



RESEARCH REPORT

# MAPPING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BIH



## **MAPPING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BIH**

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UNICEF is a global organization that is present in over 150 countries to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence, and since 1992 has been in Bosnia and Herzegovina actively supporting national efforts to fulfill children's rights and improve their well-being. Together with relevant BiH authorities, UNICEF continuously supports the strengthening of health, social care and education services for all children in BiH.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has ratified a large number of human rights conventions and instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and thus has the obligation to give excluded children the priority attention they deserve. This Report is a contribution to that process. As stated by a mother interviewed in the context of the research “(...) *for me, it is not important that my child learns and knows geography, but has the opportunity to live and grow in a healthy community, and socialize with other children. I know how much my child can learn and adopt, and how much I can personally help him, so I don't care about his grades but simply about the basics.*”

Inclusive education seeks to address the needs of all children with a specific focus on those who are the most vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the Salamanca World Conference of Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) and was restated at the Dakar World Education Forum (UNESCO, 2000). Legal provisions at all levels of BiH government stipulate that all children should be enrolled in primary education and should receive education in accordance with their needs, capacities and interests.

This rationale underlined a joint UNICEF and Save the Children UK attempt to further address the issue of inclusive education and has resulted with this Report titled *Mapping Inclusive Education Practices in Primary Education in BiH*. The Report reaffirms that “...schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. In particular this refers to disabled or gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.” Some of the obstacles to this process are a slow translation of existing policies into practice, complicated by the lack of financial allocations, human and structural capacities, stigma and prejudices towards children with special needs.

It is much easier to set down inclusive education principles than it is to map out the changes needed throughout an education system to deliver on those principles. In that context, this Report represents a snapshot of the BiH situation concerning legislation, policies and delivery of education from the perspective of inclusion. The Report ends with synthesizing key problems and offering a set of recommendations for a range of stakeholders.

We hope that this Report will further the efforts of all those who care about children with special needs and their well-being, either individually or institutionally, in making progress towards the achievement of set goals and the provision of quality inclusive education for all children in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The words of a coordinator for inclusive education are an inspiration for us all: “*We need to realize that we are all part of the inclusion process. The bus driver, who drives a child to school and back, is also part of this process. We all are. Not only the school pedagogue and the teacher.*”

Sarajevo, 2008

June Kunugi  
UNICEF Representative  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

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# INTRODUCTION

## *Statement of the Problem*

Following the steps toward European Integration, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has adopted a number of laws and policies entitling all children to *quality education* and *equal opportunities*, with “all,” referring not only to children with special needs but to other marginalized groups such as Roma children, returnees, children without parental care etc.

However, implementation of these laws and policies is under question and needs to be examined. For example, when it comes to the question of integration of all children into the primary education system, it is estimated that approximately 1.7% of children are out of school; the general drop-out rate varies from 1-2%, being significantly higher among marginalized groups such as Roma children; those in schools do not receive education appropriate for their age, cultural background, abilities and interests which further hinders their development and effective inclusion in society (UNICEF, 2007).

In addition to the question of inclusion, it is recognized that current strategies, programs, and available resources have largely been insufficient or inappropriate with regard to the needs of many children. Furthermore, marginalized children such as Roma and children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are additionally discriminated against due to the failure of the education system to effectively respond to their specific educational needs.

## *Inclusive Education*

Inclusive education seeks to address the needs of all children with a specific focus on those who are the most vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. The principle of inclusive education was adopted at the Salamanca World Conference of Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) and was restated at the Dakar World Education Forum (2000).

Inclusive education means “...schools should accommodate **all children** regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. This should include disabled or gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.” (The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs, par. 3).

Stated otherwise, inclusive education is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children through increased participation and decreased exclusion. It presumes processes other than mere integration. As such, it involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures, and strategies with a common goal to provide quality education to all children. Inclusive education looks into how to transform education systems in order to respond to the broad spectrum of learners' needs. It aims to enable both teachers and students to feel comfortable with diversity and see it as a challenge rather than an obstacle.

Furthermore, inclusion is a rights-based (rather than defectological) concept, which strives to permanently remove all obstacles to the participation of (all) children in the school and education system as well as within the community and family. Hence, inclusion, besides integration of all children and transformation of educational systems according to children's needs and diversities, comprises a systematic increase in participation and refers to all social segments such as family, school and community systems.

At the opposite end of inclusion is exclusion, ranging from exclusion of children from educational systems to passive involvement, stigmatization, segregation, abuse, and belittling of children.

Although inclusion focuses on children with special needs and marginalized groups such as children with developmental, cognitive and behavioral difficulties, sensory impairments,

chronicle diseases, epilepsy, pedagogically neglected children, children with PTSD, returnees, asylum-seekers, children from poor socio-economic conditions, Roma children, children without parental care, children from minority groups, and gifted children, the process of inclusion increases the efficiency of schools to respond to a range of special needs and interests of *all* children

In general, the notion of special needs can be manifested in various ways and within different areas such as cognitive, motor, perceptive, speech, emotional, and behavioral. Independent of the type and area to which some specific needs refer to, all needs require: the application of specific educational approaches, which increase a child's functionality, participation, development, and happiness; and the application of adequate educational and teaching means, accessories and professional care, which offer full support to children, their parents, and teachers.

At the core of inclusive education, is the human right to education and the right of children not to be discriminated against. A logical consequence of these rights is that all children have the right to receive the kind of education that does not discriminate on the grounds of disability, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, capabilities etc. However, in BiH (as in many other countries around the world) there are many barriers to the implementation of an effective inclusive education system such as socio-economic factors, which place children at risk of exclusion, curriculum content, negative attitudes towards differences, school environment, fragmented human resource development etc. Consequently, this project aims to map the barriers and trends in the provision of inclusive education and practices in BiH.

Also, one of the main areas we will focus on is the mapping of barriers and practices of inclusive quality education for marginalized groups of children such as **children with special needs** and **Roma children**.

A number of policies have been adopted by the entity and cantonal Ministries of Education in BiH with the main objective to ensure access to and completion of quality primary education for children with special needs and Roma children. However, translation of these policies into practice is complicated by the lack of financial reallocations, human capacity for the implementation of these policies, and misunderstandings and prejudices toward children with special needs, and Roma children. This in turn, results in only the partial implementation of prescribed services, thus disabling inclusion of children with special needs and Roma children into mainstream education.

# PROJECT PURPOSE AND RESEARCH GOALS

This project aims to explore *gaps* between education policies that promote inclusive education and current practices. Hence, identify the extent to which inclusive education principles have been embedded into the education practice and trends in provision of inclusive education in BiH schools. More specifically, the current project aims to achieve the following goals:

## 1. Analyze legal and policy framework related to inclusive primary education in BiH. This

will include the analysis of:

- current laws and legal regulations (at all levels), books of rules, pedagogical standards, adopted relevant action plans;
- appropriateness of legal and policy framework with regard to inclusive education;
- any intended trends or suggestions in changing the current legal framework.

## 2. Identify current procedures of identification of children with special educational needs. This will include:

- identification of instruments used for identifying children with special needs;
- analysis of the categorization process of children with special needs;
- assessment of the existing documentation regarding categorization;
- identification of parents' and children's participation level regarding the identification and categorization process.

## 3. Identify inclusive primary education practices (including barriers and trends) in BiH and their effectiveness with respect to the inclusion of children.

This will include the following:

- definition of roles of relevant stakeholders within inclusive education practices;
- identification of the extent to which the school curriculum is adapted to children's needs, abilities, and interests;
- identification of the extent to which material and technical school conditions (including human resources) are appropriate and adequate in addressing children's abilities, needs, and interests;
- identification of the level of satisfaction with the quality of education by children;
- identification of current practices (how, what, and who) of working with children with special needs;
- identification of types of children's participation in schools;
- identification of types of professional training acquired and required for teachers;
- analysis of any discrimination cases against marginalized children in schools;
- analysis of relationships between all children (including level of friendship development and violent behavior);
- analysis of relationships between teachers and children;
- analysis of school management regarding inclusive education;
- identification of support programs offered by the community regarding promotion of inclusive education;
- analysis of the cooperation level between schools and communities;
- identification of the cooperation level between schools and relevant institutions with regard to promoting inclusive education;
- identification of current programs within communities aimed at improving inclusive education;
- identification and analysis of available mobile teams and their specific activities.

## 4. Identify the level of school inclusiveness.

This will include:

- identification of the levels of inclusive culture, politics, and practices within schools as well as the differences among schools.

## 5. Identify areas within inclusive education practices that are in need of improvement, including identification of barriers and recommendations.

This will include:

- identification of specific problems and related areas;
- identification of necessary interventions aimed at the promotion of inclusive education;
- identification of recommendations for improving the quality of education and provisions of inclusive education for all children (referring to specific stakeholders).

### ***Planning and conduct of research***

Based on the research goals and the complexity of questions, the planning and conduct of this research entails three important functions: descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory. With the data obtained, we aimed to *describe* facts (e.g., estimation of a number of children who are not included in the educational system; number of children with special needs and other marginalized groups of children such as Roma who attend schools; description of identification procedure used in order to identify children with special needs etc.), *explore* specific questions (e.g., analysis of the legal framework defining inclusion, roles of various stakeholders etc.), and finally *explain* current practices and offer possible solutions for the improvement of inclusive education quality.

### ***Research planning***

In order to obtain relevant, reliable and accurate results, research planning involved the development and piloting of instruments to be used, choosing a method of data collection and sample selection.

The first instrument drafts were developed in accordance with research goals. Hence, data collection was to be obtained using various sources of information (quality and quantity of expected information), such as structured interviews, questionnaires, and protocols for focus group discussions. Once the content and logic analysis of the first instrument drafts and their preliminary applications (using the method of role play) were developed, they were piloted in two schools and were subsequently followed by changes.

For data collection, four types of research techniques were used: “face to face” structured interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and content analysis of legal regulations.

The selection of schools was based on research goals, geographic representation (all cantons and regions in Republika Srpska and Brčko District), area (urban/rural), and inclusive education practices (random selection and selection based on recognized good practices) with the objective to obtain a representative, unbiased, and external valid sample.

The following group of people were part of the school sample: children with and without special educational needs, parents of children with and without special educational needs, pedagogues (psychologists, social worker and defectologists were applicable), teachers, school directors, representatives of Municipal and Educational government, representatives of non-governmental organizations dealing with issues of inclusive education, Pedagogical Institutes and Mobile Teams.

Overall, the research was conducted in 40 primary schools. 32 schools were randomly selected based on the following principle: two schools from each canton (1 urban and 1 rural); ten schools from the Republika Srpska entity (5 urban and 5 rural); and two schools from Brčko District (1 urban and 1 rural). An additional eight schools were chosen in consultation with the Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes, UNICEF and NGOs. Those schools were selected on the basis of “known good practices”. See appendix 1 for schools visited.

### ***Research conduct***

Preceding data collection, researchers were trained in the application of instruments. Researchers were involved at almost every stage in the development of instruments, so they were fairly well acquainted with the content of interviews, questionnaires, and protocols for focus group discussions. Role play was used as a technique with researchers, to further strengthen their skills in the application of instruments. During the training, researchers were also alerted to the typical errors and biases associated with data collection.

After the training, the instruments were piloted. During the pilot stage, the researchers' skills for leading an interview and a focus group were assessed by a supervisor. The role of the supervisor was to follow the procedure of the instruments' application and address any necessary changes to be employed.

Data collection was conducted during the time period of November 2007 to February 2008, in 40 primary schools, 12 Ministries of Education, 34 local communities, 8 Pedagogical Institutes, five NGO's and four Mobile Teams. Data collection was finalized without any significant obstacles or problems<sup>1</sup>.

After the data was collected, coding, entry and data analysis proceeded. The SPSS program was used for data analysis.

### **Participants**

In each school, the school director and the pedagogue were interviewed; questionnaires on school statistics, for teachers, parents, and children were filled out; as well as the protocol for focus group discussions for teachers, parents, and children were applied. Also, data from the representatives of the Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes, municipal representatives, NGOs and Mobile Teams were collected.

**Table 1.** *Number of participants within each sample.*

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Total number of participants</b>
School directors	40
School pedagogues	36
School teachers	225
Children with special needs	126
Other children	130
Roma children	9
Parents	205
Municipal representatives	34
Ministries of Education	12
Pedagogical Institutes	8
NGO's	5
Mobile Teams	4

As can be seen from the table above, 265 children participated in focus group discussions. In addition, 880 children filled out a questionnaire on school inclusiveness.

See appendices for visited schools, Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes, municipalities, Mobile Teams and NGOs.

### **Instruments**

The following instruments were used in this research:

- protocol for structured interviews with school directors
- protocol for structured interviews with school pedagogues
- protocol for focus group discussions with teachers
- protocol for focus group discussions with children
- protocol for focus group discussions with parents
- questionnaire on school statistics
- questionnaire for children
- questionnaire for both teachers and parents
- protocol for structured interviews with representatives of local communities (municipalities)
- protocol for structured interviews with representatives of the Ministries of Education
- protocol for structured interviews with representatives of Pedagogical Institutes
- protocol for structured interviews with representatives of the NGO sector
- protocol for structured interviews with representatives of Mobile Teams

<sup>1</sup>The primary school "Marko Marulic" in Prozor was randomly selected as one school from Herzegovina-Neretva Canton rural area. However, data was not collected in this school as the school management showed reluctance to cooperate. This reluctance was initially reflected through postponing data collection and eventually explicitly refusing to cooperate with the research team. Therefore, in order to obtain quality data, another school was randomly chosen from Herzegovina Neretva Canton. This school was "Prva O.S. Konjic".

### ***Protocol for structured interviews with school directors***

The interview for school directors consisted of the following five parts (In addition to the first part, which contains more general information):

1. Director's role within the process of inclusive education;
2. Appropriateness of legal regulations;
3. Professional training/education of school staff regarding the process of inclusive education;
4. Types and levels of cooperation the school has with other relevant institutions and organizations regarding inclusive education;
5. Problems and possible solutions regarding inclusive education processes.

### ***Protocol for structured interviews with school pedagogues***

The interview for school pedagogues consisted of the following seven parts:

1. Approaches and procedures regarding the identification and categorization of children with special needs;
2. Pedagogue's role in the promotion and facilitation of inclusive education;
3. Ways of working with children with special needs inside and outside a classroom;
4. Professional training of school staff;
5. Situations or cases of discrimination of children;
6. Cooperation with relevant institutions/organizations;
7. Specific problems and potential solutions.

