

MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

**“PROTECTION AND INTEGRATION OF STREET CHILDREN IN
TIRANA”**

This project is financed by European Union

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1. Summary

The main findings of the evaluation can be briefly reported as the following:

- The activities of the project had been run quite well in its complex;
- The staff is well prepared and quite enthusiastic in performing its activities;
- The Centre is working at its best, and it is believed by both the evaluators that it should be replicated in other parts of the town to assure a good coverage of the area;
- Coordination with partners is working well, even though it has additional potentialities;
- Coordination with institutions is taken care of and is running, but a lot has to be done on this side especially during the second year of the project;
- The families of the children should be supported through activities generating incomes;
- The limitation of spaces for the Centre is an aspect to be addressed;
- Finally, a lot of work has to be dedicated to lobbying and informing against social stigma.

A detailed description of the findings is given by dividing the whole evaluation body into sections according to the foreseen ToRs.

2. Description of the Project

Though the situation of street children in Albania is not a new phenomenon, it can be stated that only in relatively recent times it captured the attention of some of the main involved subjects (at the beginning of years 2000) and brought to its analysis by taking into consideration all its main components. Anyway, a considerable progress in the analysis does not mean anything else than a good starting.

Street children in Albania are in fact still highly discriminated and marginalized, as if the social phenomenon was a new one. This is partially due to the fact that people do not understand the phenomenon roots and know little about street children. In addition, as in Albania the greatest part of the children on the street belong to Roma communities, adds up to the phenomenon discrimination aspects related to the minority group.

"The difficult situation of the Roma community in Albania is of a composite nature. Their social status is low because of their low educational and training levels. In addition, their households are quite sizeable and have limited access to health and education services. Prejudice and social stigma build obstacles that make their acceptance and advancement difficult. The majority of Roma people live in pocket areas with underdeveloped infrastructure. They are the ones who suffer the most from social crisis. As a consequence, Roma live in conditions below the country's average, and most of the time in extreme

conditions of poverty. In most of the cases, all of the above factors combine to make Roma exclusion even deeper and starker".¹

A sharp and now well recognized lack of data concerning street children in Albania is at the same time a consequence and a cause of discrimination.

In sum, all this creates a lack of proper evaluation of the phenomenon magnitude, a general lack of access for children to basic services and a continuous potential exposure to trafficking or any other abuse.

The social stigma prevents any kind of inclusion, especially in the fields of education and health provision services, by reinforcing in this way the trend to exclusion of children.

The inclusion process finds a quite sharp gap in the institutions as well, not to mention in the legislation field.

On the basis of the above mentioned aspects, Save the Children elaborated a strategy based on the development of a specific model: direct support to children at level of a Centre and support to children and their families at level of communities.

The project focuses on:

1. Services provision

a) *Preparatory classes* which will help children learn how to read and write as a first step toward their integration in the public education system.

b) *Literacy classes* for a group illiterate youth/adolescents (of 14-18 years old-never attended school.

c) *Vocational training*. Successful cases of completion of literacy classes among youth and adolescents will be referred to and supported to attend vocational training.

d) *Learning support classes in the public schools* organized at the nearest public school and to provide extra hour of school support to help children enrolled in regular schools.

e) *Various recreational activities* organized with children that come to the centre including sports, music, video camera training etc

f) *Outreach work* to identify children living and working in the street, provide information and assistance to access public and non-public services social mediation with families

g) *Reception in the centre and on site visits, counselling and mediation*, carried out by social workers and cultural mediators to identify children at risk and their families

h) *Referral to other services like health (including supporting the costs of emergency cases), legal agencies and social services, vocational training agencies and employment state agency.*

¹ "National Strategy for improving ROMA living conditions", OSCE, p.12

i) Registration: un-registered cases of children and their families will be identified and helped to get registered in the Civil Registration Office

l) Informative meetings and discussion groups in the centre, organized with youth and their families from the community on life skills, value of education, family planning, drugs and alcohol, human rights, exploitation, health care, birth registration.

2. Establishment of a core group of statutory services like social services, education, health, and police and provide capacity building through formal training and on-the-job.

Formal, regular monthly training and establish a referral system within the core group that ensures relevant services to children and their families.

3. Establishment of a coalition network of civil society organizations with the aim of documenting the situation of children living and/or working on the streets and their families. This network will lobby local and central government to improve legislation and institutional capacity to provide protection and basic human rights to exposed children and their families.

4. Ensuring a gradual handover to municipal authorities and establish a model of service provision and support to street children that can be replicated.

An important aspect of the **coordination and implementation** of the project is the involvement of **relevant partners** such as:

- Save the Children Albania (**SCiA**);
- the **Municipality of Tirana** (responsible for providing the centre premises, a project manager and a social worker, and the establishment and coordination of a core professional group and coordination with public services);
- a local Albanian NGO, **Children of Albania and of the World-Human Rights (FBSH)**, an Albanian local NGO with which SCiA has established a partnership since 2002 in supporting Roma children integration in schools. This partner is particularly important vis-a-vis its well rooted ability in providing an experienced outreach unit and well-trained experts in the considered field.

On the side of other relevant public and non public stakeholders at central and local level it is important to mention: the Albanian Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities; the Ministry of Education; Tirana General Hospital Authority; Regional Employment Office; Mini-municipalities; Regional Education Authority of Tirana; legal agencies and service providers.

