

# EDUCATION OF MINORITY CHILDREN IN KOSOVO

For every child  
Health, Education, Equality, Protection  
ADVANCE HUMANITY

unicef 

# Education of Minority Children in Kosovo

**UNICEF Kosovo**  
January 2004

**Prepared by:**

Kayo Kasai  
Monterey Institute of International Studies  
Graduate School of International Policy Studies

# Contents:

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
The general difficulties of collecting data on minority children	4
<b>Data and documents on minority children from organizations,</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Functions and interventions by organizations for minority children</b>	<b>5</b>
The Education Management Information System	5
Main indicators	6
The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST)	6
OSCE	6
Municipalities	7
<b>Ethnic groups: Serb, Roma, Gorani, Bosniac, Turkish, Ashkali,</b>	
<b>Egyptian, and minority disabled children</b>	<b>8</b>
Serb children	8
Roma children	9
Gorani children	10
Bosniac children	11
Turkish children	11
Ashkali and Egyptian children	11
Disabled minority children	12
<b>The overall situation of education for minority children</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Returnee children and the function of the UNHCR</b>	<b>13</b>
The current situation of returnee children	13
The function of the UNHCR and municipalities for returnees	14
Outline of IDPs	14
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Reference</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>16</b>



# Introduction

In the four years after the war, the Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) of Kosovo and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) made efforts to restore security, the rule of law and the full exercise of human rights for each and every person in Kosovo regardless of his/her ethnicity. One of their main objectives, given persisting ethnic tensions, a high unemployment rate, and relatively lower educational standards compared with European educational standards, was to establish an inclusive and qualified education system in which every child could have access to education. The education system was to help children understand equal rights. However, it soon became clear that to build such an inclusive system, accurate data needed to be collected and every aspect of the educational environment analyzed.

In Kosovo, there are several minority groups consisting of Serbs, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Gorani, Bosniacs, Turkish, and Croatians. The population of Kosovo is estimated to be 2 million. Ethnic minorities account for approximately 11 percent of the total, while some 43% of the total population is under the age of 19.<sup>1</sup>

It is estimated that there are some 93,600 minority children in Kosovo. Household sizes vary according to ethnic group. Albanians have on average 6.76 family members and Serbs have 3.93 members. Albanians might have two or three children and Serbs might have one or two children. In contrast, other minority ethnic groups have 5.36 family members<sup>2</sup>. Generally speaking, a Roma family has between four to six children. With this in mind, minority children are thought to account for more than 11% of the total population of children. In the current situation in Kosovo, it is hard to get precise data on minority children because there has not been a census in the area since 1991, and neither does any institution have data at this point. What is more, while the situation has stabilized since 1999, people are still moving to and from Kosovo.

Over the years, a parallel school system has developed in Kosovo. Albanian communities established their school curriculum prior to the war, and Serb communities continued to follow the Serbian curriculum. During the turbulent social and political times, the minorities in Kosovo were often excluded from economic activity and public services such as education. When the situation stabilized, many minority children, especially Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children were forced to go to Albanian or Serbian schools, according to their languages or their religions.

The Human Development Index for Kosovo for 2001 shows that around 83% (estimated 713,800) of all children had access to education<sup>3</sup>. However, the Education Management Information System (EMIS) shows that only 423,000 children attended school in 2002<sup>4</sup>. In times of political and social hardship, it was assumed that minority children had far less access to the educational system.

As mentioned, to establish an inclusive educational system in Kosovo, accurate data needs to be collected and the real situation analyzed. This paper will examine the functions and data collecting systems of international organizations in Kosovo as well as the situations minority children face, as it presents interviews and case studies conducted in the field.

## The general difficulties of collecting data on minority children

There has been no census in Kosovo since 1991, before the war and when the government of the former Yugoslavia last conducted one. This makes it difficult to collect data not only on minority children but also on the general situation of children in Kosovo. Although in Pristina, the Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) exist as the central government, there is currently a transfer of authority from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in

Kosovo (UNMIK), and neither the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MEST), UNMIK, nor the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Kosovo (OSCE) has precise data on children.

Although the World Bank funded-Education Management Information System (EMIS) has been in existence since 2001, its system and methodologies are not yet well developed. EMIS indicates the gross enrollment ratio but not the net enrollment ratio, and because it lacks the total number of children, it cannot estimate the number of children dropping-out school or staying out-of-school. For these reasons, EMIS does not have precise data on school children.

Given the difficulties minority children in particular have in accessing the educational system in Kosovo, it is crucial to collect precise data on minority children in order to establish strategic policies for an inclusive educational system. The lack of a unified educational system, (consisting of a parallel school system and different curricula), together with unique ethnic compositions and political and ethnic sensitivities, make it difficult to grasp the situation of minority children in Kosovo.

## Data and documents on minority children from organizations, Functions and interventions by organizations for minority children

### THE EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Education Management Information System started in June 2001 in cooperation with MEST and UNMIK in order to create and maintain an updated database of every aspect of education in Kosovo<sup>5</sup>. It aims to provide decision makers with resources so

that they are able to analyze the situation in education and make strategic policies for education in Kosovo.

EMIS research is conducted twice a year, in October and April, using Microsoft Excel. There are three levels in the process: the school level, municipality level, and central level. At the school level, the administrators or staff at each school enter the children's data in the computer. The calculations are conducted automatically and the results are submitted to each municipality. At the municipality level, an education officer from each municipality has the responsibility for collecting data from schools. At the central level, the data collected by the municipalities is sent to the central data base. The EMIS team verifies data by contacting each school administrator and confirming the numbers<sup>6</sup>.