### ***Protocol for focus group discussions with teachers***

The focus group with teachers was divided into five themes:

1. Relationship between children and the teaching curriculum (appropriateness of the teaching curriculum for children's needs, abilities, and interests);
2. Support system (appropriateness of working conditions with regard to children's needs);
3. Ways of working with children with special needs (frequency and methodology both inside and outside the classroom);
4. Cooperation (with school pedagogues and Mobile Teams);
5. Recommendations (ways of improving the quality of education for children with special needs and other marginalized groups of children).

### ***Protocol for focus group discussions with children***

The focus group with children began with more general questions aimed at creating a positive and warm climate (What do you like in your school and why? What don't you like in your school and why?). Followed by questions on ways of working with children (frequency and methodology both inside and outside the classroom) and their assessment of how useful these approaches are. Finally, there were some questions on relationships among children and about things they would like to change in their own school.

### ***Protocol for focus group discussions with parents***

The focus group with parents consisted of five parts.

1. Appropriateness of the teaching curriculum to children's needs, abilities, and interests (the Relationship teaching program children);
2. Ways of working with children with special needs and appropriateness of working conditions to children's needs (Support system);
3. Relationship between teachers and children (children were also asked);
4. Attitudes towards distinctiveness, consequently attitudes towards children from marginalized groups (e.g., minorities) attending a class together with other children;
5. Ways of improving the quality of the education for their children (recommendations).

### ***Questionnaire on school statistics***

This questionnaire contained a series of questions referring to different aspects of inclusive education. The first part referred to a number of children with special needs in the school, Roma children and others. There was also a question on the number of categorized children with special needs and types of categories their needs refer to such as epilepsy, cerebral paralysis, chronic diseases etc. Then, questions on the level of satisfaction of children with the quality of

education as well as the appropriateness of the teaching program were posed. This questionnaire was filled out by school pedagogues (where available) or school directors.

### ***Questionnaire for children and adults (indicator of the level of inclusiveness of children)***

The questionnaire for both children and adults consisted of 39 questions measuring different indicators of inclusiveness. The questions were formulated in the third-person singular and ranged on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) and measured three dimensions with each dimension entailing two factors:

Dimension A: Creation of an inclusive culture

Factor A.1: community development

Factor A.2: development of inclusive values

This dimension aimed at measuring the level of an inclusive culture referring to the creation of a secure and supportive community, which accepts, cooperates, and values all its subjects targeting their development. Such a community encourages the development of inclusive values, which are being passed on to employees, students, parents/care-takers, and members of the school management. The principles and values of such an inclusive culture determine the decision process of school politics such that the educational development becomes a continuing process.

Dimension B: Creation of inclusive policies

Factor B.1: creation of a school for everybody

Factor B.2: support for distinctiveness

This dimension enables inclusion within the entire school system. Such school politics encourage active participation of all its members and undermines any pressures aimed at exclusion. It implies clear strategies and activities aimed at the acceptance and support of distinctiveness. All types of support are created on the basis of inclusive principles and incorporated in the common development framework.

Dimension C: Creation of inclusive practices

Factor C.1: organization of the learning process

Factor C.2: mobilization of resources

This dimension creates practices, which reflect inclusive culture and politics. For example, the creation of classes takes into account the distinctiveness among children; students are encouraged to actively participate in all educational segments; and school staff identify resources (material as well as people such as students, colleagues, and communities, who can be mobilized and used in supporting the learning and participation process).

### ***Protocol for structured interviews with representatives of local communities (municipalities)***

Protocol for structured interviews for municipal representatives consisted of four parts:

1. Cooperation between municipalities and schools;
2. Inclusive practices supported by that particular municipality;
3. Ways of improving the quality of inclusive education;
4. Recommendations on promoting inclusive education in the educational system.

### ***Protocol for structured interviews with representatives of the Ministries of Education***

Protocol for the Ministries of Education consisted of five parts.

1. Law and legal regulations referring to inclusive education;
2. Role of the Ministry of Education in improving the quality of inclusive education;
3. Current inclusive education practices (e.g., what, how, and with whom are they working on promoting and improving inclusive education practices);
4. Obstacles towards high quality inclusive education and potential ways of overcoming them;
5. Recommendations on the improvement of inclusive education.

### ***Protocol for structured interviews with representatives of Pedagogical Institutes***

The first part of the interview with pedagogical institutes referred to:

1. Legal regulations about inclusive education and their level of appropriateness;
2. Role of Pedagogical Institutes in improving inclusive education;
3. Current inclusive education practices implemented by Pedagogical Institutes and concrete activities and ways of implementing them;
4. Professional training of school teachers;
5. Problems and possible solutions.

### ***Protocol for structured interviews with representatives of the NGO sector***

The questions for representatives of the NGO sector dealing with issues of inclusive education were framed in four parts.

1. Area of activities, projects referring to inclusive education that have been implemented and way of assuring their sustainability;
2. Their assessment of school inclusiveness and appropriateness of the teaching curriculum with regard to children's needs, abilities, and interests;
3. Their view on the problems of promoting and implementing high quality inclusive education for three specific groups of children: children with special needs, Roma children, and returnees;
4. Recommendations on improving inclusive education in the school system.

### ***Protocol for structured interviews with representatives of Mobile Teams***

In addition to the first part, which contain more general information:

1. Profiles of Mobile Team members;
2. Areas of activity, ways of working, school selection procedures, involvement of mobile teams in the identification and categorization procedure, ways of evaluation of special teaching modes etc.;
3. Cooperation with school pedagogues, teachers, and Pedagogical Institutes.
4. Level of school inclusiveness and appropriateness of the teaching curriculum;
5. Perceived problems and ways of solving them;
6. Recommendations on promoting and facilitating inclusive education.

### ***Procedure***

All selected schools, municipalities, Ministries of Education and Pedagogical Institutes received an introductory letter by Save the Children UK. In the letter, the research goals and activities were explained in detail. It also informed them that they would be shortly contacted by either the research team (for schools and municipalities) or the project manager (for Ministries of Education and Pedagogical Institutes). Then, all relevant stakeholders were contacted by phone.

During the phone call, the purpose of the research was once again explained. Once this initial contact was established, the organization of data collection commenced. For those participants who gave their consent, interviews and focus group discussions were recorded. The parents of children, who were in focus groups, were in turn the participants of the focus group with parents. A questionnaire on school statistics was faxed or emailed prior to the data collection. A questionnaire for children was also distributed in randomly chosen classrooms, and a questionnaire for teachers and parents was distributed prior to the group discussions.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data obtained with interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using a qualitative approach. First, the audio-taped interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed. This was followed by content analysis in order to define broad contextual emerging themes and more narrow constructs and categories within each large theme for each school separately. Data obtained with questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS. Overall, three SPSS databases were created (for pedagogues, children, and adults).

In order to respect the principle of confidentiality, the names and place of origin of participants were not identified when quoting.

## RESULTS

### *Analysis of the legal and policy framework related to inclusive primary education in BiH*

Inclusive Primary Education in BiH is regulated by several laws: the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Entity/ Cantonal/ Brčko District laws on Primary Education, Book of Rules on the Education of Children with Special Needs and Pedagogical Standards and Norms for Primary Education. Inclusive education is further stipulated in the three action plans: Action Plan on the Education Needs of Roma and Members of Other National Minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Action Plan on School Enrolment and Completion in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Action Plan on Children with Special Needs.

In June 2008, the BiH Council of Ministers adopted Strategic Directions for the Development of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the implementation plan, 2008-2015.

Inclusive Education as such is rarely explicitly mentioned in the above policies, even though they do provide provisions for inclusive education.

Provisions granting access to primary education for all children (*enrolment and completion*), their equal and meaningful participation in schools in accordance with their needs, capacities and interest (*quality and participation*), and wider community involvement in school management (*community participation*) will be considered as inclusive education provisions, and therefore analyzed in this report.

*Legal provisions at all levels of the BiH government stipulate that **all children should be enrolled in primary education** and should receive education in accordance with their needs, capacities and interests.*

*Additionally, provisions prescribe an education setting that ensures **cost-free primary education for all children**, a school environment that accepts and supports child development and secures transport from home to school for some children (who live more than 2-4 km away from school).*

*Laws on primary education state that education will be **in accordance with the religious, language and cultural heritage** of children and their parents.*

*Monitoring of the school enrolment process is described as mere **information sharing** between the school and the Municipal Registrar's office, disregarding the migration flows, lack of birth certificates etc.*

*Even though laws grant the development of **individual school programs** for children with special needs, they are restricted to those children who have been officially categorized.*

*Furthermore, the usage of terminology across the laws at different levels/ cantons/entities is not unified, referring to **children with special needs** as children with disabilities, disorders, mental retardation etc. Focus is given primarily to children with decreased mental capacities, while children with behavioural and emotional problems are often omitted from the text of the law.*

*The laws also stipulate that **languages of national minorities** should be integrated into the school curriculum, but do not provide means for the implementation of these articles.*

*In general, even with the additional Action Plans and Book of Rules related to the education of children with special needs and national minorities, **implementation** of the provisions granting inclusive quality education is not at a satisfactory level.*

## Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH (July, 2003)

The Framework Law is the only law on education in BiH applicable to state level (Cantons, Republika Srpska and Brčko District). The Framework Law is the basis for inclusive education, as it sets the frame with which other laws on primary and secondary education need to be in accordance.

Inclusive education is engraved into the Framework Law indirectly through several provisions ensuring the education in schools is in accordance with children's potential and abilities, and promotes respect for human rights.

Provisions from the Framework Law are repeatedly appearing in entity/cantonal/Brčko District Laws.

The Framework Law sets primary education as obligatory and free of charge for all children. It obliges governmental bodies to take necessary measures to ensure conditions are established for free access to primary education and equal opportunity to participate in the education process without discrimination of any kind. It also obliges parents to ensure regular attendance of their children, the failure of which results in legal sanctions.

Education authorities and institutions, together with the schools, are responsible for providing functional facilities and supporting infrastructure for children with special needs to allow unrestricted access to education.

Education of children with special needs shall be conducted in mainstream schools and in accordance with their individual needs. Individual programs shall be adapted to children's potentials and abilities. Categorization and identification procedures, as well as planning and working methods shall be regulated by entity, cantonal and Brčko District legislations. The possibility for education of children with special educational needs in special institutions is left open.

The Joint Core Curriculum shall provide the application of a curriculum that corresponds to the developmental needs of children, their age and special interests. The responsibility of schools is to examine and rate it in order to ensure that students acquire an education suitable to their needs and possibilities.

The language of any significant minority shall be respected.

Schools promote and develop permanent and dynamic partnerships between schools, parents and the local community. Parents have a right to participate in all levels of the decision-making process relevant to the work of the school. School board members are selected from school staff, school founders, parents and the local community.

### Entity/Cantonal/Brčko District Laws on Primary Education

The entity/cantonal/Brčko District Laws on Primary Education are built on the Framework Law, which identify the promotion of human rights as the main objective of primary education.

Within the entity/cantonal/Brčko District laws, children with special needs are described in different ways: children with special needs, children with special educational needs, children with disabilities, children with behavioral disorders, and children with obstructions in development etc., sometimes even within the same Law.

The Law on Primary Education in the Republika Srpska defines children with special needs as: children with physical and sensory impairments, children with mental disabilities, multiple disabilities/disorders, autistic children and children with other disorders.

Most of the provisions within the entity/cantonal/Brčko District laws are the same, however, some provisions for inclusive education are different from area to area. Where a provision is specific for an entity or canton it will be specified.

In general, within the entity/cantonal/Brčko District laws, schools are defined as educational institutions for children with normal psycho-physical development and for children with psycho-physical disorders. However, schools can organize special classes for children with special needs if it is inappropriate to include them into mainstream classes (in the RS Law, the word *inclusion* is explicitly mentioned). Additionally, primary schools can be mainstream and special.

Enrolment of children in primary schools is based on the lists submitted to schools by the respective municipalities, which is based on the birth registration.

Children with special needs are accessing primary schools following a special procedure proposed by the Minister, which allows them to attend primary schools until they are 18/19 years old.

The Law on Primary Education in the Republika Srpska ensures transportation to all children who travel further than 4 km, and the implementation of this right is the responsibility of the government. The Sarajevo Canton law on Primary Education ensures transportation to all children traveling further than 2 km or any other distance, if the child has obstacles in movement. The implementation of this right is the responsibility of the respective municipality.

Students can't be expelled from primary education, but can be relocated to another school nearby. The new Draft Law on Primary Education in the RS, forbids expulsion of children from primary schools.

If schools do not enroll all the children within their district they will be fined (for example: 1.000-5.000 BAM in Republika Srpska, 1.000-4.000 BAM Zenica-Doboj Canton - 1BAM=0.511€).

If parents fail to enroll their child in school, they will be fined 100-500 BAM in most cantons, however, some cantons have increased the fine like in the Tuzla Canton from 200-1.000 BAM.

If a school enrolls a child in a special school without a Classification Resolution issued by the Commission for Categorization, the school will be fined as well.

In mainstream schools, children with special needs are educated based on a school curriculum adapted to their individual needs, potentials and capabilities. (The Law on Primary Education in Zenica-Doboj Canton emphasizes that the development of an individual curriculum is part and parcel of inclusion).

If there are children with special needs in a regular class then the number of children in that class can't be over 18; where as a class without children with special needs can't be over 32 children. Special classes have between 6-10 students.

Schools can organize combined classes. If two different grades of students are combined then the maximum number of children is 18 and if three or four grades of children are combined the maximum number of children is 12. The Law does not take into consideration cases where combined classes include children with special needs.

If ethnic minority groups of children are present in the school, the school needs to organize classes in the language of the specific group.

For children who are lagging behind the school curricula, supplementary classes should be organized.

For the implementation of pedagogical-psychological work within the school, pedagogues, psychologists, social workers, doctors, medical technicians, speech therapists, etc., can be employed by the school.

The principal school managerial board consists of school representatives, founder representatives, local government representatives and parents. Some laws allow other citizens to contribute to the development of the school and become members of the school board. The main objectives of the school board includes liaising between the school and local community, and advancing the school economy.

In the Tuzla Canton, school boards do not have a managerial role since the Law on Primary Education prescribes that each school in this canton should have a managerial board composed of teachers, parents and founders - 1/3 each.

Schools can establish student and parent councils to promote the interests of the schools in local communities, represent their views and promote their commitment.

### **Book of Rules for Education of Children with Special Needs (based on article 19 of the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education)**

The Book of Rules adopts the inclusion of children with special needs in primary education institutions and determines the criteria for the formation of groups and classes, including children with special needs.

