schools called “Cultural Diversity does not make us unequal towards human rights” (Cultural and ethnic minorities, introduction to the UN Universal Declaration on cultural diversity)
- The Children’s Government participates in the School Board meetings. In these meetings they exchange opinions, ask for support, ask for permissions to organize activities, discuss the school annual plan, transmit students’ suggestions, discuss on the various problematic, discuss on semester analysis and on what they can adjust and improve.
- The Children’s Government is notified about the participation in School Board meetings 1 week to 2-3 days in advance. The issues they will raise in the School Board meetings are previously discussed in the Children’s Government meetings and then presented by their representative.
- Children say they have not been part of the decision-making in School Board meetings; they have mainly expressed their concerns and listened at the various issues discussed in these meetings. The children’s Government has expressed opinions related to the conditions of the school premises and problematic students.
- The School Board in some cases has helped with material basis for activities but this help has been sporadic as expenses have been mainly covered by the Children’s Government project.
- Children believe that children’s and adults’ opinions are equally considered in the School Board meetings. Children transmit their direct experiences since they have to do with their daily needs and reality. But, on the other hand, opinions parents express in the Board meetings are actually a result of children’s concerns. Adults’ proposals have been related to transport, school timetable and crossing the road when finishing school.
- Children say they do not know the 4-year school development plan.
- Free hours are discussed in class by subject. Part of them is used to develop projects and teaching classes at school and the rest to carry out activities at school level.

The suggestions made in class about free hours are also discussed with the Children's Government.

- The activity part is the one that is mainly discussed with the Children's Government. The proposals of the Children's Government on free hours have been on literary, arts, cultural, sports and entertaining activities that transmit various messages, competitions aimed at increasing students' motivation, career counseling, etc.
- Proposals on free hours are not discussed with the School Board.
- Children think that the changes in the free hours' curriculum have improved their school experience as children identify school's most concerning needs and try to find solutions to these problems on their own. "Texts that are more understandable for us, that are closer to our world".
- The didactic program has included sensitizing classes combining didactic classes to educative ones.
- Children say the discussions on free hours must be more inclusive allowing problematic students to take part and discuss as well. However, they say they are happy with the fact teachers have been open in reflecting children's proposals.
- The topics of free hours have been related to environs cleaning "A clean environment, our life"; the end-of-year celebrations; children's rights; 7th-8th of March celebrations; 1st of June; posters on violence; HIV/AIDS
- Free hours are planned at the beginning and cannot be always modified at the moment new needs and problems arise.
- The REA has distributed some questionnaires to get students', teachers and parents opinions on free hours. All actors are making an effort to get the most of the children's opinions on the organization of free hours.
- There have not been proposals from children on changes to the school regulation. Children say the roles they have set in the school regulation are implemented and have not seen any need to make changes.
- They express their opinions and problems in the "Opinions Box". These opinions and problems are discussed every month at school and then reported to the REA. The entire problematic is analyzed by the Children's Government in cooperation with the School Directorate and the REA. There are also requests that are not under the competences of this institution and cannot be given a solution.
- The Children's Government has its own regulation which is applied by this structure. The Children's Government always refers to the regulation of the previous year and only makes changes to it when considering it necessary.
- The school regulation is discussed with the School Board at the beginning of the academic year.
- The School Board has not the same performance in all the schools as it depends on the commitments of the School Board members.
- Children wanted to include the issue of the uniform in the regulation but could not achieve it as they did not have the support of the School Board.
- During the last year, the Children's Government has identified about 4-5 problems related to:
 - Environment hygienization
 - Problematic students
 - The conditions inside the classrooms at the beginning