EMIS indicators and collected data include the following:

Form 1: Pupils/pre-primary/pre-school education
Form 2: Pupils from grade 1 to grade 12
Form 3: Pupils by year level, staff, and school facilities
Form 4: Special needs pupils in pre-primary/pre-school education
Form 5: Special needs pupils from grade 1 to grade 12
Form 6: Special needs school staffing
Form 7: Special education school facilities
Form 8: Special needs pupils by grade level

See appendix 1.

## MAIN INDICATORS

They can be divided into three main parts: information about the students, information about school staff, and information about special needs education.

Students' information	School staff	Special needs schools
• Grades and gender	• Subjects, gender,	All indicators
• Distance from school and gender	qualified or unqualified	are included under "stu-
• Ethnicity and gender	• Ethnicity and gender	dents' information" and
• Number of children from each ethnic group attending	• Ethnicity	"school staff"
Albanian schools or Serbian schools	• Number of school staff (teachers, administrative staff,	
• Number of students per municipality	support staff) per municipality	

EMIS 2002 academic year

Some of the data is useful to analyze the situation of education in Kosovo. For example, some forms indicate the number of children of each ethnic minority group attending Albanian or Serbian schools. The forms also show the gender ratio of children of each ethnic group attending schools and the ethnic composition of teachers.

However, from the data it is hard to predict the potential problems children and schools face, such as long distances to schools, lack of facilities, security, materials, teaching in the mother tongue, irregular attendance, incompleteness of courses, dropping out, and staying out of school. For example, while a form includes indicators relating to distance and gender, it does not show which children were required to commute long distances to school and how many children did not go to school because of long distance commuting.

In addition, the EMIS team leader, Ms. Krasniqi, mentioned that EMIS data was not necessarily correct because staff in the municipalities and schools were not used to using computers. Therefore it is necessary to train them and this will take time. She also stated that the MS Excel program was not adequate for their needs and her team found a lot of information lacking and mistakes in the calculations. The EMIS team has developed new software called "Info Gather" and currently contacts each municipality to confirm the numbers. According to Ms. Krasniqi, another problem was that Serbian schools did not cooperate with EMIS's data collection. Although administrators of Serbian schools agreed to send data to EMIS, in practice they did not<sup>7</sup>.

The problem was that the team had neither established networks to collect data effectively nor constantly interacted with MEST to develop indicators and methodology useful for educational analysis. The team is planning to introduce new indicators such as the number of children dropping-out, school attendance, and the completion rate; however, they have not yet had time to bring the plan into shape.

## THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MEST)

MEST's document, "SCHOOL EDUCATION STATISTICS" is basically the same as the one published by the EMIS team. It shows the number of children enrolled in pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools, as well as their ethnic composition and gender ratio, and those of the educational employees in Kosovo. It does not, however, refer to children either dropping-out or staying out-of-school, and other factors such as a long commute to school, lack of materials, insufficient equipment, and outdated curricula.

MEST also has school data from the Kosovo Force (KFOR). The KFOR investigation includes the names of schools, the total number of children attending each school, and the ethnicity of students at each school, which are divided only into Albanian, Serbian, and other. It seems that the KFOR data is not included in MEST analysis.

According to Mr. Ud Din, International Adviser of Communities and Gender Division at MEST, once MEST receives data and the finalized document from the EMIS team, it confirms the accuracy of the data by contacting each municipality<sup>8</sup>. This duplicates the EMIS team's confirmation process. It is assumed that no additional analysis is done by MEST. Interaction or exchange of information between MEST and the EMIS team, to develop methodology or indicators for the analysis of EMIS, is very low.

## OSCE

As a parental organization of UNMIK, both the Democratization Department and the Human Rights Rule of Law, Non-discrimination Section of OSCE in Kosovo address the issue of minority education in Kosovo, although neither division has precise data on children. The Democratization Department has eight field offices throughout Kosovo. The division allocates funds to the field offices that propose projects to meet the

assistance needs in the regions. The Democratization Division plans to approach the central authorities as well as local administrations to advocate establishing the inclusive education system for minority children, although they do not yet have a strategic plan<sup>9</sup>.

In collaboration with MEST, the Department held "the Regional Round Table on Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian Education in Kosovo" on July 29 and 30 in 2003. Its aim was to discuss three challenges to develop a national strategy for education in Kosovo: "Low enrollment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in all education sectors and high drop-out rates", "teacher training for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian [teachers]", and "[education for Roma children in] the Roma Language". It was a historic conference in the sense that representatives from the Roma and Serb communities participated to make their voices heard. MEST was supposed to work out a comprehensive strategy for minority education by the end of December 2003.

The Human Rights Division intervenes mainly by distributing articles and holding human rights workshops for officers to promote central and municipal authorities.

The OSCE is planning to focus on children's accessibility to education, especially the Roma, and immediate education in Kosovo. The OSCE Human Rights Division is also planning to undertake research on "education in the mother tongue" possibly this year, in order to understand the situation of education in the children's mother tongue in Kosovo<sup>10</sup>.

## MUNICIPALITIES

While it is hard to collect data on minority children in the center of Prishtina/Priština, there is some information on the situation of the minority children at the municipal level. In some municipalities, especially ethnically-complicated municipalities, local community officers are deployed from UNMIK to protect local communities as well as to build up the capacity of municipal officers.

In many cases, local community officers have a team of municipal community officers who represent each ethnic group. Local community officers and their teams work closely with local communities and establish good relationships with them. Thus local community and municipal community officers understand the situation of schooling for children from each ethnic group, their needs, the problems they face, school staffing, materials and curriculum. Some municipalities also keep track of the number of children out of school.