The Cantons, Republika Srpska and Brčko District have their own Book of Rules. There is no major difference between these documents.

The inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream classes is done based upon the recommendations of the expert team during the period of observation in the (regular) school. The observation period is initiated by the teacher or parent and lasts between 3 to 6 months. The

expert team consists of pedagogue/psychologists, psychologists, defectologists, speech therapists, teachers and parents where appropriate.

The assignments of the expert team are: the analysis of existing documentation, pre-categorization, development of an individual curriculum in cooperation with the teacher, monitoring of the methodical and didactical application of the curriculum, implementation of the treatment, cooperation with teachers and parents and evaluation of the individual curriculum.

A maximum of 3 children with special needs can be integrated in the same regular class. For each child with special needs, the total number of children in that class is reduced by 3. In the New Draft Law on Primary Education in Republika Srpska, a maximum of 2 children with special needs will be integrated in regular classes. Children with greater and/or combined disorders are educated in special schools.

Children with special needs use regular or adapted individual curriculums with individualized methods and the support of an expert team. The individual curriculum is a curriculum appropriate to a child's disability/disorder. In general, it presents the school program in a less intense manner, enriched with specific methods, means and accessories. This curriculum is implemented by defectologists and teachers.

The Ministry of Education appoints and decides on the number of Mobile Teams needed to support schools, where an expert team does not exist. The government will plan to introduce teaching assistants in regular classes. Students in their last year of their teaching degree can be teaching assistants in the class.

### **Book of Rules for Education of Children of National Minorities (Republika Srpska)**

The Book of Rules for the Education of Children of National Minorities, sets the framework for the provision of educational needs of children of national minorities. The Book of Rules is addressed to all national minorities even though some provisions are specifically designed for Roma children. The Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska is responsible for the implementation of all provisions within this Book of Rules.

The Ministry of Education and Culture shall ensure regular and systematic data collection of the enrolment and drop-out rate of national minorities. Furthermore, schools have to enroll Roma children even if they do not have proper documentation.

Irrespective of the number of national minority members, each group will have the opportunity to learn their own language, literature, history and culture in their own language.

### **Pedagogical Standards and Norms for Primary Education**

The main objective of the Pedagogical Standards is the assurance of equal baseline conditions for the development of student's capacities, emphasizing scientific cognition, student's needs and social commitment.

The Pedagogical Standards regulates: the number of classes and groups, school space, equipment and school accessories, number of children in classes and groups, number and structure of school personnel, student standard, free activities and social and cultural activities in school.

For students and employees who can't conduct every day activities without technical accessories or can't communicate without some special technique, the procurement of the accessories is ensured. Unimpeded access to all floors and rooms, and adapted toilets need to be ensured. Also, transportation of students from home to school is ensured by the municipality or government (varies from canton to canton and entity) for all children traveling more than 2-4 km.

The standards prescribe a maximum, optimum and minimum number of children in one class. In regular schools the maximum number of children varies from canton to canton and between entities, from 32 to 34 children, with an optimum being 24 and a minimum of 18. In mainstream classes, the number of children with special needs can't be over 3 and all such children need to have a categorization paper.

For the purposes of monitoring, analysis and advancement of educational activities in schools, and cooperation with students, teachers and parents, schools with up to 25 classes have pedagogues, pedagogue-psychologists or psychologists. For each class over 25, schools can

have an additional 0.05 pedagogues or pedagogue-psychologists or psychologists. Schools with 50 classes can employ a social worker (0.02 social worker per class). If needed, schools can employ defectologists from special schools.

Schools are obliged to have a school kitchen, and the costs for children in social need should be covered by the Centre for Social Welfare (for Sarajevo Canton). Schools will enable the usage of available school books for children in social need and children with special needs.

The schools will also establish continuous and direct cooperation with the community and the citizens of the local community through cultural, sports and other activities.

## **Action Plan on the Educational Needs of Roma and Members of Other National Minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The Action Plan on the Educational Needs of Roma and Members of Other National Minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a document signed by all Cantonal Ministries of Education and the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska. It emphasizes the disadvantaged position of Roma and members of other national minorities within the BiH education system.

The document is divided in two parts - the Action Plan for the Educational Needs of Roma and the Action Plan on the Educational Needs of Members of National Minorities. The overarching goal of the Action Plan on the Educational Needs of Roma, is to improve the access of Roma to the mainstream education system in BiH, through addressing a variety of obstacles currently faced namely practical, systematic and wider issues, while enhancing Roma communities' participation in and commitment to their children's school enrolment and completion. It stipulates five objectives and requires actions for different responsible bodies in order to achieve them.

The promotion of systemic change in order to ensure accommodation of the educational needs of Roma and members of other national minorities, and the removal of financial and administrative barriers to Roma school enrolment and completion, are two objectives focused on ensuring access to education, and preventing drop-out.

## **Action Plan on School Enrolment and Completion in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The Action Plan on School Enrolment and Completion (APSEC) in BiH is a document signed by all cantonal Ministries of Education, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska and the Brčko District government. The overarching goal of the APSEC is to ensure that all children and youth, but also adults, complete primary education and acquire conditions that will enable further continuation of education through the creation of the necessary preconditions for uninterrupted access and regular school attendance.

School enrolment and completion for children will be reached through the promotion of systematic changes so that all children have the opportunity to complete primary education and through long term removal of financial and administrative barriers. This will be possible through garnering support and participation of parents, educational institutions and communities related to the education process.

## **Action Plan on Children with Special Needs**

The main objective of the Action Plan on Children with Special Needs is to ensure that children with special needs are included at all levels of the education system, by identifying ways to overcome the challenges that impede their inclusion into the general classroom and to develop a plan to educate the community with respect to the inclusion of children with special needs.

It is evident that this action plan promotes all three components of inclusive education: access, quality and community participation. However, most of the actions are focused on improving the quality of education and participation, and community participation.

In order to achieve inclusion of all children with special needs at all levels of the education system it has to; ensure regular and systematic assessment of children; precisely define the type of disability (with less-labeling terminology); establish expert teams; ensure that children have a

developmental portfolio; ensure a consistent pre-service and in-service training program; develop clear guidelines for the assessment of students' achievements; develop standards for an appropriate educational environment; establish a program for accelerated learning; and develop a flexible system for assistance based on community participation.

The removal of financial and administrative barriers will be made possible by ensuring a budget for the regular assessment of children with special needs, for teaching assistants, learning equipment and through allocating budgets for specialized education institutions.

Garnering support and participation of parents, educational institutions and communities in the education process will be achieved through continuous efforts to involve all relevant authorities in the education of children with special needs; the organization and development of promotional/educational material containing positive examples of practice; and the organization of a nation-wide public information campaign on the importance and benefits of inclusive education.

### **Framework Law on Preprimary Upbringing and Education in BiH (November 2007)**

The main principles stipulated in the Framework Law on Preprimary Upbringing and Education in BiH, guarantee inclusive preschool education that respect child development levels and ensure equal possibility for participation without discrimination on any ground.

Furthermore, this law establishes children's rights as basic goals of preschool education. These goals entail the following: the child's best interest, respect for individual cultural; religious and national values of the child; an education environment that provides equal opportunities for the optimum development of all children; respect for the language and religious freedoms of national minorities; integration of children with special needs in preschools in accordance with individually developed programs; and the parent's right to choose the institution where their child will attend preschool education. In case a right is in a conflict with another right, the advantage will be given to the one, which will ensure the best interest of the child.

The Framework Law on Preprimary Upbringing and Education in BiH stipulates that parents have a right to form a Parents Council and the preschool institution has an obligation to support them. However, the law does not state if this is mandatory. Whereas preschool education (a year before primary school) is obligatory for all children. Financing of preschool education is to be regulated by a competent educational authority. The Center for Social Welfare has to co-finance preschool education for children without parental care, children with special needs, children with disabilities, civil war victims, children whose parents are unemployed, children with single parents, children who receive social support and children whose parents are full-time students.

### **Strategic Directions for the development of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the implementation plan, 2008-2015 (June 2008)**

One of the priorities in education development is the prevention of social exclusion of children and youth. This document re-confirms that primary education is compulsory and free of charge.

Within the principle of access, equality, and equity in education, special attention is given to the identification of and early intervention for individuals with learning difficulties. The document emphasizes the need for increased cooperation between education authorities and local communities, and reiterates that education should be tailored in accordance with minority needs and the afore-mentioned Action Plans. The elimination of the phenomena of "two schools under one roof" and ensuring proper conditions for all children to be included in the education system, are additional reforms that the education system should undergo.

In order to prevent social exclusion and socially unacceptable behavior, evidence keeping and monitoring of the number of pupils (especially girls) who drop out of formal education will be put in place. As a short term measure, an action plan for reducing the drop-out rate will be designed. An expected mid-term result is a 7.5% lower drop-out rate. The long-term expected result is 100% enrolment and completion rates.

Short-term objectives for the education of children with learning difficulties are: to reach an agreement on common principles and criteria for establishing and financing special upbringing-educational institutions; establish an adequate system of recognition and identification of children with special needs; ensure adequate support to teachers and parents for work with children with special needs (mobile expert teams etc.); develop a framework program content and based on this elaborate a specialist program content, occupational work program and individually tailored program contents. Mid-term objectives include: the adoption of additional legal and pedagogical acts necessary for the full implementation of the right to education of children with special needs; the development of training programs and permanent professional development for teachers; removal of architectural barriers to ensure free access for children with disabilities and develop a program for the inclusion of parents and volunteers in the activities with children with special needs. Long-term objectives are: all teachers complete training on individualization and inclusion in education, and enable permanent education of children with special needs.

### **Assessment of appropriateness of current legal regulations**

Considering all the laws, bylaws and action plans, one could recognize the education system in place, however, in practice, stipulated provisions are rarely met. In order to obtain some information regarding the adequacy and sufficiency of the current legal framework in terms of promoting and enabling high quality inclusive education, school directors and the representatives

of the Ministries of Education and Pedagogical Institutes were asked to give their opinions and perspectives.

Overall, the laws and legal regulations referring to inclusive education in primary schools are thought to be adequate but *not sufficient* enough. For example, school directors believe that legal regulations are not elaborated enough when it comes to attributing specific tasks to specific institutions responsible for the promotion and implementation of inclusive education. In addition, they believe that each school, by law, should have (besides school pedagogues) at least one psychologist, defectologist, and/or a social worker, who would provide support to teachers working with children with special needs. Also, the topic of inclusive education with a particular emphasis on 'working with children with special needs' should become an inevitable part of teachers' higher education. In addition, laws referring to inclusive education should define specific and particular types of further professional training for teachers working with children with special needs. For more specific legal amendments, see below.

### **Suggestions by school directors on necessary legal amendments:**

- Decrease the number of children per class;
- Legal provision that enables financial support to teachers working with children with special needs.  
*"We need to motivate these people through financial means... but currently we are not in that position. You can only imagine how difficult it is for a teacher who has up to 30 children in a class including those who have some special needs. He or she alone has to do everything in one class while working at the same time with average, gifted and children with special needs. They also need to prepare themselves for these kids, which is a double load and at the same time they are not being stimulated enough."* (Assistant to a School Director);
- Form an assessment commission consisting of professionals (besides the school pedagogue) who would assess each child before the enrollment. This should be obligatory for all schools in all regions;
- Define guidelines for the assessment of children with special needs;
- Define regulations regarding professional orientation of children with special needs hence, which high school they can attend, what type of work they can perform and how they can be active and significant members of society;
- Define a methodology for working with children with special needs;
- Provide teaching assistance to teachers working with children with special needs;

## ***Suggestions by Ministries of Education and Pedagogical Institutes on necessary legal amendments:***

- Prescribe timely identification of children's abilities, needs, and interests;
- Define the exact process of identification/categorization (who, when, and how);
- The notion of inclusion (inclusive education) should be defined more clearly and precisely:  
*"We are still not very clear on what inclusion means"* (Minister of Education);
- Creation of individually-adapted programs should be obligatory;
- The type, role, and the process of developing individual programs should be better defined:  
*"Teachers currently believe that there are two types of programs (regular and inclusive ones). But this is not true. For example, a child with LMR (mild mental retardation) and ADHD (Attention Deficit Disorder) cannot follow the same (inclusive) program. This issue needs to be defined and made clear."* (Minister of Education);
- The number of children with special needs within one class should be defined clearly. According to legal regulations (see Book of Rules for Education of Children with special needs), a maximum of three children with special needs can be integrated into a regular class. Many of our participants suggested that this number should be reduced to two;
- The law should define which "type of children," depending on their needs, can and need to be fully integrated in regular classes define the limit (criteria) to which children can go to regular schools:  
*"I don't think that children with severe mental problems can be combined with other children in one class. That would create problems for both that child and other children."* (Minister of Education). *"Inclusion should not be implemented at all costs...everything has to be in accordance with a child's abilities to follow regular classes and school capacities."* (Assistant to the Minister of Education);
- Define stages/steps to be taken regarding categorization complaints made by parents;
- Adapt all regulations to the 9-year education system;
- Standardize all laws at a state level:  
*"We need to unify and standardize the legal regulations"* (Director of the Pedagogical Institute);
- Employ teaching assistants to work with children with special needs should be obligatory;
- Establish and create Mobile Teams all over the country in accordance to school and community needs;
- 'Modernize' the categorization scale by creating more categories adapt it in accordance to the WHO (ICD 10);
- The role of each stakeholder such as school directors, pedagogues, teachers etc. should be precisely defined.

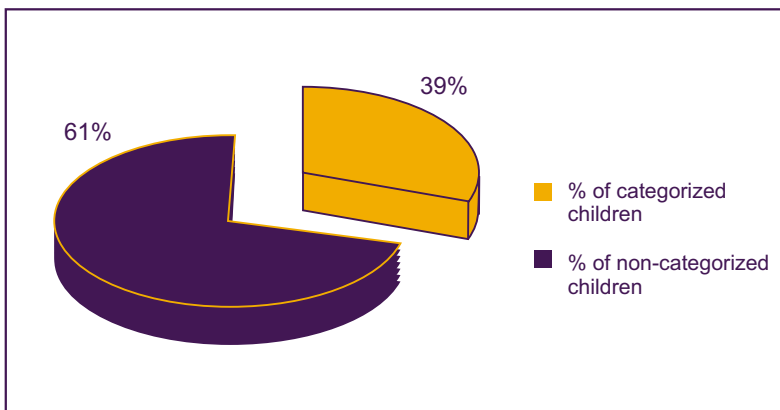
## General statistics

Using the questionnaire for school pedagogues, we intended to obtain existing information on the number of children in (and out) of schools, children with special needs and Roma children. See appendix 1 on the number of children across schools. Out of 25,728 children from 40 schools, 913 children (3.55%) have been identified as having some special educational need. Out of which 286 children (31%) have been categorized by the categorization commission. See figure 2 for the percentage of categorized and non-categorized children - for those who are recognized as children with special needs by school personnel.