3. The Evaluation Process: Methodology and Challenges

An external evaluation was promoted by Save the Children on the EC funded project: "Protection and Integration of Street Children in Tirana".

The evaluation aimed at assessing the following:

- the quality and relevance of interventions related to stated objectives, the progress of implementation with reference to time-frame and project objectives
- whether the project is reaching the target group and attaining its objectives
- the participation of children and parents in various activities and the level of satisfaction with respect to the activities organized
- the personnel is fit to carry out the requested tasks
- monitoring tools and documentation of impact/project files
- the most useful and the least useful aspects of the project.

The above aspects were identified through the design of specific Terms of Reference (Annex I). In the ToR, the evaluators (Annex II: Evaluators' CVs) were requested to provide a report including specific analysis of the above aspects of the project and ad-hoc recommendations.

As a general comment, it can be stated that the identified duration of the evaluation process (15 days for the local evaluators and 6 days for the international one) is way too short to cover in details the above requested aspects of the project. As such, the evaluators needed to concentrate only on the main specific aspects of the research in order to be effective about their outcomes and to limit the data collection and analysis in order to cover the whole project's perspective.

This is to underline that part of the analysis would have required a wider and deeper investigation.

As a first step, the evaluators provided their referent at SCiA, with an assessment guideline draft, in order to coordinate all the phases of the evaluation process and exchange ideas and documents. A timetable was included as well as a tentative appointment schedule.

Beyond **reports, project's files and other written documentation** (such as legislation documents, drafts of reforms' documents, and so on) a **questionnaire** (semi-structured one) for children, parents and other relevant stakeholders was prepared according to KAPB technique (Knowledge, Attitude, Practice and Behavior). The questionnaire (Annex no.III) included all the questions for all the different groups to be interviewed, so that, obtained data would have been easily comparable. To facilitate the provision of the questionnaire to different groups of stakeholders, it was conceived in a modular way, so that only the parts relevant-to-the-interviewed-ones will be submitted to the different groups.

As far as children and parents are concerned, given the time-constraints, it was not possible to build a sample which might perfectly reflect the composition of the children assisted by the Centre and related families. Nevertheless, by combining two different sample construction techniques

(the random technique and the snow-ball technique), a good representation of children and their families was identified.

Some interviews had been performed to secondary stakeholders (not directed involved in the project's activities), in order to cross-check disseminated information and general knowledge on various aspects related to the project.

4. Main Findings

The analysis followed by the evaluation process focused on specific Terms of Reference and as such, the main results included in this section will be presented by reporting data and comments for each project's aspect taken into consideration.

4.1. Assess the quality and relevance of interventions related to stated objectives

As a general comment, it is worthwhile to report in this part that the main tool for the analysis of quality and especially relevance of objectives in a project, which is the Logical Framework of the proposal, follows a quite uncommon and different logical path from the EC recommended one. This creates some difficulties in well identifying the activities which logically support the single results and consequently, the single results which refer to the specific objectives. Nevertheless, through the proposal reading it appears clearer how the whole core of actions tends to support the achievement of the objectives.

The project proposal overall objective, in fact, is: "To promote and protect the rights of street children in Tirana at risk of exploitation, abuse and violence".

On the basis of what is reported on the proposal the main objective is then supported by specific objectives concentrated on the following main domains:

- ***Direct support to street children and their families.***
provision of non formal education and support of street children enrolment in public school; support to their families, through ensuring birth registration; provision of a referral system to existing public and non public health and social services; vocational training (entrepreneurship and other); raising awareness among children about their rights; raise their knowledge and knowledge at family level on how to better protect themselves from abuse, violence and other risks, including HIV/AIDS, and to have more self confidence and hopes for the future; create a safe environment to allow children to have recreational and educational activities (the Centre), ask for help when it is needed and create a better relationship with their families.
- ***Creation of a professional group from different state institutions like education, social services, police, health system, state employment agency and the local government.*** This group will be trained, throughout

the project period, on practical and professional methodology to work with street children and their families and apply a multidisciplinary and child-centered approach.

- ***Awareness and Sensitization Activities:***

strengthening the civil society's role in promoting human rights and reducing discrimination, exploitation and social exclusion of children living and working in the street through lobbying at local and central government; promoting activities and events to improving legislation, policies and institutional capacity in providing basic human rights and child protection at government level.

The overall objective is well supported by actions concentrating on direct activities on children and their families, support of them in specific needs through a highly specialized group and larger support in legislation aspects, and above all, in struggling against social stigma (to promote integration).

On the basis of interviews to direct beneficiaries and key actors and focus groups, in addition to project's files reading and analysis, it can be recorded that all the activities linked to the above mentioned objectives are running properly, although the foreseen available space for the Centre was limited in comparison to the foreseen space. This was due to the closure of the center for elderly people, whose premises were used for educational classes and group discussions for adolescents.

The target number of children covered is even higher than the expected one. Approximately, 260 children were followed up by SCiA daily center staff in 2011. Other cases within the same community have been supported in order to ensure so a good impact on the community which will hopefully help in future steps foreseen.

In general terms, it can be stated that some of the activities had been more developed than others, due to some normal project's implementation difficulties, but in general terms everything is well run.