Due to the fact that they have to apply for an educational budget, the officers keep records of the number of children who register in schools according to their grades, ethnic groups and the school system (regular or satellite school and the number of shifts) (appendix 4). If the application form were to be standardized in all municipalities and include indicators such as the number of children dropping-out and staying out-of-school, as well as their genders, and some remarks referring to educational problems such as long distances to school, the facilities or harassments, it could provide the data necessary to analyze the situation and develop a strategy for education in Kosovo.

The local education officers (SEO/REO, MDE) in many municipalities also regularly collect information on minority children in school. This could also be considered as a useful information source.



# Ethnic groups: Serb, Roma, Gorani, Bosniac, Turkish, Ashkali, Egyptian, and minority disabled children

## SERB CHILDREN

In terms of minority education in Kosovo, there are two main issues to be mentioned: (1) the Serb parallel school system and (2) education for Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children. While the Albanian communities implement their own school curriculum, the Serb communities maintain the Serbian education system and curriculum, along with other links to Belgrade such as systems relating to pensions, medical insurance, salaries, and social allowances. The fundamental factors that cause Serb communities to hang on to the parallel system include persisting ethnic tensions with Albanian communities, Serb pride for their well-established education system, a long history of deep-seated mistrust of the international community, and the double salary system for Serb teachers from UNMIK and the Serbian government.

In Serb communities, Serbs are traditionally keen on education. Educational officers in Serb enclaves, teachers at Serbian schools, and municipalities, insist that all Serb children attend schools and that there are no drop-out and out-of-school children in their communities. Schools provide fewer shifts (one or two) because they have fewer children compared to Albanian schools, while they also provide transportation if needed. In the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane, there are no more KFOR escorts for school children but community members organize teams to monitor security when children commute<sup>11</sup>.

While Serb communities insist that all Serb children have access to the education system, interviews with the local community officers revealed three main concerns.

Firstly, the communities have difficulty establishing a relationship with UNMIK. As previ-

ously mentioned, a deep-seated public mistrust of international organizations and anxiety over losing ties with Serbia, make UNMIK educational policies unsustainable for Serb educational authorities. Some Serb educational experts insist that UNMIK refuses to fund Serb schools because they are not multi-ethnic. Their feud with UNMIK tends to be considered "uncooperative" by international organizations. Ethnic identity, severe financial restraints, and pressure from UNMIK have increased their dilemma.

Secondly, while all Serb children complete primary school education, they have difficulty accessing higher education because of the small number of secondary schools available. For example, to attend secondary school Serb children from the enclaves in the southern part of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica have to find accommodation close to the school, which puts added financial burdens on Serb households<sup>12</sup>. It used to be the case that Serbian families would leave Kosovo for Serbia because of the lack of access to higher education, as well as feelings of disparity towards integrating into Kosovo society. This pattern is changing however, as Serb facilities return to northern Kosovo. Serb facilities have been developing in Kosovo since 2002.

Thirdly, the lack of materials and the low quality of the curriculum especially in schools in Serb enclaves surrounded by Albanian communities, is problematic. Physical situations seem quite different between the Serb-dominated regions such as the northern parts of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and the isolated Serb enclaves such as Gorazhdëvc/Goraǰdevac in the municipality of Pejë/Peć and Shtërpç/Štrpce in Gjilan/Gnjilane AOR. For example, the local community officer in the municipality of Pejë/Peć, Ms. Gana, insisted that the quality of education was very low and that the curriculum was outdated. She also stated that there was a lack of qualified teachers<sup>13</sup>. An evaluation report on first grade teacher training conducted by Friends of Children shows that there are some serious gaps among K-Serbian teachers from the south and central parts of Kosovo. These communities are completely isolated; they lack freedom of movement and are inaccessible to the K-Serbian education authorities of the parallel school system.

In some communities, community leaders tended to have a direct political influence on education in the enclaves<sup>14</sup>. The educational officer in Shtërpce/Štrpce also mentioned that Serb children and their parents fear harassment while commuting to schools<sup>15</sup>.

## ROMA CHILDREN

While there are political sensitivities when considering education in Serb communities, Roma children face more social problems.

Historically, Roma people have suffered discrimination throughout Europe. They have had little access to public services including education, so their literacy rate is very low. They have also had very limited access to economic activities and have remained extremely poor. Their exclusion from society also accounts for the relatively low motivation for living among some Roma people. The poor social situations and lack of hope for unimproved living conditions have impeded Roma children from attending school.

Again, there is no precise data on Roma children, especially in terms of the number of children dropping-out and staying-out of school. However, some records and case studies provided by the municipalities provide some clues as to the situation regarding education for Roma children.

For example, in the municipality of Prizren/Prizren, about half the number of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children attended schools (259) and half from the same ethnic groups did not (220)<sup>16</sup>. In the municipality of Gjiilan/Gnjilane, there were 1,160 Roma families though none of the children from these families attended regular school<sup>17</sup>. It is worth mentioning that the situation was the same all over Kosovo.

Accessibility to education for Roma children depends on whether the issue is addressed or not. In the more fortunate cases, Roma children have had access to education through catch-up-classes or private schools run by NGOs, communities, and municipalities.

Catch-up-classes are crucial for Roma children in allowing them to attend regular schools that

are taught in Albanian or Serbian. A lack of fluency in one of these languages was one of the reasons why Roma children dropped-out of schools. Although UNMIK and MEST are now carrying out a national educational strategy that includes a right to education in the mother tongue, such favorable environments have not yet been developed.