*Most of the schools taking part in the research **do not have any data on out-of-school children**. Those schools that are aware of some Roma children who are not enrolled in school are **ignoring the problem** by simply attaching all the responsibility to their parents.*

*Over 2/3 of children who are identified as children with special needs in regular schools are not **categorized** by an expert commission as such, but recognized by school staff.*

**Figure 2.** Percentage of categorized and non-categorized children with special needs across 40 primary schools.



### Children excluded from the school

Regarding the number of children who do not go to school in the communities we visited, in general, school pedagogues could not provide us with reliable information. The majority of them stated that they are not aware of children who do not go to school. In other cases, the school pedagogue mentioned that some Roma children (although majority of them do go to schools) do not attend the school. She, however, does not know the exact number but believes that it is mainly their parents' responsibility. Sometimes they don't want their children to go to school and sometimes they simply withdraw them.

*"We had a case where two girls (VI VI grade) left our school their father came to school and said that they won't be going to school anymore, that they had enough and given that they are girls they don't need to know more. Currently, their third sister is now in the II grade. What will happen with her, we still don't know."* (school pedagogue).

In these types of situations, the school is not very influential. The first thing they do is to try to convince the parent to send the child to school. If this does not prove efficient, then they send a request to the court and Ministry of Internal Affairs or the Centre for Social Work (CfSW). What happens afterwards, they do not know but believe that legally some financial sanctions are eligible.

In general, school pedagogues listed potential reasons of why some children do go to school, such as:

- Socially-threatening family circumstances such as alcohol and drug addictions in the family;
- Poor socio-economic conditions (including Roma families);
- Some parents are simply not interested in sending their children to school and/or do not realize the importance of education;

Overall, measures aimed at preventing the above mentioned reasons such as raising awareness of the importance of education and offering financial support should be taken, encouraged and facilitated by the relevant authorities and local communities.

## Identification process of children with special needs

In most schools, the process of identification begins with a child's enrollment in the school and administering a battery of different tests. Parents very rarely report a child's special needs (unless there is some visible physical disability). Therefore, the identification of a child's conditions and needs usually begins with the process of School enrolment through the application of different tests and observations.

Types of tests which are used in order to assess children their specific abilities varies significantly from school to school (as well as from region to region). In general, these tests aim at measuring spatial and temporal orientation, perception - recognition, memory, and other cognitive abilities, pronunciation, and articulation.

Such an assessment of a child's abilities and other conditions (such as social and health status) is conducted in several ways. In all schools, the school pedagogue plays a crucial role in this process. However, in addition to the school pedagogue, some schools have employed other professionals such as psychologists and defectologists (special educators) (see appendix 2 for a list of schools, which have employed special educators).

In some schools, preceding enrollment, a child has to bring a medical statement issued by the health centre (except in Tuzla Canton). In other schools, a commission for identification (which includes the school pedagogue as well as other professionals and special educators) is being formed simply for the purpose of assessment. Usually, this commission

consists of a medical doctor, the school pedagogue, teacher(s), psychologist, defectologist, social worker, and a speech therapist. However, it must be noted that such commissions are not available in all schools and that in many places, the identification and assessment process is solely conducted by the school pedagogue using a battery of tests. Regarding types of tests used for assessment, there is not one common procedure across the country. For example, in Republika Srpska, school pedagogues use tests recommended by the Pedagogical Institute. These batteries of tests include the standard KTZ (Kettwig) test for maturity and the Goodenough test of human figure. In the Canton Sarajevo, they use tests to assess a student's maturity for primary education. In addition to this, some schools in the Canton Sarajevo use tests for spatial and temporal orientation, progressive colored matrices, Goodenough test (Drawing test of the human figure), memory test, Akadija test etc. In the Tuzla Canton, school pedagogues run a battery of tests as suggested by pedagogues at the cantonal level. However, in one school, a school pedagogue reported using a test, which she has developed herself based on her experience and knowledge, and consulting relevant literature. In the Una-Sana Canton, school pedagogues apply standardized tests as suggested by the pedagogues at the cantonal level.

Although the majority of schools, use some form of testing, in Zenica-Doboj Canton, the schools were instructed by the Pedagogical Institute not to administer any kinds of tests. Instead, school pedagogues fill out a pedagogical form containing information on the emotional and social

*The identification of children with special needs in regular schools starts with the process of school enrolment as well as using **instruments for measuring the cognitive ability** of children, and placing them under a **6-month observation period** by experts (pedagogues, psychologists, speech therapists or mobile teams).*

*While the focus of the testing and observations is placed on what a child **can and can't do**, most of the teachers state that this information is irrelevant as it does not provide additional information on a child's education. Teachers seek information on the child's **potential for learning**, kind of instructions they need for optimum educational outputs, necessary didactical tools, ways in which the child can benefit from the educational environment, etc.*

*Some schools lack in professionals such as psychologists and speech therapists and are unable to get the support they need from the centres that can provide professional services to children. The Ministries of Education have established **mobile teams** or **support teams** to support schools in most regions in BiH.*

*Attitudes towards the categorization process of children with special needs are not coherent. **While some praise the role of categorization others diminish it.** Those who praise it, mostly talk about general rights that a person can access thanks to being categorized. In general there seems to be a low appreciation for categorization with regards to education purposes due to the partial procedure. Nevertheless, laws stipulate that no child will be placed in a special school without a categorization resolution, and if done differently a fine is prescribed.*

aspects of a child by talking with the child, and a questionnaire filled out by parents. Also, this procedure is being conducted with a group of 4-5 children in order to minimize the perception of being tested whereas in other places the application of tests is mainly conducted on an individual basis.

As it can be seen, the type of tests used for the assessment of a child's level of abilities varies from place to place. But in most places<sup>2</sup> some form of testing is being done. In addition, the identification procedure includes the observation (of a child's behavior, establishment of relationships, openness to a new environment etc.) by the school pedagogue. However, it must be noted that not all schools included in this research reported to have an employed pedagogue. Three of the schools covered in this research (in Stolac, Glamoč, and Gornji Rahići) do not have a school pedagogue. For school enrolment purposes, these schools rely on school pedagogues working in other schools in their vicinity or other employed special educators such as in the Gornji Rahići School.

In the majority of schools we visited, parents filled out a questionnaire on the psycho-physical conditions of their child, including the socio-economic family condition, perceived emotional state of the child (e.g., trauma experience), physical and medical condition, child's social skills and level of independence.

Also, children bring a medical statement before their enrollment. However, this procedure is not standardized across regions. In other regions (Tuzla Canton), medical statements are not required. However, according to the information received while conducting this research, medical statements will be re-introduced again in all schools across the Tuzla Canton.

If a child is identified or rather assumed - (either by a test or observation) as having some special needs, he/she undergoes a high attentive observation by a teacher during the first year (usually 6 months). Hence, once the child has started the school, the continuation of identification is mainly based on further observation by teachers and school pedagogues. However, as previously mentioned, some schools have besides the school pedagogue other employed professionals and special educators (such as psychologists, defectologists, speech therapists, social workers, etc.). In these schools, the identification, observation and assessment of health, psychological, pedagogical and social conditions, is also being conducted by them. This includes meetings with the child, attentive observation and in some instance application of further tests (e.g., instruments aimed at children with slower cognitive development or diagnostic tests for speech, language, writing, and reading assessment). Tests used for the identification of the extent and level of special needs have been developed by the professional team (pedagogue, psychologists, defectologist, and educators) in some cantons.

After a child has been identified by the teacher as still having certain special needs (e.g., experiencing specific difficulties in the learning or socialization process), the usual procedure is then a) to consult with the school pedagogue (and other employed special educators-if available) and b) contact members from the Mobile Team for their assessment<sup>3</sup>. After the Mobile Team has received the request by the school (if available), the usual procedure is to observe the child for a certain period of time and issue a recommendation for further steps to be conducted. In most cases, the school pedagogue informs the child's parents before contact with the Mobile Team has been established. However, we have identified some schools where parents are being contacted after the observation (recommendation) conducted by the Mobile Team.

After this, teachers or school pedagogues contact the parents for a meeting. If the recommendation (as issued by the Mobile Team or recommended by a teacher and/or school pedagogue) is to send the child for further assessment and if the parents agree, then it is the parent's obligation to take the child to the CfSW for categorization. However, without the permission of a child's parents, a child cannot be sent to the CfSW. Hence, the parent's permission is a precondition to any kind of assessment (e.g., application of any kind of additional tests) including the final categorization. A quote by one school pedagogue illustrates this point well:

*"My hands are tied. Without the permission of parents, I cannot apply any kind of instruments."*

If parents refuse to send the child to the CfSW for categorization, in some cases, the school recommends sending the child to the Centre for Mental Health in order to receive a recommendation issued by a psychologist. In general, parents seem to be more comfortable with a psychologist's assessment rather than with a categorization. However, psychologists

<sup>2</sup> Exception: At the school in Bijeljina the identification and assessment is solely based on the pedagogue's observation.

<sup>3</sup> Note that not all schools in BiH have access to Mobile Teams. So far, mobile/professional teams are active in Sarajevo and HNK canton, and RS entity.

working in Centers for Mental Health are only eligible for the conduct of psychological assessment but not categorization (which includes all other aspects such as medical, pedagogical, defectological etc.).

### ***Problems associated with the identification procedure***

The major problem regarding the identification procedure refers to tests used for a child's assessment. In the majority of schools, the tests used for assessment are neither standardized nor aimed at the identification of a child's potential. The types of tests vary from school to school and are focused on detecting a child's difficulties rather than his/her potentials. Therefore, in order to address this issue, relevant stakeholders should focus on either the development of new tests or the revision and standardization of old tests.

Subsequently, these tests are being applied mainly by school pedagogues who are eligible to administer such tests and analyze them, and not by school psychologists. Given the current circumstance that psychologists are not employed in schools, the school pedagogue has to do the job of both. The following quote by a school pedagogue illustrates this point well:

*"I am a pedagogue and I should not be doing this. Application and analysis of data obtained with different test should be performed by a professional team."*

Employment of psychologists in primary schools should be prioritized by the government if an appropriate and standardized assessment is to be conducted and expected.

### ***Categorization procedure***

The above-mentioned procedure summarizes steps towards categorization. Categorization across the region is being conducted by the commission for categorization within the CfSW or the municipality (Herzeg-Bosnia, and Posavina Canton<sup>4</sup>). In addition, children from West-Herzegovina Canton are being sent for categorization in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. However, not all children who have been identified as experiencing specific (learning) difficulties undergo categorization. The commission for categorization consists mainly of a psychologist, defectologist, social worker, and a medical doctor.

One of the key determinants of whether a child will undergo the categorization procedure is the parent's willingness and psychological readiness to initiate this process. Consequently, it is mainly the parents' responsibility and decision to contact the CfSW after a recommendation has been made by the school pedagogue, teachers or Mobile Team. School pedagogues mentioned fear of stigmatization and financial costs as being some of the main reasons why parents show reluctance towards their child's categorization. This fear stems from discrimination by the community and reluctance by the parents to acknowledge their child's needs/problems. This fear is particularly spread in rural areas more so than in urban areas.

*"Other people will think that my child is crazy, if I take him for categorization."*  
(a parent)

Regarding the issue of financial costs, some schools such as "Simin Han" in Tuzla adopted a policy of inviting professionals from the CfSW (the commission for categorization) to the school directly where they were able to conduct some parts of the categorization procedure. But in major cases, it is the parent's obligation to take the child to the categorization commission (hence pay for it).

Here it must be noted that the categorization conducted by the CfSW should not be regarded as the only step in the process of a child's assessment. As reported by the school defectologist in Brčko, each child should be sent for further re-categorization in order to assess the change in the level of the particular need. Unfortunately, re-categorization or reassessment of a child's needs and abilities is not very common. The majority of schools reported that the CfSW does not implement the process of re-categorization. However, other schools such as those in Posavina canton reported that the categorization commission conducts re-categorization every four years. Independent of this, re-categorization should be facilitated on all levels and across all schools.

Overall, not all children who have been identified as experiencing or having certain difficulties have been categorized and hence are in possession of a formal certificate-categorization resolution. See figure 2 for the estimated number of categorized children. Children who have been categorized are mainly children with mental disabilities, cerebral paralysis, epilepsy, combined disorders and visual/hearing impairments.

<sup>4</sup> Here it must be noted that Odžak municipality does not have a categorization commission. Currently, children from this municipality are not being categorized.

Those who have been categorized receive a so called categorization resolution, a statement issued by professionals (the categorization commission). This resolution acts as a legal document stating a child's condition and providing him/her with specific rights such as the development of individual programs. Basically, if a child possesses a categorization resolution, issued by the CfSW, the Ministry of Education issues a permission to create individually-adapted programs. This implies that the school is *legally obliged* to create such programs for categorized children. However, it does not imply that the school (teachers) cannot do so in the situation of non-categorized children. Whether a school (including teachers) believes that they need this formal categorization resolution in order to create individual programs, vary from school to school. For example, teachers in some primary schools reported that a categorization resolution is a necessary condition for individual programs to be created in the first place. Without it, they do not and will not create individual programs adapted to a particular child's abilities and needs. However, in other schools, teachers reported that the creation of individual programs is not conditioned on a categorization resolution and report to adapt and create specific individual programs even for children who do not possess the above mentioned categorization resolution as issued by the categorization commission.

However, it must be noted that not all children who have been categorized as such follow a precisely defined individual teaching program (as it is required by law). In some schools, even those children who have been categorized do not follow an individual curriculum. Some of them attend regular classes following an individualized teaching approach. Other categorized children are placed in special classes, and only few of them do indeed follow an individually-created curriculum within regular classes. For more details, see the section below on inclusive practices inside the classroom.

Although this categorization resolution might provide some benefits for a particular child (see section below), it often presents a very brief description of a child's condition (on two pages). This includes a report on the psychological, cognitive, pedagogical, defectological, and social condition of the child. These brief descriptions often end with a recommendation such as 'a child identified as having x condition is recommended to attend a regular class by following an individually-created program.' Teachers often report that this categorization resolution simply confirms what they have already assumed and does not provide them with any concrete suggestions and recommendations.

