

## BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ACHIEVEMENTS

### BRIEF HISTORY/INTRODUCTION

In 2012, REF Montenegro branch office joined a consortium established by Help (Help - Hilde zur Selbsthilfe e.V), which aimed to increase the complex integration process of Podgorica Konik Camps' inhabitants.

In the context of three programs entitled *"Assistance Program for Integration and Return of RAE and Other I / DPs Residing in the Konik Area" Phase I and Phase II* and *"Promotion and protection of human rights of RE and other vulnerable groups"* REF designed and implemented a set of actions aimed at achieving desegregation and educational integration of Roma and Egyptians children living in the Konik Camp area in Podgorica and later wide Montenegro.

The program was financially supported by both the European Commission's Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funds and funds from the government of Montenegro, with significant finance support from REF own resources.

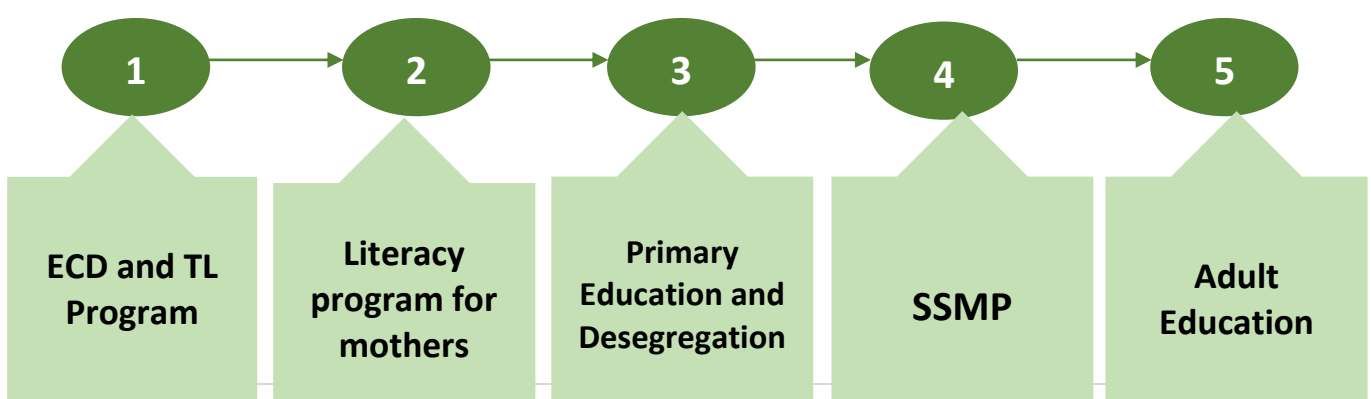
Until the summer of 2016, REF had mainly delivered its services to the inhabitants of the Konik Camp, and after that it widened its beneficiary group on all domicile RE living in wider area of Podgorica and two newly added municipalities of Montenegro - Nikšić and Berane. REF activities in new project sites, Nikšić and Berane, were built upon continuously implemented actions in Podgorica. These two newly added municipalities were also included in the Montenegro school dropout prevention network.

Apart from widened coverage, and in the context of EU-funded program, REF has also widened its areas of intervention by adding REF ECD–TL model of inclusion and parents' awareness raising program.

The REF model of primary school dropout prevention program has been launched in two new municipalities Nikšić and Berane, and in the context of EU-funded program, REF also added its ECD–TL model and parents' awareness raising program.

By the end of 2018, all three phases of the project were successfully implemented through the application of the five REF's models of inclusion: 1) ECD and TL Program, 2) Literacy program for mothers, 3) Primary Education and Desegregation, 4) SSMP and 5) Adult Education (see figure 1).