Catch-up-classes however, have some limitations. Many organizations are forced to close catch-up-classes due to lack of funds. Not all children enter regular schools after completion of a catch-up-class. In many cases, parents do not encourage children to go to school. The low educational level of Roma parents should be addressed. Some schools refuse to accept Roma children based on misconceived ideas about Roma people's living conditions. Often the municipalities do not have the capacity to support children transferring to a regular school after completion of the catch-up-class<sup>18</sup>. Regulation is needed at the municipal level to systematically include minority children in the education system as well as sensitizing school administrators and teachers to ethnic discrimination.

Poor living conditions and little knowledge of education also prevent Roma children from attending school.

For example, just a month before this survey was conducted, three siblings in the Plementinë/Plementina IDP camp died within two weeks of each other. The doctor in the camp and NGO staff assumed that the children died because of careless and bad hygiene conditions. They also found a wound on one of the children's bottom<sup>19</sup>. In the collective centers in Gjiilan/Gnjilane, the prevalence of alcohol and smoking has had negative effects on children. Some children started to drink alcohol and smoke at the age of 14 or 15<sup>20</sup>. According to NGO staff in the Roma community of Gjakovë/Djakovica in the municipality of Pejë/Peć, some 80% of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families collected rubbish for a living. An estimated 60% of Roma people were considered to be alcoholic. Some children come to Bethany's facility asking for help from domestic violence<sup>21</sup>. While this NGO was addressing the needs of the Roma community, the staff said that their impact on this community was limited and they also lacked funds to properly

deal with the problem. At the municipal level, the communities have to be addressed in many different ways when tackling issues relating to educational and social welfare.

The school attendance of Roma girls was relatively low compared to other ethnic groups. Traditionally Roma girls get married young.

#### CASE STUDY 1:

##### Roma community in the municipality of Prizren

In a Roma community in the town of Prizren/Prizren, seven families have lived in just a few houses for more than 35 years. Each family has between four to six children. Because of malnutrition, the children's eyes are wide open and they look younger than they are. Most of the children do not attend school and some of them occasionally go to catch-up-class. Their hygiene conditions are not good.

The families have three carts to earn a living. Each cart allows them to earn between one to two euros per day. There are many children working in towns in Kosovo selling cigarettes or carrying products in the market place. However, Roma children tend to be excluded from the child labor market, hence it is hard for them to get jobs. Despite the severe labor conditions, Roma children choose to work all day to help their families and do not attend school.

The same situation can be seen in Gjakovë/Djakovica in Pejë/Peć, where Roma communities receive no support from outside organizations and live in harsh environments. Their situations are sometimes even worse than those of people living in the IDP camps or shelters.

#### CASE STUDY 2:

##### Plementina IDP camp

In Plementinë/Plementina's IDP camp, there are 272 children under the age of 15. Of that number only 48 children finished primary school, while 69 children dropped out. Twenty-eight children finished high school and 2 spent some years at university<sup>22</sup>.

In this camp, for example, Roma children used to go to the Serbian school from the 1st grade; however, on one occasion the school bus did not turn up at the camp and the Roma children missed a day of school; they subsequently stopped attending school. Although some NGOs tried to persuade the Roma parents to make their children go to school, the situation following the departure of the NGOs, went back to the start or became even worse. Roma parents are only willing to make children go to school when they are provided with incentives such as a free breakfast, lunch, or materials. The NGO staff said that this situation was common in many Roma communities. The Roma parents, because of their own low educational level, have little awareness of the importance of education. This, coupled with a sense of hopelessness in their society, means that the problem has to be addressed strategically.

Many Roma girls are often abducted or sold as brides. Some Roma parents tend to see the schooling of girls as a waste of time, particularly in areas where Roma children have little access to economic activity even though they may have completed primary education. Some Roma parents are afraid their girls will be abducted while commuting to school.

## GORANI CHILDREN

The Gorani population in Kosovo concentrates itself in the municipality of Dragash /Dragaš in Prizren/Prizren AOR. The northern part of the municipality of Dragash/Dragaš is 65% Albanian, while the southern part is 35% Gorani, (or 1,400 inhabitants)<sup>23</sup>. The Gorani people have integrated well into the Albanian communities and on the surface, the relationship between the two ethnic groups appears to have no problems.

In the 2002 academic year, 1,520 Gorani children attended primary schools and 153 attended secondary schools. All the Gorani children went to ethnically mixed Albanian schools. Albanian children were taught in the Albanian language with an Albanian curriculum and the Gorani children were taught in Serbian or Bosnian with a Serbian curriculum. Their concept of education is very similar to that of the Serbs and they are keen on education. The school enrollment rate was very high and there were no Gorani drop-out or out-of-school children in this region.

There are four ethnically-mixed primary schools. From first to fourth grade, the children go to school with one shift in their own villages. From fifth to eighth grade, the children go to satellite schools with two shifts. In this case, the distance from home to the satellite school and changing school at fifth grade does not affect their schooling. The local community officer mentioned that while there were enough qualified teachers there was a lack of materials, and some experts were concerned that there were more unqualified teachers in Dragash/Dragaš than in other areas. The curriculum there came from Serbia and the materials from Bosnia. In their communities, the Goranis speak Albanian with the Albanians although they are educated in Serbian.

While the Gorani people identify themselves as Bosniac, for political reasons they look to Serbia for education.