*"It is absurd that a child receives a categorization resolution on one page without any concrete recommendations for teachers and without any emphasis on the child's abilities and potentials. If a child is not capable of doing one particular thing, let's see what he/she is good at and let's force that."* (a school pedagogue).

*"In my opinion, that commission for categorization should establish what a child can do and what it can't. I think that those tests used for categorization are fairly old. Using such tests, a child is categorized and re-categorization does not take place. In this context, we should look into this further how is this categorization being conducted, which instruments are being used and how often should a child be re-categorized."* (a school pedagogue).

### **Problems associated with categorization**

- Parent's unwillingness to send the child for categorization (fear of stigmatization);
- Lack of a categorization commission within school proximity: in some regions, there is only one categorization commission (in Mostar) covering schools in two cantons (Western-Herzegovina and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton). Based on this, some children have to wait for a significant amount of time in order to get categorized;
- Financial costs of the categorization process;
- Too little time spent on the categorization process not enough to truly assess a child's abilities and difficulties;
- Focus is mainly on detecting disabilities and difficulties and not potentials;
- Places children into limited number of categories;
- One often used category refers to 'combined' disorders, which does not state the main issue or primary concern;
- No conduct of re-categorization in most schools.

## Do we need categorization for education purposes?

The categorization procedure conducted by the categorization commission results in a formal categorization resolution (certificate) stating the child's condition. According to some professionals, this formal certificate could be beneficial for several reasons:

- Legally, the number of children within one regular class can be decreased if the school can 'prove' that they have children with special needs within that particular class. Based on this, teachers could simply have more quality time to spend with each child as there are fewer of them in a class. Also and looking at this issue from a legal perspective, a school can require the formation of so called 'special' classes if they can prove that there is a certain number of children with special needs. However, what are advantages and disadvantages of a special class? See section below on the phenomenon of special classes;
- The possibility of employing special educators (from the Ministry of Education) such as psychologists and defectologists is more likely if the school can prove it has a certain number of children with special needs;
- The categorization resolution enables the creation of individually-created programs (the Ministry of Education issues permission for the creation of individual programs only after the child has been categorized). In some schools, teachers believe that they need this categorization resolution in order to create individual programs. Essentially they don't need it but would prefer it as they don't trust their own judgment and competence;
- Categorized children cannot fail classes;
- Teachers believe that they would be better acquainted with the child's characteristics from the beginning (if the child is categorized early) vs. discovering and learning about them with time;
- Children or their parents have some legal benefits (they can claim their social rights) in the case of categorization or proof of certificate (e.g., financial compensation);
- A child with special needs, without the categorization resolution, cannot be placed in a special class or in a special school. If the school places an identified (but not categorized) child into a special class, it will be fined (according to legal regulations at the cantonal, entity, and Brčko district levels);
- The process of categorization seems to be conducted for more severe cases, which then enable placement of children in special classes as well as the development of individual programs;

In contrast to the above mentioned advantages, some professionals believe that categorization and assessment of children are not necessary as they create unnecessary stress for both parents and children, and often result in stigmatization. What is needed instead is constant, regular, and systematic observation.

*"It is absurd to believe that with the application of a few tests, we could be sure to which category a child belongs or how mature a child is."* (a representative from the Pedagogical Institute).

In support of this view, another professional stated that there is no need for the categorization of children:

*"We don't need categorization. It excludes inclusion. For example, I had one child who was gifted in one specific area but those people from the CfSW categorized it as being mentally retarded because that child did indeed have some limited abilities. However, it was gifted and fairly intelligent in other areas. Sometimes, the professionals from the CfSW make drastic mistakes. In the end, what can you conclude about a child in 30 minutes?"* (a Mobile Team member).

On the whole, some problems associated with the categorization process (besides the potential of creating stigmatization of a categorized child) are simply potentials for assessment errors. As illustrated by the above quote, the application of a certain number of tests in a limited time can not produce a whole and adequate picture. In extreme situations, such an assessment error is associated with negligence of a child's abilities and potentials. Also, and as mentioned by several participants, a child is often only being sent for categorization once. Such an approach of having no re-categorization or reassessment practice cancels out potential changes and progress experienced and made by a particular child.

Essentially, categorization of children with special needs should only be conducted where necessary such as in situations where a child can gain some specific legal rights (e.g., financial compensation) or if a child is to be placed in a special class or school given his/her level of difficulty (in cases of severe mental disabilities). All other benefits, as listed above, which are associated with possessing a categorization resolution, could potentially be transferred to all children identified as having some specific educational or learning difficulty.

### ***The role of parents in the categorization procedure***

The role of parents in the categorization procedure of a child's special needs varies from school to school as well as from region to region. In general, and as stated above, the parent's involvement in the identification/categorization procedure as well as in the entire education of their child is crucial. However, whether parents are indeed involved in this process depends on several factors. Several schools reported that parents did not follow the advice provided by the school pedagogue to send their child to a defectologists or speech therapist. This might suggest that not all parents are willing to cooperate with schools when it comes to their children's needs. Such an unwillingness or unreadiness for cooperation by parents prevents any kind of formal categorization, which might prevent the development of an individual curriculum aimed at that child's particular needs. Overall, the parent's role in the categorization procedure is crucial if the child is to be categorized by the categorization commission.

In general, parents are fairly reluctant to send their child for categorization as they fear stigmatization.

*“One parent told me that it is better for the child to fail a class three times than to be categorized” (a teacher).*

### ***Children's involvement in the categorization procedure***

Again, there is no standardized procedure describing ways in which children are being introduced to a fact that some children have special needs and require special treatment. A school pedagogue from a school in Sarajevo believes that there is no need to do this in an explicit manner as children with special needs 'know' and 'feel' that they are different as much as other children know who these children are. This means that there are situations where a child is not explicitly introduced to the process of categorization hence the reasons and the nature of the process is not being explained.

*“These children are still too small to understand the nature and process of categorization but I believe that the child probably feels that something is happening based on the special conversation with the pedagogue and professionals from the centre for social work.” (school pedagogue).*

Another school pedagogue's opinion is that not talking about it can be beneficial for children.

*“The less you talk about a child's special needs, the less commercialized it gets and the easier it is for a child to live in his/her environment. Somehow, they become one with the environment.” (school pedagogue).*

Here again, the role of parents is very important. It is also up to a child's parents to decide if and how the child will be explained the reasons and the nature behind the categorization process.

*“It is a parent's decision on how and what they will say to their child.” (school pedagogue).*

In case other children express disagreement with the special treatment of children with special needs, then a school pedagogue conducts an individual face-to-face conversation in which he/she explains the reasons for the special treatment. After such conversation, there are usually no further perceived injustices by other children.

At the Banja Luka school, the NGO EDUCAID has organized workshops for children where children with special needs were introduced to the nature and reason of the categorization process. At the same time, other children were being sensitized to the notion that some children might and do have special needs.

In situations where the procedure of categorization is concerned, the CfSW should inform the child directly.

## Inclusive Practices

As noted above, the research team has visited and interviewed representatives from the Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institutes, Mobile Teams, NGOs and municipal representatives throughout the country in order to identify their roles and existing inclusive education practices. The results are as follows:

### Ministries of Education

The role of the Ministries of Education refers foremost to the efficient implementation and enforcement of all legal regulations referring to any aspect of education. More specifically, the responsibility of the Ministries of Education is to create and facilitate mechanisms, which would enable access of education to all children, and ensure the implementation and respect of existing pedagogical standards through constant monitoring of the efficiency, management, and working conditions of schools. In addition, the Ministries of Education should provide quality working conditions within schools, which would contribute to an increase in the quality of education for all children such as; employment of necessary professionals (e.g., teachers and special educators) and provision of regular professional trainings for schools staff; regulation and adaptation of school facilities; provision of books, teaching and didactical material, technical equipment and other logistic support (e.g., provision of free transport for children).

### Pedagogical Institutes

Pedagogical Institutes are expert advisors to the Ministries of Education. However, not all Ministries have established Pedagogical Institutes such as those in Middle-Bosnia, Posavina, Western-Herzegovinian and Herzeg-Bosnian Canton. In order to address this, the Institute for Schooling in Mostar (Zavod za školstvo) acts as a Pedagogical Institute for the above mentioned regions<sup>5</sup>. As well, the Ministries of Education (or Department for Education as in Brčko district) take on specific activities to be conducted by the Pedagogical Institutes. Those specific responsibilities refer mainly to school monitoring, including supervision of teachers' work (e.g., books used for teaching, applied teaching and learning methodology, ways of assessment and evaluation etc.) and provision of support, training, and professional education for teachers, special educators, and parents.

Besides this, pedagogical institutes are also responsible for the development of methodology and instruments used for the assessment, identification, and progress monitoring as well as ensuring efficient application of pedagogical standards. Again here, it must be noted that not all pedagogical institutes report to have same/similar practices. The situation varies across regions

*The analysis of the results obtained identified four areas of inclusive practices: the formation of **mobile teams** or expert groups consisting of special educators such as psychologists, defectologists, social workers etc., which operate through pedagogical institutes; employment of **special educators** (such as psychologists and defectologists) within schools; provision of education and **professional trainings** via Pedagogical Institutes; and provision of **means to schools** (such as books, transport etc.). However, it must be noted that these inclusive practices are not being implemented by all Ministries of Education but present a summarized picture throughout the country.*

*Mobile teams are operational in **Sarajevski Canton, Hercegovacko/Neretvanski Canton and Republika Srpska**. Some other Cantons like Zenicko/dobojski Canton formed support teams at the school level, which consisted of pedagogues, teachers and parents whose primary task is to identify the type of support and resources a child needs in education.*

*The role of the **CfSW** is mostly seen as a procedure for categorization as it is generally excluded from the education process.*

*Work of international organizations and local NGOs is mostly focused on **developing capacities** within the education sector to advance quality and inclusiveness of the schools and education sector in general by providing trainings for teachers, direct services to children with special needs and/or Roma children, and lobbying Ministries of Education to conduct certain reforms in education etc.*

*At the school level, directors, pedagogues, psychologists, defectologists, teachers, parents and children are recognized as the most important stakeholders for the advancement of inclusive education. However, very few schools have hired **psychologists** and/or **defectologists** or have access to the services of the mobile teams.*

<sup>5</sup> Treba napomenuti da Zavod za školstvo u Mostaru pokriva samo one škole koje isključivo koriste hrvatski jezik, odnosno takozvane H-škole (za razliku od B-škola) u Srednjobosanskom kantonu.

and the existing practices depend mainly on financial availability, ministry management and initiative, level and type of existing cooperation with relevant institutions and non-governmental organization. However, the majority of Pedagogical Institutes have indeed organized (with support from the NGO sector) some form of educational trainings referring to aspects of inclusion. See below for more specifics on educational seminars and training on inclusive education conducted by Pedagogical Institutes or Ministries of Education in regions with no existing Pedagogical Institutes.

Inclusive practices, as conducted by Pedagogical Institutes refer mainly to the organization and implementation of various professional trainings. In major cases, the organization and implementation of educational/professional trainings are being supported by the non-governmental sector such as EDUCAID, MIOS, and DUGA, and international organizations such as OSCE. These educational trainings refer to workshops and seminars on issues related to inclusive education (such as the creation of inclusive classrooms, development of individual programs), study visits to other countries, and organization of round tables and public tribunals. However, it must be noted that the level and type of educational training received by teachers is not the same nor sufficient enough.

### **Problems associated with the Ministries of Education and Pedagogical Institutes**

As noted above, the role of the Ministries of Education and Pedagogical Institutes refer to ensuring the implementation of legal regulations and pedagogical standards, monitoring of schools and teachers as well as the organization and implementation of any kind of educational training. The efficiency of both the Ministries and Pedagogical Institutes is far from being equal across regions and depends on several factors such as the availability of financial means, management and cooperation within and among ministries/institutes, and the type and level of cooperation with schools and the NGO sector etc. When it comes to the assessment of problems associated with the efficiency of Ministries/Institutes, we encountered a wide range of problems, which cannot be standardized across the country. However, one common factor, reported by teachers, referred to the usefulness of educational seminars organized by the Pedagogical Institutes/Ministries.

Overall, teachers believe that the seminars, workshops, and educational trainings barely equipped them with concrete skills and knowledge, which can be applied in direct work with children. In addition, teachers commented on the low levels of creativity of the seminars. On the other hand, some Pedagogical Institutes reported dissatisfaction with school management with regard to irregular reporting of the schools' efficiency and the performance and progress of children. Here, we see that the level of cooperation and management of both parties (Ministries/Institutes on one hand, and schools on the other) needs to be improved.

### **Local communities municipalities**

The role of the social services sector in education varies not only across regions (cantons and entities) but also within municipalities and depends mainly upon the budget. The Majority of municipalities covered in this research are as active as their financial situation allows them to be. In particular, the role of the municipality refers mainly to provisions of transport and other means (e.g., books and sandwiches) for marginalized groups of children (e.g., Roma children and children from poor socio-economic backgrounds), and financial support for building reconstructions, for they believe that the main activities should be implemented by the Ministries and not the municipalities. However, in other regions (such as those in Posavina, Western-Herzegovina and Herzeg-Bosnia Canton) the social services sector takes on the leading role in the identification/categorization process of children with special needs. For more specific activities referring to education conducted by the municipalities, see below.

Although the role of municipalities varies significantly across and within regions, a more general observation is that the social services sector in local communities are not significantly involved in the process of inclusive education, but do report to be open to any kind of cooperation, which would benefit the inclusion process. Overall, schools reported to be fairly satisfied with the support provided by the municipalities although they believe that both the cooperation and direct involvement by the municipalities could be improved. One of the reasons for such a low level of

involvement by the municipalities (besides the management of the government body) is due to the perception that schools are entirely under the authority of the Ministries and not municipalities. When asked whether schools should fall under the authority of the municipality (vs. cantonal government), opinions differ. It seems that schools situated in rural areas (smaller regions), prefer to fall under the authority of the canton since they would get more financial benefits, whereas, schools from urban areas prefer to have direct financial contact with the municipalities, where the cooperation and management prove to be more efficient.

## Mobile Teams

The usual structure of a mobile team consists of a psychologist, pedagogue, speech therapist, social worker, and a defectologist. Such mobile teams are usually financed by the Ministry of Education and managed by the Pedagogical Institute. However, not all regions across the country have an existing mobile team. So far, this research has identified the existence of such mobile teams in two cantons (Sarajevo and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton) and Republika Srpska entity, whereas in other regions, some Ministries have formed so called professional/expert groups (see above).

