

PHOTO ESSAY



Education during early childhood, the only way for integration of children

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There is life in their eyes. Poverty fails to sadden them. Innocence make them believe in the future.

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1.246 Roma children are identified in the whole country. Some of them grow up in barracks, malnourished, and have no possibility to attend schools. Many children have no access to health centers where they should receive free of charge treatment.

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Kaloshi, is one of the children in the Pjeshkore quarter, Berat, where 45 Roma children live. We met him at the “Donika Kastrioti” kindergarten which he and 22 other Roma children are attending for a year.

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Kaloshi grew up in the street, where he had to fight against hunger and cold weather. Today, he is surrounded by love and care, feelings he never knew before.

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Integration of Roma children, 3-6 years old, in kindergartens is a challenge for the country. UNICEF, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Austrian Development Agency and the Ministry of Education and Sports, have established partner groups in the 12 regions of the country.

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Every Roma family encounters economic and social problems, which are reflected on children. Parents, even though they want their children to be educated, feel powerless to cross that path alone.

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- I do not have any clothes, nor do I have money for textbooks. I can not bring him to kindergarten. – this was the reaction of Nazmia, the mother of Erzel, when local partners asked her to register Erzel at kindergarten.

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Field work commenced with the identification of out-of-kindergarten Roma children by the Education Directorates, Child Protection Units in Municipalities and organizations in help of Roma community. This process has helped in case documentation, and then in registration of children in kindergarten.

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Sonita Kamberi is 6 years old. She has to travel 2 kilometers to arrive at kindergarten. Inclusion of Roma children in kindergarten is difficult, because children feel excluded.

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Local partners networks and civil society organization have organized some meetings with the director of the kindergarten to provide the necessary assistance to every child, to be willing to go to kindergarten.

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Educator of the kindergarten “Donika Kastrioti” in Berat, Shaqe Serani told us that every morning, she takes children from their homes and brings them to kindergarten. “At the beginning, a part of them stayed alone and felt shy. Most of the children have never had contacts with books and pencils.”

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Hermes is 5 years old. It has been one year since he became part of this kindergarten. He has learned to read and write. Books are part of his life.

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Mira is a 3-year old girl who has not been registered in the Civil Status Office. She lives only with her mother. The local partners group managed, with a lot of efforts, to register Mira in the Civil Status Office. Later, she was granted the right to be vaccinated, as well as to be registered at the kindergarten.

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Through the initiative “Every child at kindergarten”, supported by the initiative of UNICEF with the Ministry of Education, local partners have identified 1.246 children, out of whom 686 are now registered in kindergarten compared to 383, registered in 2011. More than half of them are vaccinated in the health centres.

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UNICEF is committed to fighting social exclusion based on the recommendations of the Child Rights Convention, in order to ensure nondiscrimination of minorities, increase of access in preschool system and free of charge compulsory education for all children.

The Project “Every Roma child at kindergarten” is a project of MoES and UNICEF, implemented by CRCA, YWCA, ODF with the financial support of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Albania and Austrian Development Agency