### CASE STUDY 3:

#### Children and NGO activities in Skenderaj/Srbica

In Skenderaj/Srbica, there is a local NGO, Committee for Protection of Children's Rights, which is technically supported by Save the Children. The NGO provides children with opportunities to use computers, visit surrounding communities, and interact with other children from different municipalities. Given the concept that "Children are experts of children", Committee for Protection of Children's Rights has, since 2000, been implementing "drop-out school children activities" in Likovc and Qirez. This project aims to decrease the number of children dropping-out of school. Children participating in the project visit the homes of children who do not attend school. They have conversations with the children and their parents and persuade them to go back to school. In a pilot project, 10 drop-out children went back to school.

Skenderaj/Srbica is one of the poorest regions in Kosovo. The staff from the above-mentioned NGO said that there were 50 child laborers in Skenderaj/Srbica. Unlike other regions, those children do not attend school at all. Due to economic reasons and traditional gender disparities, girls have less access to education than boys<sup>24</sup>.

## BOSNIAC CHILDREN

Bosniac people are concentrated in the municipalities of Pristine/Pristina, Prizren/Prizren, Pejë/Peć, and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica. They are relatively well integrated into the Albanian communities and have access to the education system. Bosniac children attend Bosniac schools and some attend multi-ethnic schools. In Vitomiricë/Vitomirica in the municipality of Pejë/Peć, schools are ethnically mixed with Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children, and lessons are taught in the Albanian language for Albanian children and in Bosniac and Albanian for Bosniac children. Because of the similarity of their languages, Bosniacs are integrated into Serbian communities and have access to Serbian services including the education system in Pristinë/Priština and Prizren/Prizren AOR<sup>25</sup>.

According to NGO staff addressing minority education issues in Kosovo and municipal local community officers, some major constraints for Bosniacs include less access to

higher education and language. For example, in the Pejë/Peć municipality, there was only one secondary class for Bosniacs with 30 students attending. They did not have enough materials and their lessons were in Albanian<sup>26</sup>. Primary education is crucial for Bosniac children and their parents understand the value of pre-primary education to help them develop language skills to complete primary education<sup>27</sup>.

## TURKISH CHILDREN

An estimated 12,000 Turkish inhabitants live in Prizren/Prizren AOR and of these, around 5,000 live in Mahala<sup>28</sup>. They are well integrated into the Albanian communities. There are also small Turkish communities in Prishtinë/ Priština, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and Gjiilan/ Gnjilane AOR. In the municipality of Prizren/ Prizren, Turkish children have access to the education system. In the municipality of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, although a Turkish school provides education to Turkish children, it has only three children<sup>29</sup>. Relatively speaking, the situation regarding education for Turkish children is slightly better than other minorities as they receive scholarships from the Turkish government. In a national roundtable in Prishtinë/Priština, despite considerable discussion about the need for scholarships to encourage other minority children to go to school, MEST said the prospect of this was bleak because of financial constraints.

## ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN CHILDREN

Ashkali and Egyptian people live mainly in Pristine/Priština, Prizren/Prizren, and Pejë/Peć AORs. While their children have access to education at the Albanian schools, it is often difficult to distinguish them from the Roma because of their languages. NGO staff working in the municipality of Gjakovë/Djakovica in Pejë/Peć AOR insisted that they represented themselves as Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian in order to receive assistance<sup>30</sup>. They also suffer from discrimination.



## DISABLED MINORITY CHILDREN

In Kosovo, disabled children are particularly vulnerable. Depending on their ethnic group or the regions they come from, many parents feel ashamed about their disabled children and try to hide them. Therefore, even at the municipal or NGO level, it is hard to get an accurate count of the number of disabled children. Even though the EMIS survey shows that some disabled children attended a so-called 'special school', UNHCR protection officers in the field and local community officers in the municipalities maintained that disabled children have little access to the education system. In a few municipalities such as Pejë/Peć and Dragash/Dragaš, there were one or two schools providing education for disabled children. They were, however, mostly in Albanian communities and disabled minority children could access the education system. In the municipality of Pejë/Peć, a disabled Serb child was escorted by KFOR from a Serbian village to school<sup>31</sup>. In Mitrovicë/ Mitrovica north, a 'special school' provided primary education for K-Serb disabled children from the municipalities of Mitrovicë/ Mitrovica and Zveqan/Zvečan. In the municipalities of Zubin Potok/ Zubin Potok and Leposaviq/Leposavić, educational branches were recently opened within primary schools for disabled children.

### CASE STUDY 4:

#### Child laborers in Kosovo

Child labor is a widespread phenomenon in Kosovo. In most of the major towns, many children are seen selling cigarettes, looking after the shop, and carrying products in the markets.

Each town has child labor characteristics. For example, in the center of Prishtinë/Priština, children walk from one café to another selling cigarettes or telephone cards. In pretty towns, like Prizren/Prizren, children take photos of visitors at cafés. In Ferizaj/Uroševac, famous for its huge market, many children sell products in the stalls or transport products with carts.

It is thought that most of those children work after school; however, some children in relatively poor regions such as Skenderaj/Srbica and Roma children work all day long without attending school.

## The overall situation of education for minority children

From the research and interviews, it appears that long distance commuting to school and security issues does not hinder education for minority children in quite the way that many international organizations or NGOs had reported. Neither was MEST right in concluding that the number of children from countries of crisis or returnee children played a significant role<sup>32</sup>. It is true however, that minority children and their parents feel insecure about schooling.

The main problems regarding education for minority children, their parents and teachers, were the "economic situation or lack of materials", as well as the "language", and "perception" of school.