Irrespective of what such groups of special educators are called, the role of these teams is mainly focused on the identification of children with special needs within schools. This identification is implemented via a 6-month observation. This type of observation is conducted both in the class and individually with the child. After the observation has been conducted, a Mobile Team/expert group issues an analysis of the child's condition (including specific learning and social difficulties) and makes recommendation for further steps to be taken. In addition to participating in the identification phase, members of the Mobile Team are also involved in helping the teacher design an individualized teaching approach. Also, depending on the availability, some members of the Mobile Team also work with the child individually. However, this does not seem to often be the case, as one Mobile Team often covers many schools making it impossible for individual work. See below for specific roles of each Mobile Team member as provided by the team in HNK canton:

- a. **Pedagogue:** observes children in order to identify children with special needs; assesses the learning ability of a child as well as areas in which a child has difficulties; evaluates the relationship between the teacher and the child; identifies how the child relates to teaching and learning requirements; establishes a linkage with the parents.
- b. **Psychologist:** determines the level of intellectual abilities of a child through the application of various tests; determines motor mobility and development of all general psycho-physical abilities; predicts a child's future development.
- c. **Speech therapist:** works with children with speech and linguistic difficulties; conducts diagnostic procedures; assists in the rehabilitation of speech problems; assesses the writing and reading ability level; helps children with dyslexia and dysgraphic difficulties.
- d. **Defectologist:** consults with the parents and the child on the child's current status and what can be expected from his/her development; offers professional support to teachers and parents; assists in the creation of individually-created programs; reports on the child's progress.
- e. **Social worker:** establishes the social and material status of a child, family relationships, and social maturity of parents; advises parents and teachers on how to work with children; introduces parents to the child's rights; assists in the provision of financial support.

As it can be seen from above descriptions a mobile team works with teachers, children, and parents. Working with teachers implies introducing a teacher to a child's specific characteristics and needs, including a child's defectological and educational status, recommending teaching methodology and literature, assisting in the adaptation of the curriculum to the child's needs, and monitoring the teaching method and the child's progress. Working with children includes an assessment of the current status through observation and analysis of the level of understanding of the current curriculum. Working with parents implies establishing cooperation and educating them on the child's specific needs and status, as well as providing advice on how to work with the child at home.

Inclusive practices as implemented by the Mobile Team refer to the implementation of its role and responsibilities (as described above). In the Canton Sarajevo, the Mobile Team consists of over 50 special educators and works in 56 schools. Based on this, each school has its own coordinator from the “Vladimir Nazor” centre who then determines the need of the school (number of required visits, observation etc.). So far, the Mobile Team from the Vladimir Nazor centre has been working (on a regular basis) in 56 schools and has observed over 200 children. With the cooperation of teachers, they have created 30 individual programs, individualized teaching approaches for approximately 170 children, and offered specific treatments (speech therapy or psychological treatment) to about 20 children.

In the HNK canton, two mobile teams each consisting of five special educators work in 33 schools. Until now, they have conducted observations in 33 schools for children with special needs from 1-4 grades and made recommendations/suggestions to teachers. This includes specific advice with regard to the teaching and learning methods of a particular child. The situation in Republika Srpska is very similar to the two above mentioned regions. Overall, there are 40 defectologists distributed across 48 schools, in 14 towns across Republika Srpska. Each person works (on average) 5 hours a week in a school assigned to him/her.

In general, the teachers find the Mobile Teams to be efficient and useful. They are grateful that they can rely on other professionals when it comes to getting a second opinion on identifying a child's needs or problems. However, the level of support provided by Mobile Teams is limited by the number of schools they have to visit. Such limitations (except in the Canton Sarajevo) result in little time spent on individual work with a child and a lack of direct support to teachers during the class. As stated so many times, teachers would prefer to have more assistance when it comes to direct work with children. In some schools, teachers reported that Mobile Teams are not that useful as they sometimes only confirm assumptions developed by teachers and pedagogues themselves. However, this should not suggest that Mobile Teams do not facilitate the process of inclusive education, rather that schools (teachers) are in need of additional support.

### **Centers for Social Work**

The role of the Centers for Social Work refers mainly to child protection in situations of child abuse, divorce, no parental care etc., and to provide the categorization of children with special needs via the established commissions for categorization. These commissions conduct the assessment of a child's needs, abilities, and interests as well as socio-economic, family, and health conditions. Based on these assessments, the commission at a particular Center for Social Work (CfSW) issues a categorization resolution stating specifically to which category a child's condition refers to and (based on the category) what the recommendations are.

The commission for categorization consists usually of the following members: social worker, pedagogue, psychologists, defectologists and a medical doctor. This commission conducts four types of assessments: health, social anamnesis (family conditions, socio-economic status etc.), psychological and pedagogical (emotional condition, easiness of established contact etc.) and defectological (including assessment of specific abilities such as cognitive, speech, spatial etc). Based on these types of assessments, the commission issues a recommendation. In most cases, the recommendation is that a child is to continue his/her education following individually-created and adapted programs. In some more severe cases such as those of severe mental disabilities, the commission recommends attendance of a special school. However, not all commissions for categorization are of the same profile nor do they conduct their work with the same professional approach.

Schools reported that the cooperation with the CfSW is mainly initiated by the schools themselves. Very rarely is any kind of cooperation initiated by the CfSW. Despite this being an indicator of the low levels of initiative exerted by the CfSW, in situations of established cooperation, schools report not to be very satisfied. Overall, they believe that the CfSW are fairly slow in problem solving, efficiency and organization. In many places, schools reported that the CfSW take too much time to respond efficiently to their requirements and reports. In more

extreme cases (e.g., Stolac), the school director said that they contacted the corresponding CfSW regarding one pedagogically-neglected child, but that they have never responded to their request. In Brčko district, they reported that the categorization conduct is not done very professionally and that CfSW do not pay family visits as much as they should. In fact, some schools (including reports by school directors, pedagogues, and teachers) are not very happy with the cooperation nor with the efficiency of the CfSW.

## NGO Sector

Roles of the NGO sector in advancing inclusive education are:

- Creation of a network between relevant sectors (e.g., education, health, and protection) and improvement of the cooperation between relevant stakeholders (e.g., schools, municipalities, Ministries, Pedagogical Institutes etc.);
- Increasing self-efficiency and self-initiative of the local communities (including schools) through direct and indirect support such as financial means and trainings;
- Creation and training of human resources;
- Offering direct support to children with special needs, parents, teachers etc.;
- Increasing the participation of local community and children through the creation and implementation of inclusive education;
- Advocating educational reform in cooperation with the Ministries of Education;
- Promotion of inclusive education “education for all” through campaigns, round tables, press-conferences etc.;
- Conducting research on problems and need assessments;
- Creation of educational and promotional materials;
- Supporting the prevention of mental health;
- Decreasing stigmatization and differentiation among children;
- Facilitating the development of every child's potential.

In this research and through an application of interviews with governmental institutions and schools, we have identified a range of both local and international non-governmental, and other organizations working on the issues of inclusive education. The practices implemented by those organizations refer mainly to the training of human resources, advocacy and promotional activities. For example, UNICEF's projects conducted in the domain of advocacy on educational reform resulted in a creation of an action plan on education of children with special needs signed by all Ministries of Education in the country. In the domain of training, referring to inclusive education, UNICEF has conducted most of its activities in cooperation with the local organization, “DUGA,” which has offered direct support to parents (220), children (100), teachers (120); training of 26 trainers from 5 regions; creation of working groups in four municipalities in order to apply the Index for Inclusions in 12 schools. Save the Children UK introduced the Index for Inclusion in six schools by forming coordination groups at the local level and facilitating self-management, participation, and the initiative of the local communities (including children). OSCE, in cooperation with the government has developed two action plans concerning the education of Roma children and children of other national minorities, and school enrolment. In addition, OSCE has organized a range of round tables across the country with regard to inclusive education and establishing further action plans.

In Tuzla canton, “MIOS” was identified as one of the major and most active NGOs aimed at improving the quality of education for all children. As such, they have conducted research on teachers' needs and attitudes towards inclusive education in eight schools; training of teachers (64) on theoretical aspects of inclusive education, identification of children, and the creation and adaptation of teaching and learning programs.

As well, EDUCAID, an Italian NGO, has been identified as working extensively on the issues of inclusion in both entities, particularly in Sarajevo, Mostar, Zenica, Tuzla, Bihać and Banja Luka. The activities conducted by EDUCAID mainly entail the organization of seminars and workshops for teachers as well as the opening of information-documentation centers. Their work is being financed by the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and two Italian regions (Emiglia-Romagna and

Marche). EDUCAID aims to promote the quality of inclusive education via three sectors: social, educational and health, which implies close cooperation with these three Ministries.

Overall, all non-governmental (both international and local) organizations aim to have a close collaboration with Ministries, Pedagogical Institutes, and local communities by trying to increase and strengthen local human resources, management, participation and the initiative of local communities.

## **School staff**

### ***Role of school directors***

Based on the information obtained from 40 schools, school directors believe that their obligation is to:

- ensure monitoring of teachers working with children with special needs;
- enable the enrollment of marginalized children such as Roma children into the school;
- contact relevant non-governmental institutions or mobile teams where and when their support is needed;
- manage coordination between teachers, children, parents, and other relevant institutions;
- create quality conditions for education and socialization of all children.

### ***Role of school pedagogues***

School pedagogues perceive their role in almost every segment of inclusive education starting with the identification of children with special needs, counseling work with both the teachers and parents, providing support to teachers in curriculum adaptation, and any sort of involvement in inclusive education projects conducted by other institutions or organizations. In addition, the school pedagogue tries to ease the transfer of a child from classroom to course-type curriculum by introducing all teachers and children to others children' special needs. More specifically, the role of school pedagogues is to:

- Identify children with special needs;
- Monitor (individualized) teaching approaches as well as evaluate the achieved goals (in cooperation with teachers);
- Choose classes and teachers who will be working with a child with special needs;
- Organize and conduct internal education for teachers on various issues including human rights, inclusion etc.;
- Establish contact with the CfSW and other relevant institutions;
- Organize teacher (consultations) meetings;
- Provide literature for teachers.

### ***Role of defectologists working in schools***

During this research, we have identified 19 schools (out of 40) that have another (employed) special educator, besides a school pedagogue. In most cases, this is a defectologist, who is permanently employed by the school. The following are specific tasks conducted by defectologists working in schools:

- Assist teachers in the development of individual plans and programs or at least in individualized teaching approaches;
- Offer advice, support and directions on how to adapt the programs;
- Give recommendations on how to assess child school success;
- Provide guidance on how to monitor a child's progress;
- Write progress reports for each child with special needs each year;
- Keep in touch with a child's parents (provide support, information on how to work with the child etc.);
- Individually work with children with special needs for a certain number of hours per week;
- Be involved in the identification phase;
- Prepare the child and parents for the categorization process;
- If available lead the special class.

### **Roles of teachers**

The role of teachers in creating, implementing and promoting qualitative inclusive education is crucial. For, they are the ones who work, teach, and educate children on a daily basis. In order to implement their daily activities effectively while respecting a child's special needs, teachers need to be sensitized towards the issues of inclusive education, be equipped with the necessary methodology and teaching approaches hence know how to effectively address a child's specific needs, respect the variability and distinctiveness among children, and cooperate effectively with all relevant stakeholders (e.g., parents). More specifically, the role of teachers is to:

- Identify children: assess their cognitive and social abilities, interests, and behavior;
- Create individually-adapted programs including specific short-term and long-term goals as well as teaching methods for achieving them, and/or adapting specific teaching units;
- Evaluate a child's progress (followed by the implementation of either specific individually-created programs or individualized-teaching approaches).

## **Inclusive Education Practices in relation to children with special needs**

### ***The phenomena of special classes***

The Integration of all children, including those with more severe learning difficulties, into regular schools can be seen in two ways. One way is to simply include all children (independent of their level and type of abilities and difficulties) into regular classes by transforming and adapting not only the teaching program but also the environment to children's' needs. Another way is to simply create a so called 'special class' where a limited number of children (usually ranging from 4-8) with more severe educational and learning difficulties are placed together (see appendix 8 for a number of special classes across regions). These classes are physically located in the school building with special educators (defectologist) working there. Here, it must be noted that only children who have been categorized as having a particular need by the CfSW who are in possession of a legal categorization resolution can (but do not have to) be placed in these special classes. Another condition for placement of children in these classes is a parent's permission. However, not all children who have been categorized by the CfSW attend these special classes. Children with less severe mental deficiency problems are included in regular classes.