**Figure 1:** REF Project Areas of Intervention



## IMPLEMENTATION

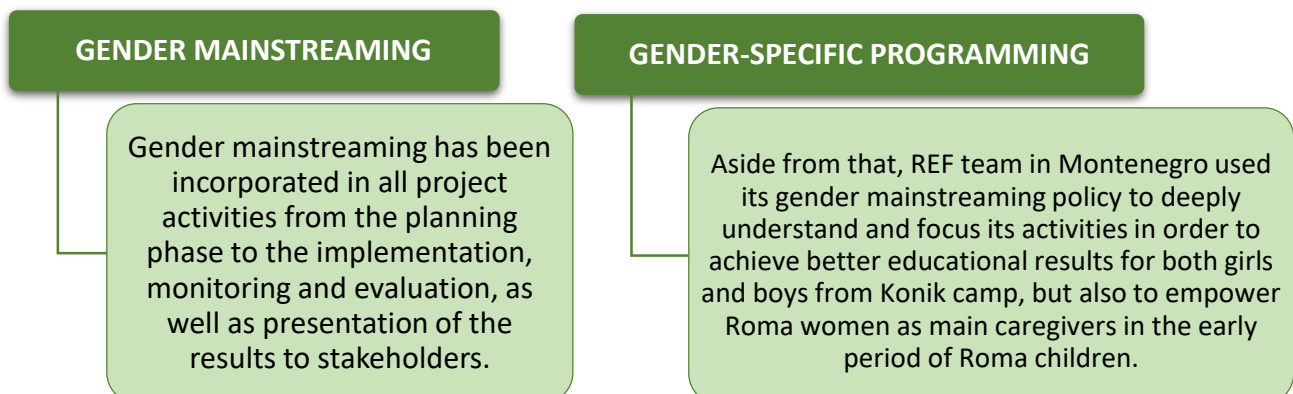
The project *Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of RE (Roma and Egyptians) and other Vulnerable Groups* was implemented in two years' period (20 December 2016 to 19 December 2018) in Montenegro (Berane, Niksic and Podgorica). The project was implemented as joint action of two organisation REF and HELP – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V. (as the Project coordinator). Affiliated entities in the Action were Red Cross of Montenegro (RCM) and Center for Democracy and Human Rights CEDEM.

The **overall objective** of the Project was to support the social inclusion of RE i.e. *fundamental human rights of Roma and Egyptians as well as other vulnerable groups in Montenegro protected in durable and sustainable manner in compliance with international standards.*

The Project component **integrated practical assistance and effective and efficient mechanisms** to combat discrimination and the creation of conditions in which RE can exercise all minority rights, with a focus on the education and employment systems.

The project was innovative in a way that it used the concept of women empowerment as a lead in supporting processes for developing the knowledge and skills of Roma mothers as women and as parents, in order to indirectly support their children's education. In its work, REF applied a two-line approach: a) **Gender mainstreaming in all its programs and activities** and b) **Gender-specific programming aimed at reducing specific gender inequalities.**

**Figure 2:** Main approaches the REF team has applied in the course of the project implementation



All REF activities were planned and delivered in close harmonization with other ongoing projects in the targeted areas and activities delivered by other partners in program consortium.

## OVERALL ACHIEVEMENTS

As a result of the activities implemented by REF and its partners in Montenegro, the access of RE children and youth to education has significantly improved, number of RE children enrolled in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools was constantly increasing and the gap between education of RE and non-RE children was continuously decreasing in all involved municipalities (Podgorica, Nikšić and Berane).

**The REF project has significantly contributed to the education of the RE children, youth and adults residing within three cities of Montenegro (Podgorica, Nikšić and Berane) in terms of:**

- **Early childhood development** through home visits, enrolment in state run kindergarten and one year of preschool program and Toy libraries;

- **Desegregation** of RE education by engaging RE mediators and through continuous support, informing community regularly about the program and ensuring close cooperation between all involved stakeholders (preschool, primary schools, parents, Bureau of Education Services, Ministry of Education);
- **Decrease of dropout** rate through regular data collection on enrolment and competition rates, including improved educational results of RE children, and
- **Improved competences** of young and adult RE through campaigns for enrolment in secondary education, professional orientation and adult education.

## ACHIEVEMENTS PER AREAS OF INTERVENTION – KEY OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

### ► **Fostered early childhood development (ECD) of RE children:**

- Regular Home visits done by ECD team;
- RE women took part in 162 ECD workshops;
- 179 RE children enrolled state-run kindergarten ensuring conditions for their regular attendance;
- 151 children enrolled in one year of preschool program;
- 180 parents became Toy libraries users embracing 441 children; 3 Toy libraries fully operational with 180 active members of RE origin (out of which are 172 mothers and 8 fathers who participated with their children) - activities successfully established and operational firstly in Podgorica, then in Nikšić and Berane, including the equipment for the premises and short info campaign to potential users of the TL program; Total number of toys was 1024 (313 different toys) and number of books was 198.