In terms of drop-out and out-of-school children, economic constraint or lack of materials are fundamental factors preventing minority children from attending school. This applies particularly to Roma children, who work to help their families, as well as Albanian children in relatively poor communities such as Skenderaj/Srbica in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica AOR. In many cases the parents of Roma children do not encourage them to go to school for economic reasons.

Education in the mother tongue is another important factor that needs to be addressed. Most of the ethnic minority groups have little access to education in their mother tongue, hence it is crucial to provide children with additional support such as catch-up-classes. Catch-up-classes are taught both in mother tongues and in the child's second language. They help children catch up with regular classes and maintain their original language. In some communities, minority children have to use more than one language according to the school, the community and family. While some minority children go to Albanian schools, others from the same ethnic group go to Serb schools in other regions. Education in the mother tongue is a real challenge when it comes to establishing a multi-ethnic school system in Kosovo.



The UNHCR protection officer in Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Ms. Marie Wholen, pointed out that there was a problem of "perception". For ethnic minorities living in multi-ethnic regions, whether they went to Albanian schools or Serb schools implied an ethnic relationship with the other ethnic group. Parents, teachers and community leaders were afraid of losing relationships or suffering harassment from the other ethnic group. This situation was prevalent among communities whose children went to catch-up-classes or private schools. The pressure to integrate promptly in other ethnic groups, as advocated by UNMIK, was a dilemma for educational activists including teachers and NGO staff, who were trying to provide minority children with better conditions for education.

Each of the 30 municipalities in Kosovo has its own unique characteristics in terms of ethnic composition, political sensitivity, and geography. It is necessary to conduct a region-wide survey in order to analyze the situation in each.

## Returnee children and the function of the UNHCR

### OUTLINE OF IDPS

The UNHCR estimated that a total of around 7,100 people returned from outside Kosovo since 2000, with a peak of around 2,800 in 2002. Among them, Serbs accounted for 3,900 (55%), followed by Ashkali/Egyptians with 1,650 (24%), Roma with 720 (10%), the Albanians with 380 (5%) and the Bosniacs with 340 (4%)<sup>33</sup>. The Serbs returned to Prishtinë/Priština or Serb enclaves such as Prizren/Prizren and Rahovec/Orahovac in Prizren/Prizren AOR, Istog/Istok in Pejë/Peć AOR, and Obiliq/Obilić in Prishtinë/Priština AOR. The Roma returned mainly to Prishtinë/Priština and Gjiilan/Gnjilane AOR. The Ashkali returned to Prishtinë/Priština and Pejë/Peć, the Bosniacs to Prizren/Prizren and Pejë/Peć, the Gorani to Prizren/Prizren, and the Albanians to Gjiilan/Gnjilane and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica<sup>34</sup>.

The UNHCR estimated that there were around 235,000 IDPs from Kosovo in Serbia and Montenegro<sup>35</sup>.

Ethnicity	IDPs in FRY	Ethnicity	IDPs in FRY
Serb	161,175	Roma	28,655
Montenegrin	17,970	Ashkali	79
Albanian	1,596	Egyptian	983
Muslim	4,074	Non-Declared	9,895
Gorani	2,933	Others	1,693
<b>Total</b>			<b>229,053</b>

*IDPs from Kosovo in Serbia and Montenegro, UNHCR, January 2003*

IDPs from Kosovo in Serbia and Montenegro, UNHCR, January 2003

## THE CURRENT SITUATION OF RETURNEE CHILDREN

In Kosovo, there is one IDP camp in Plementinë/Pri in Prishtinë/Pristina, four collective centers in Gjiilan/Gnjilane, three IDPs camps for Roma IDPs, and 16 collective centers for K-Serbian IDPs within the Mitrovicë AOR. The population in the collective center of Gjiilan/Gnjilane is mainly Serb with one Roma family and the inhabitants in the other camps and shelters are Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian. There are an estimated 640 children in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, 110 children in Gjiilan/Gnjilane, and 300 in Prishtinë/Pristina<sup>36</sup>.

All the shelters except the IDP camp in Plementinë/Plementina in Prishtinë/Priština have been taken over from UNHCR by UNMIK and are now under the jurisdiction of the municipalities. The municipalities have handed them to local communities or NGOs. The living conditions differ depending on the management. It is assumed that because of financial constraints, living conditions in the camps or shelters are harsh with the exception of the Cesmin Lug camp in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and collective centers in Gjiilan/Gnjilane. Hygiene conditions and educational support in the Cesmin Lug camp are quite good. The Cesmin Lug camp is run by the Norwegian Church Aid, an UNMIK implementing partner, and provided with educational opportunities through catch-up classes and the social mobilization of parents by the French NGO, Caritas France. The collective centers in Gjiilan/Gnjilane are funded by the Serbian government.

Generally speaking, moral is very low in the shelters and children suffer from the preva-

lence of alcohol, smoking and harsh living conditions.

On the whole though, UNHCR field officers and local community officers in the municipalities, believed that the returnees and IDPs were integrated into the majority of communities and their children do have access to education.

#### CASE STUDY 5:

##### The Cesmin Lug camp

In the Cesmin Lug camp in north Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, there are approximately 110 Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children. Most of the children attend regular school, after completing two years of catch-up classes, which are supported by UNICEF and implemented by Caritas France. Children enroll in the regular school system at primary school, which is also a valuable and sustainable way of integrating Roma children into the education system.

After school, the children go back to the camp and join 2 hours of catch-up-class. For first grade children, the curriculum includes reading in Serbian and Roma. For second to fifth grade children, mathematics and reading are taught in Serbian. To keep their linguistic identity, one Roma language class is provided to children. Parents however, do not always encourage their children to go to school and there is an especially low school attendance rate among girls.