In fact, some coordination aspects (especially with the Municipality) took a bit longer than the foreseen time, especially because of the political changes happened at level of the highest representatives levels. All this has forcibly impressed some delays and the need to spend more efforts and work on coordination aspects.

Preparatory classes, literacy classes for adolescents, learning support classes in the public schools had been run according to the planned schedule.

Discussion groups with children and with parents and recreational activities took place since the very beginning of the project, under the attentive supervision of the staff.

The outreach activities had a very relevant impact both in shortening the distance between the Centre and the communities and in disseminating information.

A lot of the energy of the staff and of the mediators was reserved to the support for the registration to the Civil Status Office. It is very important that the communities gave such a relevance to this aspect, as it is also a means of protection for the child.

The referral system activities are in place and running, even though they will need to be reinforced.

The group of professionals to be involved both in the direct support of specific cases, and in general as a relevant group for dissemination aspects and direct promotion of changes in institution mentality, has been formed and trained.

The training of the group of specialists from sectors such as health, education, police, and municipal unit social administrators is in fact already completed, with all its 6 sessions. The service was outsourced to Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania, CRCA.

Concerning the awareness campaign and the activities aimed at promoting street children social inclusion, the lobbying activities are on-going at many different levels: from organization of events ("Children in Street situation-Our common responsibility", Tirana International Hotel, 19/12/2011"), to continuous coordination with civil society representatives and institutional subjects. Still a lot needs to be done though, as the street children phenomenon is a complex and varied social challenge, which requires actions from several different parts.

4.2. Assess the progress of implementation with reference to time-frame and project objectives

In order to assess the above aspect, the evaluators went through a specific analysis of LF and related time-table, reports reading and analysis and feedback from beneficiaries and main stakeholders.

On the basis of all the above, it can be stated that the majority of the activities have been implemented according to the fore-seen time-frame.

The training courses had been performed according to schedule, even for the groups of professionals.

Some other activities were implemented even if not included in the timetable, by the street centre staff and SCiA coordinator as complementary to the action, such as a survey aimed at documenting the situation of Roma community in 13 Roma Settlements in Tirana. The survey will be used as a baseline study for future plans and interventions in favour of the improvement of living conditions of Roma children and their families.

The initiative supported by Save the Children in Albania in cooperation with MLSAEO/Roma Secretariat was implemented by the staff of the centre, partner organisation-FBSH and ARSIS-social support of youth organisation. A new Save the Children project aiming at establishing a referral system responding to the need for protection of children, under the age of 14 in conflict with law has involved the centre for street children. The role played

by the street children centre is mainly to provide children under 14 stopped by the Police in Tirana with services, such as psycho social assistance in police stations, psycho social counseling (individual and group) for the child and parents, emergency, mid and long term support plans per each child and family; identification of the services needed and ad hoc referrals; recreational activities; education support provision and support to integration in schools of children and follow up (including coordination with school psychologists and pedagogical staff, administrative support for the child and families, registration; registration to Office for Employment; identification of job opportunities; emergency sheltering provision for specific cases; medical support; vocational training opportunities; cultural mediation in case of Egyptian/Roma families).

4.3. Assess whether the project is reaching the target group and attaining its objectives

In order to assess the effective reaching of the target groups the following tools had been identified and used: reports, interviews with focus groups and with key-stakeholders, in particular children, parents and community's members.

The target group, composed by children living on the streets, is globally well covered.

Activities at the centre are regularly performed. Same thing on the field through outreach work and regular visits in the communities. The purchased car for the Center for Street Children is very important for identification, reaching and monitoring of the situation of street children and their families regularly.

Regular outreach work is carried out by the outreach team as per timetable of activities approved. It is documented through registers and data base kept by the staff.

From direct observation it was noted that the cultural mediation methodology applied helps, facilitates and supports the mutual understanding with the target group. Outreach team is welcomed and received by the community members, children and their families in a friendly manner.

In addition to the planned outreach work intensive and regular outreach, monitoring visits were conducted in the emergent shelter built for Roma community by MOLSAEO. The street centre staff after identification of needs immediately responded to this community in cooperation with MOLSAEO and other NGOs. As a result, Save the Children financed (with its proper sources) water and electricity supply, and installation of two shower facilities, assistance with medicines and hygiene materials including food and winter clothes (blankets).

Educational aspects are taken care of and a constant communication between the centre staff and the children's parents and their communities is maintained.

The introduction of computer classes has served and supported the increase of attendance and interest on other centre activities. Four computers were purchased with financial support of Save the Children Italy as informed by the SCiA responsible coordinator. Centre staff has found it very useful and attractive particularly for adolescents .

It is worthwhile mentioning an aspect related to the attendance composition of street children at the Centre.

According to the existing (though limited) reports on the effective composition of street children on the streets of Tirana, it seems that the percentage of female street children is higher than the male one. This phenomenon is in opposite trend in comparison to many other countries in the world, where the difficult life style on the streets is better tolerated by boys than by girls and as such the presence of female street children is much lower than the male one. The peculiar composition of street children in Albania can be partially explained, (according to several interviewed key-actors), by considering that the largest part of street children in Albania belongs to Roma communities. In these communities girls tend to be married at a very early age and sent later on to beg on the streets with their small babies. In addition, in the Albanian mentality (always according to interviews), a girl with a little boy is more moving than a begging girl or boy alone. It is clear that girls' families remain anyway behind them, even if girls are asked to beg at the same level as boys.