### ► **Fostered desegregation of RE education:**

- Since the school year 2012/13, a desegregation process has begun so that at the end of the school year 2015-16, the segregated school was closed and soon after demolished. The school had been in operation from the school year 1999/2000;
- The process of desegregation gradually involved over 300 regular pupils living in Konik camp in Podgorica;
- All children of pre-school age attended at least one year of pre-school program;
- Drop out in lower grades has been reduced to less than 4%;
- Drop out in higher grades has been reduced from 70% to 30%;
- 10 city schools support the process of desegregation in three targeted municipalities;
- 5 RE mediators engaged to work in Podgorica area provided support to: a) 319 children in 2016/2017 s/y; b) 353 children in 2017/2018 s/y; and c) 388 children in 2018/2019 s/y;
- 2 RE mediators engaged to work in Niksic area provided support to 183 RE pupils attending 2 city primary schools In these two schools, 22 pupils were enrolled in the first grade in the 2017/18 school year; 77 children included in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in 2 primary schools in Niksic in 2018/2019 school year;
- 2 RE mediators engaged to work in Berane and each of them worked in one of two primary school - 139 RE students during 2017/2018 s/y plus 24 first graders enrolled from September 2017; 65 children included in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in 2 primary schools in Berane in 2018/2019 s/y;
- 18 days of accredited 2-day trainings conducted involving teachers from Berane Nikšić and Podgorica.

► **Decreased dropout rate, improved results of RE children throughout educational cycle, increased rates of enrolment and completion of education by RE children**

- **Significant increase of graduation rate of Roma/RE students in 2016/2017 as well as in 2017/2018 school years, mainly thanks to:**
  - ∞ Regular data collection of children in preschool and primary school living in Podgorica, Nikšić and Berane;
  - ∞ Mentoring of 319 RE primary school children and 117 secondary school pupils through student's voluntary practice and mentoring program to ensure the academic and social integration of RE children and youth into school environment.
  - ∞ Regular detailed assessment of teachers needs in area of their capacity building – including assessment of already realized trainings with similar content in targeted schools;
  - ∞ Each municipality *Commission for Dropout Prevention* drafted its own plan and applied it until the end of the school year;
  - ∞ Protocol on prevention and action in the case of risk of early school dropout passed all legal procedure in country;
  - ∞ REF purchased three vehicles (16+1 seat) for transportations of RE children/pupils – this was donated to the Ministry of Education for them to distribute the vehicles to the schools.

► **Trained Mentors and RE Mediators:**

- REF Montenegro is the author of accredited training for RE Mediators, as well as the holder of the process of institutionalization of RE mediators in the educational system of Montenegro;
- REF Montenegro has accredited Module 1 and Module 2 training for mentors within the SSMP component of the program;
- During all phases of the project, there has been successful cooperation with the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Montenegro through the engagement of over 300 volunteer students.

► **Young and adult RE improved competences through professional orientation and adult education:**

- Campaign for enrolment in secondary education successfully planned and implemented;
- All relevant stakeholders were included within all three municipalities;
- RE youngsters in Podgorica continue their education in adult education system;
- Campaign and data collection in Niksic area in Berane identified necessity to proceed with lobbying towards primary and/or secondary schools to apply for accreditation for working with adults.

## SUSTAINABILITY

- REF MNE used the last months of implementation of the EU program to lobby at the relevant institutions in the country and the EU Delegation to make the project components institutionalized;
- RE mediators are employed by MoE. Their number is higher than the one we had during the project. All the schools that participated in the project are covered by this state program;

- Successful desegregation process through which over 300 RE students regularly attend classes at seven city schools in Podgorica, all of which all continue to be part of the desegregation process. Transportation (costs and logistic) 100% taken over by Ministry of Education. The segregated school has been closed.
- Even though the REF Mission to Montenegro has been closed REF has continued with monitoring of the actions in the country in order to ensure that institutionalization was successfully carried out and sustainable. In this regard, REF remains open for technical support and cross-country knowledge exchange as part of its phasing out strategies.