- Lack of water in school
- Transport problems
- Hitting problems
- Complaints for the problem of facebook
- School's enwall
- Lexicon students use in school
- Problems between teachers and students related to violence
- Problems of the grade and its psychological pressure
- Problems raised by the Children's Government have been addressed in time by all levels within the school and by the REA.
- The Children's Government, the School Board, the teacher coordinator and the school director must collaborate closely as children's problems are related to parents and teachers therefore cooperation between all partners is very important. Meetings have been held at the beginning of the school year with the Children's Government, directors, parents and teachers in order to discuss on the importance of cooperation between these actors.
- The Children's Government of "Urani Rumbo" School which had problems with the water supply has asked for the solution of this problem at different levels. Firstly they addressed to the School Directorate, then to the REA and afterwards to the Municipality. After a missed reaction from the part of the Municipality, the Children's Government also raised the problem in the media, until getting a response.
- The REA has served as a connecting bridge to support and refer the complaints of Children's Governments to various institutions such as the municipality, the police, the prefecture, etc.
- The Children's Government has find solutions to its problems on issues related to school infrastructure, placement of waste bins, placement of a guard inside the school, etc. by addressing to the School Directorate.
- Children say that, depending on the type of problem, there have been efforts from the side of the School Directorate to address problems in time.
- During the last year, the Children's Government has submitted to the REA about 2-3 problems and the REA has addressed the problems identified by the Children's Government in time.
- The REA has documented the entire problematic presented by the Children's Governments of the 10 schools (14 cases in total). Records of the problematic cases have been kept following a defined structure: the type of request, which institution it is addressed to, the date of the request, the date in which it was solved, comments and the way it was solved.
- The Children's Government together with the teacher coordinator has prepared monthly reports and submitted them to the REA every 25th of the month (the REA has prepared a standard reporting form for the 10 schools).
- There has been a formal communication channel with the REA during the whole year through which children have submitted reports and invitations, have asked for support and have identified various problems on their own. Communication with the REA has been spontaneous (in the street, at school) or realized through the teacher-coordinator (who has participated in the meetings held in the REA every month), e-mails or the schools' network.

- The REA has supported children in every problem and activity and has addressed their concerns in time. They have provided support with various materials and have followed children's activities closely.
- In the beginning, support from other teachers was missing but, as result of the trainings delivered, cooperation and support of other teachers has increased. E.g. for the project "Stress", in addition to the help of the teacher-coordinator and the biology teacher, we also received the help of other teachers.
- It is very important that each complaint or discontentment of children is firstly discussed with the teacher-coordinator and subsequently brought to other levels.
- In the beginning it was difficult, even a taboo, for children to complaint about teachers while now tolerance of teachers in accepting children's complaints has increased.
- As result of the participation in the Children's Government children believe they:
 - are more able to ask for their rights
 - are more able to communicate
 - are more able to think freely "We are not afraid of the punishment we might get"
 - have more organizational and leading skills
 - are more open in expressing and discovering their talents
 - "We know our competences, where to raise our voice and where ask for the solution of the problem"
 - "They now implement in practice what they read and what they have learned on paper"
 - "We now know who has the competences for what; before we thought it all depended on the School Directorate."
- Participation in various seminars and trainings has helped children learn more about Children's Government and understand properly how this structure works; they have put into practice every day the new information and skills received in these seminars "It started with the acquisition of new information and skills, followed by increased awareness and then by the practical application and fulfillment of new roles."
- Experienced and a positive pattern have been built in schools.
- The Children's Government has worked as a network of schools and there has been continuous cooperation and exchange of experiences between schools.
- Children feel freer, they openly express their opinions and want to learn and get new information.
- Parents have more information on the Children's Government; they have cooperated and have supported children in being important actors in the implementation of activities.
- Teachers-coordinators of the Children's Governments are recognized the workload they have with the Children's Government and are paid for this work (this has been achieved as result of the lobbying of the project facilitator with the heads of REA)
- The seminars carried out at by the project facilitator at the beginning of the year with school directors and teachers-coordinators have been very important in raising their awareness about the importance of the Children's Government and in enabling teachers-coordinators to have 2 hours of didactic workload less than other teachers.

- The Children's Government is a structure within the school that, when working properly, can solve many problems related to the curriculum, communication, relations with directors and teachers and conflict resolution.
- A Children's Government network has been created which does not work sporadically but has a very clear action plan and has gained a status within the school that makes it be appreciated. Many institutions responsible for the observance of children's rights have been put in motion through the project. Joint activities have been organized by the 10 schools, whose message was "This is what we are able to do, if you work with us." These activities have also had a stronger impact in the community and have been an opportunity for children to receive adults' support and encouragement.
- The facilitator has drawn documentation forms that have been standardized for all schools; this facilitates the activity reporting and documentation process.

Difficulties

- A significant difficulty has been the change of mentality. "Breaking their mentality has been difficult: teachers who had been working in the education field for years and who could not accept children giving them suggestions and advices because they considered themselves too academic."
- There have been problems with some teachers who do not see Children's Government as a partner.
- Some Roma children discriminated themselves (they withdrew from activities at the last moment due to their culture and mentality).
- There is a visible difference between Children's Governments that are part of the project and those that are not. "The faces of the 10 Children's Governments are different but, working as a network, none of them is merely formal." In the schools that are not part of the project, Children's Government is a formal structure. "We found Children's Governments merely formal; it required a lot of work to make them become active."