According to representatives of the Roma communities and the staff of the Centre, while for a girl, attending the Centre is considered of limited importance, for a boy can be both a reason of pride and a way to high his future expectations.

At level of referral system activity, even though, through reports and direct interviews to primary stakeholders involved have been performed regularly, the results are not as effective as they could.

FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Q. Have you recently been sick? Did you look for medical attention?

A. I got flu. **Grand mother took** care of it.

A. I suffer often of headache. **My mother and center staff** take care systematically of this.

A. I had recently a problem of cough. I was referred by the staff of the centre to a doctor.

A. Usually I take anti-flu and paracetamol when I am sick.

The reasons beyond this can be several, but certainly the most relevant one has to be found on the lack of a dedicated referral system (for children in difficult circumstances) and above all, of the right mentality.

Children living on the street are generally still very much stigmatized not only by the society, but by institutions as well.

In addition, the greatest part of the considered children, as already mentioned, comes from the Roma communities, and as such, highly socially stigmatized.

Even though it is very difficult to promote a switch in mentality and even if it is widely recognized it will take a long time, it seems that a lot more needs to be done in order to support the adaptation of institutions to the presence and treatment of the street children phenomenon.

In particular, the Municipality, which covers the most important role in the whole successful implementation of the project and its sustainability after the end of the project's activities, still needs to be stimulated to play a more proactive role of support.

Even though a MoU has been signed with precise commitments from the Municipality, still some aspects are pending or only partially addressed. For example, the space available for the Centre needs to be enlarged. According to the Municipality representatives during the next year, the Centre will benefit of 2 additional rooms and the salary of some of the staff will be partially taken in charge by the municipality, depending on the Municipality approved budget for 2012. A more proactive role is requested by the Municipality, in coordinating the activities of the existing centers in support of disadvantaged children and the Centre for Street Children. An additional 6 centers for support of disadvantaged people are foreseen according to the municipality plan for the year 2012. Nevertheless, it is not clear which specific areas (if only street children or socially disadvantaged people) they will cover. The coordination with governmental representatives had been difficult due to the different political views in the past (reported in interviews by both representatives of Tirana Municipality and of MOLSA). This aspect has greatly slowed down the fulfillment of commitments undertaken by the municipality as per MoU. Only recently, thanks to the alignment of political side between central government and municipality a better understanding and a better communication flow had been promoted.

Nevertheless, still the Municipality commitment, especially in terms of support to other relevant actors for a change in mentality is limited.

This aspect risks hampering the positive impact of many of the project's activities.

In general terms, the coordination with partners can be defined as good.

Partners' involvement has been promoted in different domains and at different levels, but always by keeping the main project's objectives as focal aim.

From the Interview with SHKEI

The collaboration between SHKEJ and SCiA has been mostly concentrated on cases of emergency. In particular, a good collaboration example can be reported in cases like the forced removal of families from the train station area.

The work was properly assigned and the collaboration was fruitful and positive.

SHKEJ thinks that services offered from the SCiA daily Center is effective and of high quality. The staff has done a very good job in following up very difficult cases. One very strong point has also been the provision of documents for the beneficiaries. SCiA daily Center staff has done a great job and thanks to this a lot of children could go to school and families in general could benefit from some services they were not benefiting before.

A more consolidated and continuative exchange of information on future activities of the two partners will promote a better and even more effective collaboration.

Interview with the Director of ARSIS and President of BKTF coalition

The collaboration has started since 2009, before the Center was established. The staff (social workers and psychologist) is collaborating in following up same cases. The team work so far gave very good results; a clear division of tasks is performed by each organization, and this facilitates a lot the everyday work.

In terms of case management, the Center has done a great work.

One relevant action undertaken was the empowerment of a small local network, composed by ARSIS, FBSH, and SCiA daily Center. As a network, these centers were able to follow up many cases.

One thing ARSIS really appreciates is that the staff of SCiA daily Center is very collaborative and reliable. Another very good thing about this collaboration is that information related to the different cases is shared among the 3 involved organizations. In this way, the beneficiaries do not receive the same services from the different organizations.

The only fear expressed is related to the future, that is when the Municipality will take over the Centre, as it might risk becoming more bureaucratic and less operational.

Finally, activities of advocacy and lobbying in favor of street children had been promoted, (i.e. with the direct participation of children on occasions like: the UN CRC Day; the Roma international Day and the International Day against Child Exploitation).

Nevertheless, it has to be underlined that advocacy and lobbying activities need to be intensified especially in the second year of the project.

4.4. Assess the participation of children and parents in various activities and the level of satisfaction with respect to the activities organized

In this section, the evaluators recognized the importance to use several tools in order to be sure that all the main aspects related to the above two target groups had been covered. As such, they performed interviews to children and to parents, meetings with partners, staff and project's management team and attentive review of project's files.

In particular, a number of interesting aspects were derived by focus groups with children. Their will to participate and influence activities in the centre was evident and confirmed through interviews. Parents interviewed were also satisfied and supportive of their children participation to the centre activities, even if, in certain cases, they are the ones that stop them from attending the Centre because they need the kids to work and earn money for the family.