However, Caritas France is making distinct efforts to improve the living conditions, organizing local sessions in which mothers assist teachers in catch-up-classes and set a cleaning day in order to increase participation and awareness among residents.

Living conditions in the camp are quite good. The street in the camp has been cleaned up, the barracks are color-painted, and the children look healthy. A nurse comes each morning to the camp to monitor their health condition. It is quite a rare and fortunate case in Kosovo.

## THE FUNCTION OF THE UNHCR AND MUNICIPALITIES FOR RETURNEES

In most cases, the return of IDPs from outside Kosovo was organized systematically. The UNHCR and municipalities were informed in advance. Once the returnees returned to the region, UNHCR field officers visited the returnee families and interviewed them. The UNHCR was able to receive information on the number of family members and the security conditions in their former regions (out of Kosovo). The

data was then sent to UNMIK and the municipalities. Returnees were given UNMIK identifications after investigation by UNMIK. However, both UNHCR and UNMIK did not officially record their age and gender. UNMIK did not record the ethnicity of returnees. When considering schooling, data on the age, gender and ethnicity of the returnee children is useful in assisting their reintegration. Once UNMIK and municipalities received information about the returnees, especially in ethnically complicated regions such as Gjilan/ Gnjilane, Pejë/Peć, and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, they held a multi-sectoral meeting to discuss security, education, assistance and other matters. In terms of education, UNMIK and the municipalities also discussed the schools that would accept the returnee children, and issues relating to the commuting distance and materials.

This kind of cooperation among organizations in the region needs to be more widespread, to deal with other potential returnees.

## Recommendations

To properly analyze the educational situation in Kosovo, it is crucially important to have both a census and a data collection system. Each organization and authority addresses educational issues in its own way, and because of their lack of interaction and collaboration there is a lot of inefficiency. For example, problems with data collection could easily be solved by conversations between the different actors. There is also a lot of room for EMIS and MEST to improve their methodologies. The EMIS team could use the network developed by UNICEF and NGOs with the Serb educational authorities, to collect data from Serb schools. The EMIS team could also explore educational issues in Kosovo with MEST and other educational experts.

Another way to collect data more effectively would be to standardize the forms on which the municipalities enter information about children for the educational budget, and to develop the documents that UNHCR and UNMIK keep as records on returnees. Each municipality has unique ethnic compositions and regional characteristics. The central government by interacting with each municipality could have

a better grasp of the educational situation for children. Decentralization could be achieved if channels were developed between the central government and the municipalities.

It is obvious that different approaches are needed for each ethnic group. Social welfare needs to be ensured for the Roma, in order for the educational situation of Roma children to be improved. All minority children in Kosovo, particularly Serb children, need to be given an environment in which they can enjoy education without restraint, regardless of political factors. Although this paper asserts that security is not necessarily the main reason for non-schooling, ethnic incidents that occurred in August 2003 did have a negative impact on schooling for minority children.

Aside from giving the government a more leading role and promoting education for all children in Kosovo, social mobilization is an essential element. All actors, local authorities, NGOs, community leaders, the media, families, and the children themselves- need to identify and reach out to children who are not attending school and provide them with adequate support and protection. Empowering children, parents, and communities to value and demand children's rights would help change educational and social structures<sup>37</sup>.

Education in Kosovo faces a lot of challenges. It requires elaborate social and political strategies. In order to effectively develop strategies, it is crucial to analyze reliable data and to establish a national policy for education at an early stage. The government needs to define multi-ethnic education and to assess to what degree schools should be multi-ethnic. Multi-ethnic education implies either the same building and different classrooms, or the same classroom and the same curriculum. How does one address the issue of education in the mother tongue? It is sometimes observed that the authorities and officers in Kosovo have very different concepts of multi-ethnic education. Unless the government clearly takes the lead it is unlikely that an inclusive education system will be established in which every child fully exercises his/her human rights and develops an attitude of tolerance.

## Reference

- Amnesty International (2003, April). Prisoners in Our Own Homes
- Center for Co-Operation with Non-Members Directorate for Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Education Committee (2001, June). THEMATIC REVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICIES FOR EDUCATION -KOSOVO
- The EMIS (2003, July). EMIS/SIMA Education Management Information System
- The EMIS (2002, August). School Education Statistics 2002
- International Crisis Group (2002, December). Return to Uncertainty Kosovo's Internally Displaced and The Return Process
- IRC (2002, November). Education Program for Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians (EPRAE) Interim Report Submitted to the Swiss Development Cooperation
- KEC. Kosovar Student Knowledge on Children's Rights
- KEC (2003, May). Reflections on The Children's Rights Through The Eyes of The Kosovar Students
- KEC. Policy on Education for Democratic Citizenship an the Management of Diversity in Southeast Europe-Stocktaking Research project-Country Report: Kosovo
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2002, November). School Education Statistics 2002
- Mitorica Regional Office for Education, Science & Technology. Role and Structure of The Mitrovica Regional Office for Education, Science and Technology
- Municipality of Dragash (2002, October). The Goranis in Dratash
- Municipality of Dragash (2002, February). Education Profile in Gorani villages
- Municipality of Prizren. Breakdown of Students by Ethnicities, Municipality of Prizren
- Municipality of Prizren (2003, July). A Comparative Demographic Table of Minority Population in the Municipality of Prizren
- OSCE and UNHCR (2002). Ninth Assessment

of the Situation of Ethnic Minorities in Kosovo  
OSCE and UNHCR (2003, March). Tenth  
Assessment of the Situation of Ethnic  
Minorities in Kosovo