Suggestions

- Support from the organization Save the Children must continue as this is a new structure which still needs to be supported and strengthened. "We are in the process of awaking; we are not ready to be left by Save the Children"
- The right students must be elected as members of the Children's Government, who want to be positive role models for the rest.
- Children must be more engaged in voluntary work as they must give their contribution and energies and increase practical skills.
- Each remark of the Children's Government must be taken into consideration by teachers and school directors.
- The legislation portfolio must be implemented accurately, which means the law on pre-university education, the normative acts and the various MoES guidelines that have to do with the Parents Board, free hours and so on and that require the unquestionable presence of Children's Government and define its role and function.
- Children's inclusion in activities focused on curriculum processes and issues related to teaching must be increased as well, as during this last period the focus has been more on the inclusion of Children's Government in artistic and sports activities

- Human capacities that have been built in every school (among teachers-coordinators and Children’s Government representatives) must be used to support the Children’s Governments that will be created in the following years.
- The Children’s Government pattern piloted by the project must be supported by the REA as a positive model of Children’s Government functioning.
- Children have been trained on how to write projects therefore they can write proposals and submit them to various donors in order to raise funds for the planned activities.
- A specific hour for the implementation of Children’s Government activities must be included in the didactic plan.

Strengths and weaknesses of the Children’s Government

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The various information received from the many activities carried out in schools - The support of the School Board, school directors, REA, teachers-coordinators and other teachers - Funds given by Save the Children - Voluntary cooperation of the Children’s Government with other teachers - The solution of issues and problems between the school directorate and the Children’s Government - The strict implementation of the Children’s Government regulation - The compliance with students’ fundamental rights - The opinions box where students leave their opinions - The voice of the Children’s Government which is taken more into account - The full representation of students and the increase of the cooperation between them and the school bodies - The undertaking of initiatives for the expansion of students skills and the transmission of messages - The collection of funds from various sources - Working in school networking for the activities coordinated by the REA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lack of a space where to hold the meetings (“B. Golemi” School) - Some senators not taking their duties seriously - The lack of trust in the abilities of the Children’s Government from the side of some students of the school - The lack of an appropriate office for the Children’s Government (“Lunxheri” and “N. Frashëri” Schools) - The limitation of activities in order for classes not to be interrupted - The gap between opinions due to age differences - Limited support

Findings of the region of Dibra

- The Children's Government is a well-established structure that knows very well its duties and responsibilities. Children participating in Children's Governments are very well-motivated in offering their contribution: *"it is a stronger structure, we get more involved and teachers take us more into consideration."* The commitment of teachers-coordinators is estimated as very positive as they have now experience and some expectations from the task they will carry out. Many of the Children's Governments have their spaces within the school, which gives them the possibility to meet continuously and feel equally important to the rest of the school managing staff.
- Most of the interviewed teachers come from a long experience as teachers-coordinators of Children's Government. Only one of the teachers has just 1 year of experience as teacher-coordinator but she has experience as senator and school president.
- In the schools supported by "Save the Children" a model of Children's Government has been created while there are other schools that do not have such structure. A practice has been established, laying the fundamentals for this structure to work increasingly better within the school.
- Children's Governments that have been part of this project have more thorough information on the way the election process and the planning and implementation of activities are carried out.
- Most of the children and teachers say that they have also had the support of other teachers and directors of the school, although there are also cases in which cooperation is missing. "We concentrate a lot on Children's Government but not on the rest of the teachers who are rather hampering than helping it." Teachers and children estimate as very important the support and commitment of all teachers and school directors in helping and including Children's Government as much as possible.
- The community does not provide the necessary support to the Children's Government; they do not have the needed information on Children's Government and do not understand it properly. The Parents Council and the School Board does not support and does not cooperate with this structure. "They cannot accept the fact that children may raise their voice and ask for a right. There is a very strong conflict between the new mentalities and old (traditional) ones."
- Children have carried out various activities during the year trying to make them as much inclusive as possible. Children's participation depends on the activity. There are activities in which children's participation is high and others in which their participation is lower. This depends on the type of activity that is organized and on children's interests.
- Children have made efforts to raise funds from businesses, the community and the school directorate in order to be able to implement the activities they plan.
- The activity plans are mainly prepared during the following months, i.e. there is a short-term planning which is also related to the lack of funds and to the ways these children generate funds. Children are flexible in adapting activities to the needs and specificities of their schools. A repetition of similar activities year after year is observed. Children lack in creativity and innovation in the development of activities.
- Activities carried out with Roma and Egyptian children have been mainly supporting ones aimed at meeting these children's basic needs. Various parcels (with food, clothes, equipment, etc.) prepared and collected by children have been offered to Roma and Egyptian children.