On average, children got to know about the existence of the Centre through different means: from a friend, from the cultural mediators or from their parents.

In normal days, on average, a child performs the following activities: visit to the Center (those who go to school after school hours); home (listen to music, play football, internet, watch movies, help parents in cleaning the house); center / internet café/ home (play station, watch tv). They also like to go to other social Centers (especially Don Bosco), to play ping pong, football or use the gym.

Almost all the street children interviewed recognized the importance of education. Nevertheless, they experienced often problem of marginalization in public schools and they ended up dropping it. Another important aspect to be underlined is that because of economic aspects and marginalization phenomena, children and families tend to move frequently home.

Parents of the children attending the Centre are often from very poor areas.

FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Community of Shkoza

We live in shacks, with no electricity and for the past two months without water. Apparently the municipality has cut the water, as we have problems in paying. Now some of the families buy water in order to cook and have

showers.

All the families are aware about the services provided by the center very well. Though we are living in very hard conditions some of the families are sending their children to school. Now that there is no water, it is becoming more challenging because our children cannot have a shower very often. One good thing is the fact that the school is very close to the community and the teachers are very proactive towards the inclusion of Roma children.

The daily follow up done by Save the children staff helps us sending children to school. All the books, notebooks and other school materials have been provided by the Center and all the community families are very grateful.

In all the families interviewed in the above community, the man is the breadwinner, and the wife stays at home taking care of the children. Men are mostly involved in the collecting iron business. They earn 300-400 leke/day on average. Sometimes also children are used for working purposes. Parents admitted that when they have a problem they would go to the center to talk about it and to ask for help or guidance.

Children have the tendency to get sicker during the winter time. When the interviews were performed some of the children present were sick. Usually is the mother that takes direct care when the child is sick. When she has no money to buy the medicines she goes to the Center to ask for support. One thing noticed during the interview is that the living conditions are very favorable for the children to get sick, due to poor health conditions. The referral system appears to be extremely important as a means of direct support both to families and children.

Shkoza community's location is very far away from the daily Center. In order for children to come to the Center they need to take a bus and also walk a lot by feet. Children, older than 12 are asked to pay the bus ticket. Younger children need to group in order to go together to the Center. It is very difficult to get there and it would have been much more effective if the center was closer to this community. As a consequence, the far location and the lack of means of transportation make sometimes children missing the opportunity to take advantage of the offered services.

FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Roma Community in Jordan Misja street

This community is located close to the train station in Tirana. This makes it geographically closer to the Center. Families are living in small houses constructed by them.

None of the members of the interviewed families had a job, and they were getting incomes only through economic aid or pension. One common problem encountered in this community was the mental health conditions of some of the members of it. Some of the children would suffer of retarded or limited mental development. Some other would suffer of seizures.

The thing they like the most about the Centre is the fact that children have a place to go and eat at least one meal, and also to read and write. Parents did not seem very supporting for their children to get education especially when it comes to girls. Parents do not attend the Center often; there are some who have never been there. They were not much informed about group discussions. Most of the services this community has benefited from are: registration at school and ID card.

On average, the information about the existence of the Centre is quite well spread, thanks also to the good job performed by the outreach activities, even though some communities are still little informed (especially the ones with a high mobility on the territory). Although a brochure is produced on the availability and variety of centre activities and other services provision, additional information about the performed activities (like group discussions mostly aimed at supporting both the understanding of specific problems suffered by children and/or parents and at spreading resilience abilities and children right acknowledgment) need to be reinforced, since the target group, in most of the cases, is illiterate and direct contact and mediation is required to ensure their participation.

FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Report from the Roma community living near the artificial lake

The members of this community are moving a lot. They go in other cities to find a job. At the moment we visited, there was an average of 20 families currently living. They live in shacks and most of the time they need to buy water, sometimes they have electricity sometimes they don't. Men are the breadwinner in the family. They collect cans and sell them. There are also some mothers that go out with their children to beg. Their main concern is of course employment. There were some families who were interested in being supported with a grant in order to start up a business. There are just a few families who have benefited from the services of the daily center. The services they have benefited the most were birth registration of the child, school registration, health support. Most of the families did not know about the existence of this Center. Parents were very little aware on their responsibilities towards their children. Children are growing up in extreme conditions of poverty. The hygiene conditions were also very bad, and families are surrounded by garbage. Their immediate need was blankets for the rainy and

cold days.

Staff employed at the Centre, all agree that beyond working on children's activities, supporting the relationship with parents and communities in general is extremely relevant to the project. This aspect is taken care mostly through group discussions in the communities and at the Center. For some reason, they reported that group discussions are more effective in the community. In fact, parents feel more comfortable in their community rather than in the Center's premises.

Unfortunately, for most of the parents the Center is far away (geographically speaking) from the place they live. As such, they are not often available to come and participate. On the other hand group discussions at the center help parents understand where their children spend some time, and get to know more about services provided. The most effective subjects developed during the group discussions are the ones related to education (importance of education etc). In fact, some parents still do not recognize the importance of education, but they consider important their children are capable of reading and writing, which basically means attending only the 2 first years of primary school. Nevertheless, thanks to group discussions some families understood the importance of school and sent their children to school within a short period of time.

A common complain recorded by children, parents and staff concerning the Centre was the lack of adequate space for activities.