Although these special classes are physically located in the school building and children do have an opportunity to socialize with other children during class breaks or school events,

*Education of children with special needs in primary schools is organized in three different ways. Children with severe mental disability can be included in **special schools** or in **special classes** within the regular schools. Children with less severe mental disabilities are integrated in **regular school classes**.*

*While most of the parents and NGO representatives argue that special classes in regular schools contribute to **further exclusion of children with special needs** from the society, most of the experts like pedagogues, psychologists and defectologists believe that children with special needs should receive education specially designed for them.*

*The most often mentioned practices for the advancement of inclusive education within the school class include the application of **individualized teaching approaches and individual teaching programs**. Most of the schools don't have full time experts for developing individual teaching programs or educators with significant knowledge on individual teaching approaches, which is being compensated by mobile or support teams, where possible.*

*Many teachers **expect to receive** an individual teaching program for all children with special needs illustrating the individual approaches they should use in their work.*

*A number of organizations are providing training for teachers (UNICEF, EDUCAID, DUGA, MIOS, Save the Children etc.) on inclusive education. Teachers are calling for trainings on **specific actions** to be taken in **specific cases**, rather than on trainings elaborating theoretical approaches.*

some people believe that it still creates segregation among children and does not facilitate the true inclusion of all children. A following quote by an NGO representative illustrates this view:

*“Problems we face won’t be solved by creating special classes within regular schools as it enables further segregation” (MIOS, TZ).*

In addition, some parents simply believe that their children would benefit more in an environment with other children,

*“For my child it is better to be in a regular class with other healthy children. If she would go to special classes or a special school, then she would adapt the behavior of these other children and wouldn’t achieve anything.” (mother of a child with special needs),*

and believe that socialization is more important than education,

*“For me, it is not important that my child learns and knows geography, but has the opportunity to live and grow in a healthy community, and spend time with other children. I know how much my child can learn and adopt, and how much I can personally help him, so that I don’t care about his grades but simply about the basics.” (mother of a child with special needs).*

Despite some objections to the existence of special classes, the majority of teachers and even parents do not object to this idea. For example, a defectologist working in one school believes that children who are placed in these special classes can achieve more than by being put in regular classes. The only thing these children will achieve by being placed in regular classes is socialization and not education. Whereas when a child is placed in a special class, there is higher emphasis on the educational aspect:

*“When I get a child with special needs, I don’t go right away to reading and writing. First we do some preparations based on a child needs.”*

The following quotes illustrate support for the existence of special classes within schools:

*“I believe that children with special needs will achieve their maximum in classes specially designed for them. Our colleague working in that special class can commit himself fully to these children and he also knows how to work with them. For socialization purposes, we could include these children in certain courses such as music, art etc....but not entirely” (teacher)*

*“I think that children with special needs who are placed in regular classes cannot get enough attention or the time they actually need” (teacher)*

*“My child is in the special class. Other children visit him in his class. Before, he used to be in a regular class but now he has been transferred to a special one. There, he is progressing more. He likes to go school and be with other children.” (parent).*

The above quotes support the idea of special classes by emphasizing the educational benefits. However, some people support the idea of placing children with certain special needs into special (rather than regular) classes because they believe that the current education system with its resources (or lack of it) cannot effectively address children's needs:

*“In our canton (Tuzla Canton), working conditions simply do not allow for the inclusion of all children with special needs into regular classes. First, we need the support of the Ministry, then we need to improve working conditions and only then can we start talking about inclusion. Let’s start with the Cantonal Ministry they don’t do anything. For example, I only have a board to write on in my class. And where are other technical and teaching support means, which I need for practical work with children with special needs a child with special needs has to see an animal...it has to see it literally in order to perceive it as such.” (biology teacher).*

Another quote provided by the Minister of Education in support of the above argument:

*“One cannot expect to include all children effectively into a regular school system” (Minister of Education).*

Arguments for more effective education support the idea of special classes especially with the lack of available resources and preparedness of the current education system. However, it must be noted that these arguments are not the only reasons why certain stakeholders support this idea. Some believe that including all children (independent of their difficulty and needs) into regular classes will simply place other children at a disadvantage and unfair position:

*“Including children with special needs into the regular education system places other children in an unfair and unequal position. Teachers have to commit more time to these children and hence neglect others.”* (Assistant to the Minister of Education).

The question as to how other children respond to their peers who have some particular learning, physical or other difficulty will be addressed later on in this report. For now, it should suffice to say that opinions on whether we need special classes or not differ and need to be analyzed further.

### ***Inclusive Practices inside the classroom***

The most commonly used practice in working with children with special needs, is being implemented by teachers with the support of school pedagogues (or other professionals working in the school such as defectologists or speech therapists if available) or members from the Mobile Team (if available). This practice is being illustrated through the use of an *individualized teaching approach*, which implies the adaptation of tasks and course content to a child's needs and abilities. In many cases, this approach is based on reducing the requirements and expectations of how much information and knowledge a child can adopt (e.g., if all children need to learn summation until the number 20, a child with special needs should only learn till 10); granting a child better grades in order to increase its motivation; and simply reducing the pace with which a specific content is to be adopted. In addition, teachers quiz children with special needs more verbally than in written form (as this proves much easier for many children with special needs), if needed speak slower or place those children in the first row so that they can easily follow the class.

In other cases, such an individualized teaching approach sometimes implies trying to distract a child through passive games (e.g., drawing, blocks etc.)

*“While I work with other children on specific tasks, I try to entertain him (a child with special needs) by giving him blocks to build houses. When other children are engaged in a more 'quite' task, then I approach him and try to work with him individually. However, all this is very superficial and I am aware of it.”* (a teacher).

However, although most schools practice an individualized teaching program and approach, not all schools have written documentation on individualized teaching programs and procedures. Hence, not all programs have been developed systematically into individually-adapted teaching programs. In order to do this effectively, the school needs to have some additional support offered by a team of professionals or special educators, who will work specifically on designing, monitoring and evaluating this program:

*“In order to have an individually-created program, we need to have a team of professionals but we don't. We try to adapt the current program to a child's needs but this mainly implies a reduction in criteria. In order to have efficient and adequate programs, we need to form a team of professionals who would observe a child for a few months and then based on that issue specific recommendations in order to create a program for a specific child.”* (a school pedagogue).

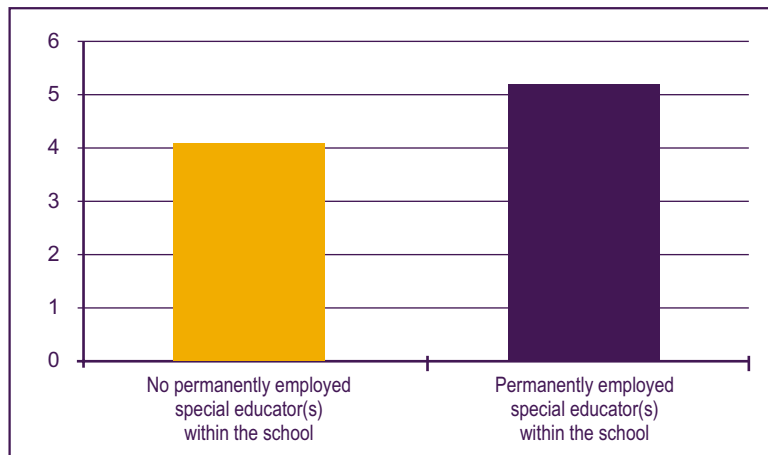
Basically, a teacher uses his or her own judgment while he or she adapts the course content to a particular child. In some cases, the teacher consults with the school pedagogue or members of the Mobile Team. In situations where a child is under the observation of a member from a Mobile Team such as a defectologist, he/she plays an important role in the creation of individualized teaching approaches through providing advice and/or support to teachers during the class. For example, in one particular school, a defectologist visits two hours per week; each hour is spent working with a child with special needs in the classroom, therefore helping the teacher.

One teacher from another school commented on the need of assistance from the school defectologist during class:

*“When the defectologist comes to my class, I feel like the sun decided to shine on me that day.”* (a teacher).

In schools that have pedagogues as well as other permanently employed special educators, children with special needs seem to be more satisfied with the education quality in comparison to schools, which rely solely on the support of the pedagogue. See figure 3 below.

**Figure 3.** Observation made by school pedagogues regarding the satisfaction of the quality of education for children with special needs (1-not satisfied; 4-moderate satisfaction; 7-fully satisfied)



For more data on beneficial effects of permanently employed special educator(s) within schools, see the section on the level of school inclusiveness.

In addition to special educators providing direct support to teachers for curriculum adaptation or offering assistance during the class, they also practice individual or group work with children with special needs in afternoon classes. In these classes, the emphasis lies mainly on the development of specific skills (such as hygiene, special orientation, dressing etc.) and socialization with others. If possible and necessary, children are also included in speech therapy. For more examples, see the section on inclusive practices outside the classroom.

In schools where teachers cannot directly rely on the support of special educators, teachers try to find some sort of guidance on how to effectively work with children who have special learning or educational needs, through the existing literature at their disposal.

In conclusion, the type and level of support provided to teachers varies across schools. In some schools, teachers solely rely on the advice provided by the school pedagogue, whereas in other schools, teachers receive some form of support from other special educators (either from a Mobile Team or from the school directly if employed).

### **Examples of individualized teaching approaches**

As it can be seen, the adaptation of course content is mainly based on a teacher's readiness, knowledge, judgment, and available support. However, teachers say that the implementation of such an individualized approach is not simple as it requires spending approximately 15 minutes with one child (e.g., in order to explain certain things) and 30 minutes with all the other children. For example, Nikola is a student with hearing impairments. Teachers say that he is actually doing well but that he still demands a significant amount of time for explanation. For this reason, Nikola receives the majority of information in written form.

*"I, as a teacher need to do this preparation beforehand. And I do so".... "We work more in practice than on paper."*

Other examples of how teachers tailor their teaching methods to children's needs are:

- increase a child's participation in the teaching process;
- adapt the course content to the child's level of knowledge, abilities, and interests;
- adapt the pace to a child's abilities;
- examine a child's progress (knowledge) more frequently;
- explain the content more clearly, slowly, and frequently;
- give the child frequent and positive feedback;

- use illustrative techniques for explanation and examination instead of writing;
- conduct more verbal vs. written exams;
- evaluate through description rather than numerical;
- when reading a book: other children should be able to identify and describe all characters vs. children with special needs should identify only the main characters;
- do not request from children with special needs to know all tenses - it is sufficient if they are capable of differentiating and using correctly the past, present and future tenses;
- use print (block) letters for writing lessons with children with special needs (If he/she does it without a mistake, then he/she gets the best grade) and use script letters with the average child;
- prepare teaching material at home;
- write with big letters on the chalk board for children with visual problems;
- use creative techniques such as drawing, coloring etc., in order to explain specific things;
- use sticks for math/counting;
- assign tasks such as re-writing texts, drawing figures, coloring;
- draw and color maps in geography class;
- tell a child ahead of time what exactly he/she will be evaluated on;
- use group and interactive teaching approaches;
- speak slower;
- if possible, provide a child with a computer for writing;
- engage other children to help teachers during the class by explaining the task and helping a child finalize some specific tasks more efficiently.

Here, we see that teachers do commit their time to a child's particular situation but that such commitment requires additional time and knowledge, which teachers sometimes lack.

In some schools, teachers are provided with occasional assistants (teachers) who then work individually with the child during the class. In other schools such as "Simin Han" in Tuzla, students from the educational-rehabilitation school in Tuzla have been coming once a week to work individually with one student (for four years now). In rare cases, a parent of a child assists the teacher during the class as well, but this depends on whether a parent is available, willing, and capable of assisting the teacher. In one school, teachers who have children with special needs in their class are provided with assistants, who help them during a class. Teachers reported this practice to be very useful.

Although most teachers who participated in this research seem to be trying to improve the quality of inclusive education, some of them regard inclusion as simply a  
'waste of time' (a teacher).

### **Problems teachers face while working with children with special needs:**

- Don't know how to work and how to approach a child with special needs;
- *"Everything is in the hands of the teacher. We do not have Mobile Teams. The inclusion is nicely presented but I think that talking about inclusion while at the same time not having a professional team is ridiculous. We have not been educated to work with these children. I don't feel educated or competent enough to work with such kids. We really try but when a child has a speech problem, I can only pretend that I am a speech therapist but I can never be the speech therapist."* (a teacher).
- Don't know how much they can cut off the curriculum;
- Don't know how to develop individual programs;
- Don't know how to evaluate a child's achievement;
- Don't trust their competence;
- Don't know how to work with a child effectively while making sure not to neglect other children;
- Afraid that too little time will be spent with other children, while they work with children with special needs

In most schools, however, teachers do try to adapt the program and work with a child on an individual basis, although in practice this does not seem to always be the case. Due to a large work load, time constraints, a perceived inability by the teacher to effectively work with children with special needs, it can happen that a child with special needs ends up sitting in a class for an entire day without having worked or participated at all. A quote by a parent illustrates this point:

*“Sometimes she comes home without having written anything down in her notebook. But her teachers say that the only thing that matters is that she sits in the class with other children quietly. But, she isn't a plant!!! Fortunately enough, we can afford a defectologist who works with her individually three times a week at home. Also, the defectologist working in the school helps her a lot too and we are really happy about that she really tries to maximize children's potentials by preparing tasks for them” (a parent).*

Also, another parent strongly complained about the lack of his child's participation in the class:

*“Children with special needs in this school are totally excluded from the process...they are only sitting there... teachers don't explain anything to them...they are dragging them from one class to another... nobody works with children with special needs.”*

Involving a child actively in the process of teaching and assessment is very important for a child's confidence and perceived feeling of usefulness. They seem to like it when they are treated equally - in the sense that they have to achieve something, learn, and contribute. A parent's quote:

*“She is happy when she has an obligation. Nobody has to give her grades. They need to treat her like other children. She cannot learn as much as other children can but she can do what she can and she is happy when teachers give her a chance to present what she has learned and acquired.” (a parent).*

### **Content analysis of individually-created programs**

Here, it must be noted that in our research of 40 primary schools, we have identified only four schools that have precisely defined individual programs for every child with special needs. See appendix 2 for the list of schools.

These programs were developed and created by the school professional team (pedagogue, psychologist, speech therapist, defectologist and teachers) in consultation with the parents. Overall, these programs are very similar in structure, however, the content differs from child to child. The structure of such programs includes six categories: the domain (such as course subject, speech, language, behavior, senses, motor abilities, communication, socio-emotional etc.); description of a particular domain (what is a child capable of in that particular domain); specific long-term and short-term goals to be achieved; didactical materials (techniques) needed for achieving the goals (e.g., visual means, teaching forms, books, toys, games etc.); teaching methods (e.g., individual/group work, demonstration, coloring, conversation etc.); and ways of evaluation (verbal or written exams).

However, we have also identified schools that have individually-adapted programs for some children in specific subjects (areas) such as language, math or ecology. So, whether a child with special needs will follow an individualized program for all courses or only some, depends on a teachers' knowledge, support provided, training, commitment and assessment.

The effective adaptation of a teaching program to a child's specific needs and conditions is based on the following assumptions:

- Respect for a child's specific nature including its needs, abilities, and interests;
- Effective assessment of the level of a child's abilities and knowledge;
- Effective assessment of a child's interests and other psychological characteristics;
- Definition of specific short-term and long-term goals in accordance with a child's needs and abilities, and teaching methods of achieving those (e.g., through writing, reading or oral communication; using pictures, drawings and flipcharts; texts books or individually-created text forms);
- Definition of criteria for evaluation of both short-term and long-term goals.

Specific aims of individually-created programs are:

- Establishment or identification of the level of a child's knowledge and abilities;
- Definition of long-term (yearly) educational goals;
- Definition of short-term educational goals;
- Identification of a child's specific needs and level of satisfaction;
- Definition of the curriculum to the extent that a child can participate effectively;
- Establishment of continued individual support;
- Establishment of an objective criteria, means, and evaluation of goals;
- Establishment of professional staff who will evaluate the application and effectiveness of the programs.

One of the biggest problems we encountered in this research, which refers to the issue of individual curricula, is that very often teachers expect to be offered individually-created programs for specific disabilities. They don't recognize that it is their responsibility to develop them. Also, they don't feel competent enough to develop these programs themselves.