- There is a low awareness on the importance of voluntary work which makes children's participation and commitment be sporadic and not always motivated.
- Children know very well the procedures that are necessary to be elected in the Children's Government. They say that the way the election process is organized has been increasingly improving year after year. Children are the main actors in this process, taking over the key roles in organizing and implementing it, in order to be the most transparent and inclusive possible. Teachers play more the role of facilitators, while children lead and implement the process.
- The senators of the Children's Government are chosen following some criteria which are:
 - To be communicative
 - To be polite
 - To be active
 - To listening to others' opinions
 - "not necessarily good students"
 - To know how to manage situations and how to lead, organize and manage
 - To be a leader
 - To be listened by others
- The schools that
- Participated in the focus group did not have a high number of Roma and Egyptian children among their students. In "Sohodoll" School, last year, there was a senator who belonged to Roma community (a Roma girl in 8th grade). They wanted to involve her this year too, but she did not want to engage. In the "Demir Gashi" School a Roma boy was candidate for senator but was not voted by his class.
- Roma children have been mainly involved to help with various activities. There are also 2 schools that have not had any Roma children. In "Selim Alliu" School there are more children belonging to the Roma community at lower-level grades. They have carried out activities that Roma children prefer which have mainly been recreational ones (singing, dancing, dramatizations). They are mainly involved in the activities children organized but no special activities are organized for them as their number is very low.
- They have carried out activities promoting the rights of Roma children and children of other marginalized groups, which have mainly been of a supporting type (e.g. something from the school budget have been donated to poor children; gifts are offered to Roma children from the funds collected by the Children's Government; an exhibition on gender equality has been organized with posters and drawings. The participants in the focus group say they organize 1-2 activities addressing Roma children per year (this is also due to the low number of children belonging to this community. Roma children help in the implementation of these activities and are mainly in the role of helpers, performers and less frequently in the role of leaders. These children are more involved in acting, singing and dancing activities. E.g. in "Selim Alliu" School, a boy from Roma community is the head of the organization of **mini-maturity** for his class. Roma children usually play secondary roles because they do not always want to take over key roles and responsibilities. Roma children are only partially involved, as they are rather waiting for what others will do than engaging themselves in activities that are in their interest.
- Roma children have not submitted any proposal for specific activities.
- Roma children have no skills in writing project proposals.

- Roma children who have been engaged in the senate have also had a great support from their families. Their parents have encouraged and supported them in participating. Extracurricular activities are a good way also to motivate Roma children who do not attend school.
- The participation of Roma and other marginalized groups children also depends on the type of activity.
- The Children's Government is previously informed about the School Board meeting. Usually they are notified 1-2 days before the meeting takes place. One representative of the Children's Government participates in the School Board meeting. The Children's Government does not go to the School Board meetings with a defined position on issues as they do not know previously what is going to be discussed in these meetings. The representative of the Children's Government who takes part in the meeting is more in the role of a listener. There is an introduction of the Children's Government during the first meetings and less frequently a presentation of the problematic (discussions on the school budget, hygiene, etc.) according to the viewpoint of the Children's Government. The support of the School Board consists "mainly of opinions"
- In the "Sohodoll" School, the School Board has assigned a symbolic amount of money to the Children's Government. Only one proposal of the "Sohodoll" School has been accepted by the School Board. In "Demir Gashi" School, the School Board has approved the request of Children's Government to have a bank account and to discuss about the budget.
- Adults make continuously proposals to the school and children are not asked any opinion on these proposals. Adults' proposals are accepted more easily than children's ones. Proposals are discussed in the School Board meetings and there are cases in which they are modified according to school's problematic and possibilities to address them. Generally, the Children's Government has not documented its relation with the School Board.
- The Children's Government does not have any information on the 4-year school development plan. In two of the schools parents' opinion on this plan has been asked.
- Free hours have been discussed at class level. The thematic addressed in free hours has been on:
 - A tourist guide of the Dibra region (translated into English)
 - Olympic games
 - The Independence of Albania
 - Dramatization of different works such as "The Doll's House", "The Wooden Plate", etc.
 - Waste management, firstly within the school and then in the community.
- The Children's Government is not part of the decision-making on free hours; they are more discussed at class level.
- Free hours are not discussed with the School Board but only developed by classes. Children say that free hours have helped them a lot as they have been able to discuss on problems children have identified on their own. They have taken over leading roles in activities, have increased information in various fields, have increased participation and have addressed various problems according the school's specific needs.
- Children generally make changes in Children's Government regulation but not in the school one. In the Children's Government regulation they have added rules on