It has also to be reported the importance of providing the centre with double toilets: for girls and for boys. This is a very sensitive aspect which in the evaluators' opinion needs to be urgently addressed, in order to guarantee the due privacy to children and protect them.

Concerning one of the activities directly related to the children's acknowledgement and growth of their self confidence, through better understanding of their rights, and raise of their pride of their cultural values, even though it appears a long process before achieving concrete accomplishments, it seems some steps had been done and actually some good results had been achieved.

This is thanks to a monitoring system of the individual child performance according to which each child has a proper file (adequately kept in order not to violate confidentiality aspects) followed by the Case Management Group (composed by staff of the Centre). In this manner it is possible to measure the improvement of the child in understanding his/her rights, reactions and ability to communicate with others.

4.5. Whether the personnel is fit to carry out the requested tasks

All the staff and social workers involved in the activities have relevant background to the work they are actually performing.

They have regular job descriptions, and performance reviews for staff had been regularly conducted. FBSH has provided it for the staff seconded in the project in close cooperation with the centre manager. A detailed plan with dates and names is already drafted for record purposes.

As far as the centre manager is concerned, a performance review is regularly done by her inline manager according to SCiA requirements.

In addition, during the monthly staff meeting every employee reports about his/her monthly work and this is the place where best achievements and specific problematic work performance are evaluated by the project manager. Almost all the staff has already worked in this field it is called to perform in the project. Some of the staff has been working in the Center since it was created (2009).

They are quite enthusiastic and well motivated.

In particular, cultural mediators play a particularly relevant role in the implementation of the whole activities' process. The cultural mediators come from Roma and Egyptian communities and are considered very important from the rest of the staff especially in the field work, as they break the ice with families and children and create a sense of strong trust in the community. The cultural mediators in many cases also help with translation from Roma and Egyptian language into Albanian. Children tend to talk more about their feelings or problems with them, so they become the first step in the referral system. They all like to work with children and see themselves in these roles for the upcoming years.

Three cultural mediators have attended FBSH, partner organization, activities and premises, when they were children. As such, they were trained to become cultural mediators and they can be considered successful stories or role models coming directly from the community.

As far as training courses are concerned, staff members were trained in the following:

- Child Labor and street children in Albania "SCiA
- Domestic violence and Albanian legislation" SCiA
- "Risk Assessment", organized by TdH and SCiA
- "Case Management " organized by SCiA;
- Circus training very fruitful for the cultural mediators because they were introduced with specific communication techniques;
- "Child Rights" organized by SCiA;
- "Sexually Transmitted Diseases, HIV AIDS " SCiA;
- "Juvenile Justice" SCiA.

Very fruitful experiences were considered by the staff involved, the exchange visit in Italy, in 2011, and previous visits in Bosnje and Kosovo (for cultural mediators, psychologist and social workers) aimed at learning effective working techniques.

Team work represents the only way to deal with daily activities. The staff centre seems to work well as a team, even if they had not received any ad hoc training on this.

No staff retreat was ever done with the center staff. They think that this will help in relaxing and spending some time together outside the center.

The staff performs one meeting per month. The project manager, the psychologist and social worker have a meeting every day to discuss on specific cases. More meetings are organized during the day, week or month depending on the cases.

Confidentiality: is considered as a very important element, crucial and respected for every case. Training has been delivered and supported by SCiA in child protection, Code of conduct SC policies. The staff has strict rules when it comes to confidentiality. Confidentiality is considered as a basic concept especially when working with children. The way it is applied in the center is very strict.

If on one hand thanks to confidentiality beneficiaries are respected and grow the sense of trust towards the Centre, on the other, for the staff dealing by themselves with painful and difficult cases can be very heavy and stressful.

At this purpose, the staff could be supported through an external professional, in order to avoid getting too much charged of stress and burn out.

The job itself is very challenging and can be frustrating. Results are often very slow in being achieved and are not visible. Public institutions are very discriminative towards the Roma and Egyptian community. They discriminate this population pocket and are often not willing to offer the services they are entitled to. As such, each family needs to be assisted in preparing and presenting a lot of documents and the staff are always busy in following a lot of paper and administrative procedures.

In addition, the staff itself feels discriminated, as the majority of their own families and friends do not understand the importance of their work.

Nevertheless, for all the staff it is important to continue working in the center till the end of the project, especially for those who started working in this center since it was created, so they can see the fruits of the work done. There are parts of the staff who really like to work with children and would like to continue working with this target group even in the future. There are some others who would like to experience working with a different target group. There are others who would like to attend a master degree and be specialized in a field mostly concerning child development. Finally, some would like to lecture in the university in order to share with students all the experiences gained by working in the field and managing cases.

Among the main challenges the staff finds important to identify a solution for the limited space available in the Centre.

The need for space becomes even more important when it comes to confidential documents.

Separate toilet for children is also considered as essential. There is just one toilet in the center for both males and females.

Finally, according to the project proposal, the implementation and the strategy of the project was supposed to be followed up by a Steering Committee, composed by Save the Children, Save the Children in Albania, Municipality of Tirana and the local NGO FBSH, and it was supposed to meet twice a year. The steering committee was created since the first year of the project implementation. There have been meetings which are already reported to the main donor in 2009, 2010. For 2011, a meeting will be organised in January 2012 to discuss the main findings and recommendations of the external project evaluation, the 2011 report, future funding opportunities for 2013, and foreseen contractual regulations with municipality of Tirana (which will include the issues of the expansion of premises and set up of salaries of staff by municipality).