UNHCR. Ethnic Breakdown of Minority  
Population in Kosovo

UNHCR. Minority Returns from internal and  
External Displacement by Region-Figures and  
Percentages

UNHCR (2003, January). IDPs from Kosovo in  
Serbia and Montenegro

UNHCR (2003, January). Update on the  
Situation of Roma, Ashkalia, Egyptian, Bosniak  
and Gorani in Kosovo

UNHCR and ACTED (2002, September). Lead  
Agency Programme, Regional monthly report:  
Mitrovica/a

UNICEF, MEST, and SOK (2002, December).  
Gender Review in Education in Kosovo

UNICEF and SOK (2001). Statistics on  
Education in Kosovo 2001

World Bank (2001, December). Kosovo  
Poverty Assessment

World Bank (2001) "ECSSD Environmentally  
and Socially Sustainable Development Working  
Paper No.31, June 7, 2001-Conflict and  
Change in Kosovo - Impact on Institutions and  
Society"

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>UNDP, "Human Development Report Kosovo 2002",  
2002, p104

<sup>2</sup>UNDP, "Human Development Report Kosovo 2002",  
2002, p105

<sup>3</sup>UNDP, "Human Development Report Kosovo 2002",  
2002, p23

<sup>4</sup>EMIS, "Number of pupils by type of school, ethnicity  
and municipality in Kosovo second cycle", 2002

<sup>5</sup>Lumnije Krasniqi, "EMIS/SIMA Education Management  
Information System", 2003

<sup>6</sup>Lumnije Krasniqi, EMIS team, July 9, 2003

<sup>7</sup>Lumnije Krasniqi, EMIS team, August 2003

<sup>8</sup>Zaffeer Ud Din, MEST, June 2003

<sup>9</sup>Gian Franco Deramo, OSCE, July 2003

<sup>10</sup>Gregory Fabian, OSCE, August 2003

<sup>11</sup>Marie Whalen, UNHCR Gjilan/Gnjilane, July 2003

<sup>12</sup>UNHCR and OSCE, "Ninth Assessment of Situation of  
Ethnic Minorities in Kosovo", 2002, p20

<sup>13</sup>Laura Gana, Municipality of Pejë/Peć, August 2003

<sup>14</sup>Laura Gana, Municipality of Pejë/Peć, August 2003

<sup>15</sup>Gjilan/Gnjilane Region, Education Officer, Municipality  
of Shtërpç/Štrpce, July 2003

<sup>16</sup>Ricardo Rodriguez, Municipality of Prizren/Prizren, July  
2003

<sup>17</sup>Marie Whalen, UNHCR Gjilan/Gnjilane, July 2003

<sup>18</sup>Kristen Stec, International Refugee Council (IRC),  
August 2003

<sup>19</sup>Pranvera Sinanaj, Mother Teresa Society, August  
2003

<sup>20</sup>Marie Whalen, UNHCR Gjilan/Gnjilane, July 2003

<sup>21</sup>Bethany Christian Service, July 2003

<sup>22</sup>Mother Teresa Society, "Data of interest,  
Plementinë/Plementina IDP camp", July 2003

<sup>23</sup>Mehmet Burdali, Municipality of Dragash/Dragaš,  
August 2003

<sup>24</sup>Hajriz Hajdini, Coordinator of Committee for  
Protection of Children's Rights, August 2003

<sup>25</sup>UNHCR Kosovo, "Update on the Situation of Roma,  
Ashkaelia, Egyptian, Bosniak and Gorani in Kosovo",  
January 2003

<sup>26</sup>Laura Gana, Municipality of Pejë/Peć, August 2003

<sup>27</sup>Milica Kostadinović, KEDP, July 2003

<sup>28</sup>Amnesty International, "Prisoners in Our Own  
Homes", April 2003, p5

<sup>29</sup>Marie Noelle, UNHCR Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, July 2003

<sup>30</sup>Bethany Christian Service, July 2003

<sup>31</sup>Laura Gana, Municipality of Pejë/Peć, August 2003

<sup>32</sup>MEST, "SCHOOL EDUCATION STATISTICS 2002",  
November 2002, p4

<sup>33</sup>UNHCR Kosovo, "MINORITY RETURNS FROM INTER-  
NAL AND EXTERNAL DISPLACEMENT BY REGION-  
FIGURES AND PERCENTAGES", May 2003

<sup>34</sup>UNHCR Kosovo, "MINORITY RETURNS FROM INTER-  
NAL AND EXTERNAL DISPLACEMENT BY REGION-  
FIGURES AND PERCENTAGES", May 2003

<sup>35</sup>UNHCR Kosovo, "IDPs from Kosovo in Serbia and  
Montenegro", January 2003

UNHCR Kosovo Protection Officer Mr. Ueno points out  
that the numbers are provided by the Serbian govern-  
ment and there is a possibility of "double-registration"  
and "no-registration" or "de-registration"

<sup>36</sup>UNHCR Kosovo and UNHCR field office  
Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and Gjilan/Gnjilane, July 2003

<sup>37</sup>Sigrid Maurer, Care International, October 2003



Published by:  
United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF  
Ali Pashë Tepelena, No. 1  
Prishtina, Kosovo Office



Telephone: + 381 38 249 230/ 231/ 232  
Facsimile: + 381 38 249 234  
[prishtina@unicef.org](mailto:prishtina@unicef.org)  
[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)