

EX POST EVALUATION OF CEB GRANT PROJECTS
Improving access to education for Roma children, young girls and mothers
November 2008
Abstract

The country office of an international organization supports Roma children in a southeastern European country in order to increase their access to education to improve their social and economic conditions. This office also provides non-formal education to young girls and mothers. In 2003, the CEB approved a grant of USD 450 000, as a 47% contribution to a project addressing these issues.

Project implementation: The project had six objectives: (i) improve access to formal education; (ii) improve the quality of primary education; (iii) improve the learning environment at selected schools; (iv) decrease dropout/truancy rates and increase retention in/transition to secondary school; (v) increase accountability of communities and other stakeholders, and (vi) facilitate non-formal education for Roma young girls and mothers. To reach these objectives, four components were implemented: (i) education policy, (ii) improvement of facilities and access to schools, (iii) non-formal education, and (iv) community mobilisation over initially two years (later extended by one more) in eleven municipalities with high Roma population. The project was implemented by the international organization in partnership with line ministries and state agencies, while non-formal education was delivered by civil society organisations.

Evaluation findings: The overall evaluation rating for the project is **satisfactory**. The project addressed a highly relevant set of socioeconomic constraints for Roma children and mothers. In doing so, it might have benefited from a clearer sequencing of activities and monitoring, given the complex interactions between the components. The grant was effective in carrying out urgent repairs at schools, supporting community centres, developing curricula, and reaching teachers, children and young mothers in training sessions. Some shortcomings in monitoring and reporting were noted, particularly with respect to activities carried out during the extension year. These could have been avoided, had “results-based management” been systematically applied. The project was efficient, based on locally contracted repair of schools, trainers and implementation partners and the organization’s cost control mechanisms. The schedule was adhered to with only slight modifications of training schedules. Working relations were good and institutional coordination shortcomings were improved with support from a public agency. Input at the policy level (e.g. the national programme for the development of education and “Roma curricula”) was provided and the project impact is sustained. The project had indirect impacts through contributions to the Roma Decade Action Plans and participation in the Roma Education Fund. Social impact so far is satisfactory, though a full assessment will only be possible in the longer term when the transition of Roma children to secondary education and reduced drop-out rates can be observed. Sustainability is likely and teacher retention at schools is high even though local community centres might scale down activities, depending on funding availability. The project was successfully implemented through the international organization and its strong collaboration with local institutions. With regard to the CEB visibility, there were no specific plans or communication policy.

Recommendations:

- It would be useful, when preparing grant projects, for the CEB to systematically integrate communication and visibility plans and establish standardized project proposal (including Logical Framework Matrix) and reporting formats; these should then be stipulated in contribution agreements with implementing agencies.
- To capitalize on the experiences gained in this project, the CEB and the implementing international organization should continue their respective support to the education sector to the best of their possibilities.
- It would be useful for the international organization to consistently apply its results-based management procedure and use it for monitoring and reporting of project outcome and impact.