Operational and strategic meetings with FBSH and municipal authorities are held on regular basis (documented by minutes) although are not called steering committee meetings.

4.6. Assess monitoring tools and documentation of impact/project files

LF analysis

Monitoring activities reports and impact tools

Analysis of the project files

Interviews to individuals and focus groups

“Monitoring is the process of collecting information about what is happening in a community and in a project. It is a systematic and continuous assessment of progress over a given period of time. It takes place throughout the implementation period of the project.

Project monitoring, on the other hand, makes it possible to compare the way things are actually done with the way they were originally planned”.²

The monitoring tools provided by project reports and files are in order and presented according to the requested formats.

The indicators reflected through the LF are well followed up and according to the evaluators respond to the measurement needs. As already expressed, it would be very useful to reformulate the structure of the LF in order to obtain a friendlier tool for monitoring as well, especially at operational level.

² “Working with street children: monitoring and evaluation of a street children project: a training package on substance abuse, sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS and STD.” WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data, Switzerland, 2002. Pp.1

On the basis of the performed interviews, the target groups are involved in the monitoring activities in an adequate way. Main stakeholders (partners, institutions and Municipality) are constantly involved and take directly and indirectly part into the monitoring process.

4.7. Assess which are the most useful and the least useful aspects of the project

On the basis of the analysis conducted through several interviews, reports and files reading, observation and cross-checking of information, the present section will be dedicated to the identification and explanation of the main recurrent useful and less useful themes the project support vis-à-vis the accomplishment of a durable and positive impact of its implemented actions. The creation of a safe place where children and parents can refer to for any purpose is a long term commitment action, which will nevertheless generate a positive impact in the targeted communities.

In the Centre children and parents, under the staff supervision can above all witness and experience a different type of life. This will deeply impact their mentality and even if the favorable effects will multiply in time, the seeds for the whole process had been spread.

Recreational activities for kids are promoted not only to give them the dimension of their being children, but to understand their psychological needs as well.

Outreach activities and group discussions promoted by cultural mediators (who can be by themselves considered successful stories) assure a continuous spreading of information exchange between communities, staff and children, by reinforcing a very important aspect in these types of intervention: trust.

Confidentiality is a must and it keeps the environment safe from external threats and reassures the target groups.

The Case Management Group has high potentialities in terms of referral system development.

The organization of the Centre itself, together with the application of a specific model to support street children constitutes a replicable symbol of successful development.

A change in mentality is promoted at level of institutions through the progressive (even though still difficult) involvement of them in the implementation and in the strategic thinking of the projects activities.

The activities of lobbying at level of governmental and non-governmental subjects constitute a huge effort towards a general understanding of the street children phenomenon by the Albanian society, and this can be considered a very first step for the kick of the inclusion process.

In order to complete the coverage of the present section, it is requested to go through the analysis of the "least useful" aspects of the project.

In general terms it is worthwhile mentioning that the evaluators found more appropriate to concentrate rather on the missing or on “the-to-be-reinforced” aspects than on the least useful ones. In fact, by considering the whole intervention, it can be concluded that none of the aspects included in the project are not useful. Some of them are not as much effective as they could be (i.e. the referral system mechanism or the group of professionals), and as such, it was believed that it would have been more useful to concentrate on how to reinforce the current project aspects and on how to fill potential gaps than to think in terms of useless actions.

However, as this discussion will be part of the last section of this document, which is dedicated to a wrap up of the evaluation findings, it will be developed in the following section “Conclusions and Recommendations”.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The logical framework would need a restructuring work. It is not possible to change it (the one already in the proposal), but for implementation and coordination purpose, it would be recommended to reformulate it and use it as an internal tool for organizational purpose. It will allow a better internal management, monitoring activity and eventually it will serve as a better tool for any other future evaluation.

Attendance of girl in the centre should be encouraged.

As already mentioned, the phenomenon of street children in Albania is characterized by a large number of girls on the street in comparison to boys. This has to be referred to the fact that the greatest part of the children on the streets belong to Roma communities.

At the actual rate, the presence of boys in the centre is higher than the girls’. As this phenomenon can be mostly referred to a mentality (boys find “cool and natural” attending the centre, while it is not so for girls), it would be important to promote activities at the centre, which might encourage girls’ attendance. At this purpose, with the help of cultural mediators and the experienced staff already working with SCiA, would be worthwhile to consider the inclusion of ad hoc activities for girls aimed at facilitating the attendance.

Long - term sustainability.

The project is very well conceived, but for sure it needs a lot of support to build solid bases to keep it running and effective even after the end of the actual phase. In order to obtain this, the project has correctly pointed at the main involvement of the Municipality of Tirana, one of the main stakeholders of the whole action. A lot has been done on this side, both by SCiA and by the Municipality as well, but still a lot needs to be done. In particular, the municipality, which covers the most important role in the whole successful implementation of the project and its sustainability after the end of it, still needs to be stimulated to play a more proactive role of support. A new

agreement foresees the enlargement of the available premises and the partial coverage of the salary of two staff, but at the time of this evaluation the outcome was still uncertain. In fact, even though a MoU has been signed with precise commitments from the Municipality, still some aspects are pending or only partially addressed. For example, the space available for the Centre needs to be enlarged. According to the Municipality representatives during the next year, the Centre will benefit of 2 additional rooms and the salary of some of the staff will be taken in charge by the municipality. But since the budget for 2012 is not approved yet the municipality representative could not give us a definite answer on this.