cleaning and environment as well as sanctions in order for the common areas to be better protected. According to the children, the rules by them proposed make their life better because “*since we are children, we say what we feel is better for us.*”

- The Children’s Government has identified during the last year approximately 3-4 problems. All the problematic has been reported by the Children’s Government to the School Directorate. For what concerns the addressing of this problematic, the Children’s Government thinks the School Directorate has generally addressed problems in time and only in some cases quite slowly. This is due to the fact that the director is busy with more important works; “they see these as secondary problems and do not take our opinions into consideration.” Students of 2 schools think that reporting to the school director helps somehow in solving problems while students of 3 schools say it does help in solving problems/concerns. Teachers-coordinators help children address the problems by them identified in time and often serve as a communication bridge with other structures.
- Children say they have not reported any case related to their problematic to the Regional Education Authority. There has been a formal communication channel with the Regional Education Authority inviting them in various activities and asking them for support with material basis (used comuters).
- Teachers usually do not feel good when the Children’s Government addresses to the School Directorate/Education Authority; on the contrary “they resent us for all life”. Teachers do not justify the complaints the Children’s Government may have because they somehow underestimate this structure.
- Problems are mainly referred to the Regional Education Authority by the teacher-coordinator and the school director. In general, the problems that have been referred are related to discipline, conflicts, abuses with grades, etc.
- Teachers-coordinators are more open in accepting the complaints of Children’s Government and understanding their specific needs as they follow this structure in all its steps and support it in order for it to function in the best possible way within the school environment.
- The Children’s Government has prepared reports of its work during the last year. Reports are submitted to the School Directorate and a copy is kept by the Children’s Gvernment. Reports may be submitted also to donors upon request.

Strengths and weaknesses of the Children’s Government

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abilities in identifying and solving problems within the school - Active participation in the activities the school organizes - Continuous cooperation and ability to work in group - Being open to learn from the experiences of older students - High level of trust within the group - Support from school’s management staff - Support from the school board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of material base and funds. This often represents a difficulty that is related to the planning of activities at the last moment - Conflicts and disagreements within the group - Lack of teacher-coordinator’s support (“Haki Stärmilli” School, Melan) - Lack of commitment of some senators part of the Children’s Government - Lack of support from other teachers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperation with all the children in the school - Equality among all students members of the Children's Government - Inclusion, implementation of various activities focusing on children with various needs and problems - Communication skills - Continuous support from the teacher-coordinator - Support from teachers - The space assigned to Children's Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient support from the School Directorate - Lack of cooperation with Children's Governments of other schools
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Suggestions

- ✚ More support from school directors and teachers. The Children's Government must be considered as an important structure within the school as it represents the interests of such a large group as children are.
- ✚ Identification of tools and resources that will be needed since the beginning of the academic year in order for the planning of activities to be more long-term and for the children to be more creative and focused on school's specific needs.
- ✚ Continuous trainings with students in order to develop their skills both at theoretic and practice level as year after year different children are elected as senators of the Children's Government.
- ✚ Allocation, by the School Directorate, of a part of the budget assigned to the school every year to the Children's Government.
- ✚ Stronger cooperation with other schools both at national and international level.
- ✚ The Children's Government must not be seen only as an obligatory structure that has to exist within the school but be also part of the decision-making.
- ✚ The Children's Government must work closely with the School Board, School Director and teacher-coordinator.
- ✚ The abilities of the Children's Government in identifying and addressing problems within the school must be further developed.
- ✚ Cooperation with the community and parents must be further developed. More support from parents and from the community will increase the power of Children's Government within the school at decision-making level as well.
- ✚ Successful models of Children's Government must be piloted.
- ✚ There must be more publications based on successful stories and experiences built in years.
- ✚ Cooperation with parents must be increased *"We keep parents out of the school; we have placed a wall in front of parents."*