Furthermore, the above should be considered just a starting point if the whole network of activities and of actors created till now has to be kept running after the end of the second year of the project. As such, a more incisive action on the Municipality side (with a higher level in participation in foreseeing solutions for the future of the centre) is recommended. Finally, the Municipality can play a strong role in motivating and involving other potential local actors to facilitate not only the success of the running project, but to assure the sustainability of it after the end.

Finally, a more proactive role would be recommended on the side of the Municipality, in coordinating the activities of the existing centers in support of disadvantaged children and the Centre for Street Children. At this purpose a quite unclear vision of future planning from the Municipality side had been perceived by the evaluators.

At level of **coordination with governmental representatives** the evaluators recorded some clear difficulties clearly pointed out in the interviews, due to the different political views in the past. This aspect has requested additional energies in the project's implementation; energies that could have been reserved elsewhere in the activities. Only recently, thanks to the alignment of political side between central government and municipality, a better understanding and a better communication flow had been promoted.

Nevertheless, still the municipality commitment, especially in terms of support to other relevant actors for the promotion of a change in mentality vis a vis street children is limited.

At this purpose, both the evaluators agreed upon the importance of reinforcing activities of advocacy and lobbying in favor of street children that will be particularly effective especially in the second year of the project.

Almost all the street children interviewed recognized **the importance of education**. Nevertheless, they often experience problems of inclusion in public schools, up to the point that they drop out. Again, it has to be reinforced a strong action of support in mentality change. This will require years before happening, but seeds can be dropped now. Vocational Trainings are also considered as a very attractive option for those teenagers who drop out of school and is impossible to send them back to school. Investing in

gaining a profession could be a long term approach that needs to be taken into consideration from SCiA since it is widely accepted by this target group. For example, a more accurate support at school level of the Municipality through enforcement of local norms against the exclusion of minorities could greatly help, together with a decisive communication campaign among teachers and students to cut down on social stigma. In several countries in the world, different type of media (from short radio spots, up to locally promoted shows and events at level of schools) had been successfully used, with a very limited cost, to help communities to understand such a complex phenomenon like the one of children in difficult circumstances.

Another important aspect to be taken into account as cause for drops out is given by the frequent mobility of some of the families interviewed. The reasons behind the mobility are only partially related to cultural factors. A lot has to be referred to difficult economic circumstances and harsh living conditions. As such, it would be important to couple the actual initiative with a more attentive intervention at level of income generation for the families.

Children are generally very happy with **the activities of the centre**, but they think it would be important to include other ones, like: break dance classes, music classes, box, karate, additional professional courses, and water games. Children complained about the restriction of premises, and they would like to go to the swimming pool more often during the summer. Finally, they believe that the centre would look better with more trees and flowers. This last activity was introduced by the staff employed and is considered to be highly educative and relaxing. It is highly recommended to continue giving responsibility to children who would like to, to grow a small tree or a simple plant.

The far location of the Centre in respect to some of the communities and the lack of means of transportation make sometimes children missing the opportunity to take advantage of the offered services. The **replication of centres** like the running one in other strategic part of the town is highly recommended.

On average, the **information about the existence of the Centre** is quite well spread, thanks also to the good job performed by the outreach activities. Nevertheless, additional information about the performed activities (like the group discussions mostly aimed at supporting both the understanding of specific problems suffered by children and/or parents and at spreading resilience abilities and children right acknowledgment) need to be reinforced.

A particularly felt problem, together the one of the restriction of premises, is **the toilette** in common. It is felt by the evaluators, that girls and boys should have separated spaces to preserve each child privacy and intimacy. As such it is strongly recommended that an ad hoc solution would be found in short time.

The team works quite well together. Team work represents the only way to deal with daily activities. They would like to have more staff retreats in order to for them to relax and spend some time together outside the center.

At this purpose, the staff could be alleviated by having to deal with particularly heavy cases with the support of an external professional, in order to avoid to get too much charged of stress and burn out. They seem all to recognize this as a real need. In fact, in addition to the above, the staff itself feels discriminated by their own communities and sometimes their own families, as the majority of them do not understand the importance of their work.

Finally, it is worthwhile to underline that a direct and complex intervention on children is not enough if not coupled with actions in support to the global economic conditions of the families.

In fact, it is well known that the major factor pushing families to leave on the streets or to send their children on the streets is the economic one.

Lack of adequate income pushes families to find any kind of alternative to survive. Street children are often the result of very difficult economic environment.

At this purpose it would be strongly recommended an intervention which might aim at addressing this aspect as well. Supporting families with micro loans activities and helping them in starting up a small business could be a relevant activity especially for young women. This is a model that has recently been implemented by some other organizations in the area of Bregu I Lumit and has resulted as a very effective one.

LIST OF ANNEXES

ANNEX I	Terms of Reference of the Evaluation
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