*"Nobody came to me to tell me how I should work with those children. But what can you tell me anyways, when these children are not even categorized?" (a teacher).*

Many teachers simply expect the Ministry and/or the Pedagogical Institute to develop these programs for them, so they can apply it.

*"We should receive individually-created programs for children with special needs from the MoE because we are not competent enough to develop those. Just as there are regular teaching programs for each course, which neither the director nor us, the teachers, develop... since they come to us directly from the ministry... they should do the same for the children with special needs. However, nobody ever has delivered such a program to us since inclusion has been introduced to our school." (school pedagogue).*

Regarding children's perceptions on individualized teaching approaches and/or on individual curricula, they seem to prefer adapted programs, particularly the ones, which are creative and interesting. For example, they like it when the history teacher presents the content in a fairy-tale form. Besides adapting the curriculum to a child's needs, teachers also use other kinds of strategies. For example, they make other (mainly outstanding) children sit with a child with special needs in order to help him/her during the class. Help provided by other children can be very effective and useful, report both teachers and parents.

*"I help her mainly when she needs to read something in Croatian. Also in math I sometimes give her tasks using circles or hearts so that she can work on them while the teacher works with us (the other children). That way, she is not bored in the class and if she needs help she asks me for it and I help her." (an average child).*

However, not all children are willing to sit next to a child with special needs. In order to sensitize and raise awareness on the necessity to support other children who might have some special need, teachers discuss these issues in their weekly class discussions. During these discussions, they also talk about hygiene practices since that is a major issue in the Roma community. Overall, teachers perceive these open class discussions to be efficient.

Generally speaking, children perceive their relationship with marginalized children not to be any different from relationships with other children. Other children do not have any particular issues with children with special needs. Quite the opposite, in several schools both parents and teachers reported that children act very protective of children with disabilities.

### ***Inclusive Education Practices outside the classroom***

Inclusive practices outside the classroom refer mainly to the cooperation with parents, afternoon tutoring classes (mainly once a week) and various workshops aimed at socialization and integration. For example, teachers and/or members from a Mobile Team advise parents on how to work with their child at home, how to accept certain limitations of their child's abilities, what they can expect from their child etc. Involving parents in the process of inclusive education is crucial. One teacher says:

*“Working with children with special needs involves working with children, with a family, with uncles, aunts, and everybody else 'cause you got to involve everybody.”*

An effective involvement by parents enables continuity of support and monitoring. One teacher said:

*“During the class, we really do try to help these children. Even after the classes. But then, you got weekends, holidays etc. and if parents do not work with their children during this time, then our effort will prove useless.”*

Involving parents is being conducted either individually or through the organization of group meetings. Besides this, inclusive education practices 'outside the classroom' imply inclusion of children with special needs in extra-curricular weekly activities such as technical, musical, acting, eco- or sport classes. Socialization and integration with other children is being encouraged through participation in school plays and esthetical decorations of the school for different workshops. Teachers believe that children with special needs like creative activities a lot. They also participate in tutoring classes (frequency varies from school to school). These tutoring classes prove efficient as they are being conducted either individually with a teacher (or if available with some special educator who is permanently employed in the school) or in small groups. Both children and their parents reported tutoring classes to be useful in learning and developing specific skills.

However, issues such as establishing trustworthy relationships between a teacher and a child requires a lot of time. For example, a teacher needed a whole year to establish trust with an autistic child before she could work effectively with him. By visiting this child at his home regularly, she was able to build a trustworthy relationship. In addition, some children with special needs visit other institutions (if available) for further support, such as: 'DUGA' in Sarajevo, where defectologists work with children on particular tasks; and where speech therapists work within health centers such as the Association “Steps of hope” in Tuzla, where children can practice reading and writing. Other schools with good inclusive education practices such as “Simin Han” - have their own team of professionals offering tutoring classes by both the speech therapist and defectologist once a week. So, whether a child visits institutions or goes to afternoon tutoring classes for further support and educational development, depends on the parents' readiness and willingness as well as practical issues such as transportation.

### **Professional Training - support for teachers**

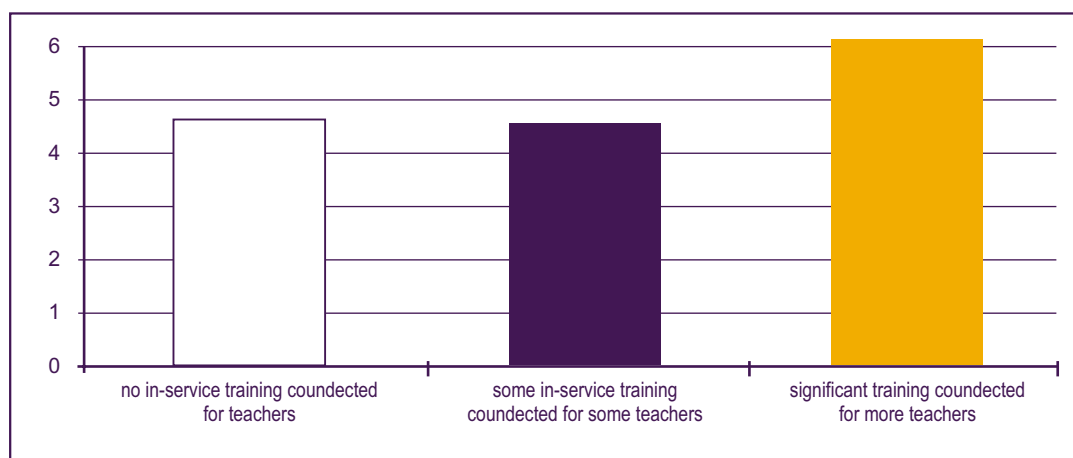
Promoting quality inclusive education is being encouraged through professional trainings of teachers. Such trainings are being implemented mainly in collaboration with the Pedagogical Institute and the non-governmental sector such as UNICEF, EDUCAID, MIOS, DUGA, and OSCE. Although these trainings do refer to inclusive education, teachers believe that it is not sufficient enough and that they require more focused and skill-oriented training. However, it needs to be noted that not all regions in BiH have received training: for example, in Bosnian-Podrinje Canton, the situation is not satisfactory. Teachers from two schools we visited reported not having had any training on inclusive education practices. A similar situation has been identified in other towns and places. A quote by the school director illustrates this point well:

*“My teachers never attended a seminar regarding inclusive education. Only once, people from OSCE came and told us that we should not differentiate between the children with special needs and other children. They visited us for half an hour and things they told us were not perceived as an advice but rather as a critique.”*

However, in other regions and places such as Sarajevo, Bihać, Banja Luka, Mostar, and Tuzla, teachers received some form of education/training aimed at the a) sensitization towards inclusive education, including the creation of inclusive classrooms, b) effective identification of children with special needs and c) development of didactical material when working with children with special needs. Educational seminars and trainings have mainly be initiated and financed by the non-governmental sector such as EDUCAID, UNICEF (in cooperation with DUGA), OSCE (in cooperation with local partners), and MIOS (in Tuzla Canton), and implemented in cooperation with local partners, Pedagogical Institutes, and Ministries of Education.

Besides training being useful for teachers themselves, children seem to be more satisfied with the quality of education in schools where teachers have received some significant and useful professional training, compared to schools whose staff do not have any. See figure below.

**Figure 4.** Observation made by school pedagogues regarding the satisfaction of the quality of education for children with special needs. (1-not satisfied; 4-moderate satisfaction; 7-fully satisfied)



Here we see the importance of professional training (see figure 4). Overall, there have been some attempts aimed at professional training of school staff working with children with special needs. In most cases, such seminars are being supported and organized either by the Pedagogical Institutes or the non-governmental sector. However, teachers, directors, and school pedagogues are united in their view that they are in need of further training to develop their skills for working with children with special needs.

### **Require training on...**

- how to recognize a child with special needs;
- how to assess a child's abilities;
- how to work with children with particular disabilities or needs;
- how to develop individual programs (in the workshop-practical rather than theory oriented);
  - “These professionals who educate us should enter into a class and hold a regular class with children with special needs and other children together. It is easy to hold lectures for me, you and other people. I haven't learned anything practical or anything applicable in these seminars.” (a teacher, Brčko);
- how to evaluate children with special needs;
- how to improve cooperation with parents;
- how to explain to other children that they should and need to accept children with special needs and treat them equally fair;
- how to establish team work;
- how to reduce prejudice among children, parents, teachers, and the entire community;

All teachers agreed that the above suggested education and training topic should be practical (skill) - rather than theory-oriented. These trainings should also be conducted by local and international professionals, and should be accompanied by study visits within the country as well as abroad. Also, they believe that all teachers in class and course-based teaching modes need to receive adequate training.

*“We lack professionals... we lack education... we need to know how far we can and should go with these children... we need to know how... 'cause we want to help these children.”* (teacher).

## **Relationships between children**

Both children and their parents believe that children do not discriminate against each other. Discrimination of children is not widely spread. A following quote illustrates this point well:

*"We try to work on this issue in various ways for example, we formed a board for human rights in our school, which will be dealing with both workers' and children rights; we also assigned an area for children rights and put a mail box in the school where children can anonymously report their human rights violations. Also, I always insist and tell them to come to me or to the director so that we can look into the problem. However, until now, we haven't had any cases."* (school pedagogue).

Overall, teachers, parents, and children commented that the relationship between all children is satisfactory and fairly supportive. Children, in general, do not mind having peers that are 'different.' In many schools, children seem to be very helpful and supportive of children with special needs. Also, both children and parents reported that the relationship with other children is good (particularly among younger age groups). At an older age, children tend to become more aggressive and sometimes refuse to be close to children who might be 'different.' For example, a hyperactive child reported being mainly alone when he is in school:

*"I don't spend a lot of time with other children. Sometimes, I do feel lonely. But, overall, I wouldn't change anything. I like it this way."* (a child).

## **The effectiveness of working conditions in schools**

Again here, when it comes to the assessment of working conditions in schools such as the availability of material means, support provided, appropriateness of teaching curriculum etc., it must be noted that a conclusion cannot be reached due to the variable working conditions among schools and regions within the country. However, in most schools, both teachers and parents agree that the teaching curriculum is not adequate enough and does not take into account children's needs, abilities, and interests, particularly children with special needs. In addition, they believe that the curriculum is too demanding even for children with average abilities.

The perception of working conditions varies from school to school. In some schools (e.g., Sarajevo canton), teachers are mainly happy with the provided technical and working conditions such as the availability of working space, technical support, classroom conditions etc. In other regions, teachers believe that technical working conditions are not sufficient enough. For example, there is a lack of computers, teaching rooms and toilets, necessary didactical material, elevators for children with psychical disabilities and parking spaces. In some places (due to poor socio-economic conditions), some children don't even have the required books. Here, we see that the quality level of working conditions differ significantly among regions.

*"Chalk board, is still the only thing we have for working with children with special needs"* (teacher).

## Inclusive Education Practices in relation to Roma Children

There are a number of barriers to the provision of quality primary education for Roma Children. For instance, the education system is primarily seen as a possibility for all children to participate rather than a proactive system striving to integrate all children.

*“Roma children have equal rights to enroll in primary schools as other children. Their exclusion is primarily the responsibility of their parents, and not the education policies.”* (representative of the Ministry of Education)

In addition to the passive education system for the enrolment of Roma children in primary schools, Roma children are exposed to peer-violence (including psychological, verbal and physical violence).

*The already **adverse** social position of Roma children within BiH society is further amplified by **social prejudices** and stereotypes, which are reflected in the **lack of response** from the government on the low enrolment rate of Roma children in schools.*

*Most decision-makers believe, by providing textbooks to Roma children, they are ensuring **institutional conditions** for quality education, while the remaining conditions are the effects of **cultural heritage and parental decisions**. The opinion that Roma parents are not interested in the education of their children results in a **lack of social initiatives** for the social inclusion of Roma. Furthermore, Roma children are **victims of violence**, particularly verbal and social isolation, which seems to **lessen with the increase of social contact**.*

Several school pedagogues reported cases of verbal insults (use of 'cigan' expression) for some Roma children by other children. In these situations, the school pedagogues and teachers try to 'reduce prejudices' about the Roma community through either individual conversations or group discussions. Although a few cases of verbal insults towards Roma children have been reported, school pedagogues and Roma parents believe that the prevalence of such verbal discrimination decreases with time. A parent of a Roma child commented on this:

*“We are different, so sometimes other children behave differently towards our children... they call them various names... but it has always been like this until they get to know each other.”*

This quote might suggest that with an increase in contact situations and time spent with each other, the prejudices held against a particular group decrease. A mother of another Roma child also reported that the insults against her child decreased significantly with time.

Besides instances of verbal insults against Roma children, the occurrence of verbal insults against children stemming from poor socio-economic conditions were also mentioned:

*“In our classes, there are many poor children and often other children who have more money laugh at those who don't. All jokes in the class are directed towards them. In case they say something wrong, we start laughing or we laugh at them 'cause of their clothes.”* (a child).

Roma children are discriminated on the grounds of their socio-economic situation, race and language as well as disadvantages they face by the education system, teachers and children. This in turn discourages them from regularly participating in classes and getting adequate support from their parents.

School support to Roma children is limited to the provision of school books and other learning materials. However, mere material does not create proper community conditions for the improvement of Roma children's educational performance. For that reason, some schools provide preparatory classes for Roma children that are intended specifically for those who have never attended school nor have been involved in pre-school activities. However, it is quite common that Roma children do not start school on time. This consequently results in the diversity of age, of children (per group) attending preparatory classes (6-13).

Since there is a great number of older Roma children in lower grades, catch-up classes are organized for them, allowing them to be educated with other children of their own age. Both the parents and teachers noticed that children who passed catch-up classes are now more confident and more interested in school:

*“No school assignment is too difficult for me now!”* (Roma girl)

Schools with a significant number of children over the age of 15, who have not finished primary school, organize part-time exams for children that have never attended regular primary school and for children who withdrew from school.

In case violent behavior towards Roma children is reported to teachers/pedagogues, the school will issue a warning to the child (perpetrator) or simply talk to him/her individually. These warnings prove to be efficient in some cases. In other more extreme cases, the teacher was not very efficient in preventing further insults, which resulted in the parent withdrawing the child from school:

*“My older sister stopped going to school because of that. One boy was always teasing her. She reported it to her teacher but the teacher did not do anything regarding it 'cause he used to scream at her too. This happened 4-5 years ago. My father went to see the director but she told him that if he doesn't like he could either change the class or the school. My father withdrew her from the school.” (a Roma child).*

Also, only a few of the schools hire a Roma assistant with the aim to provide easier access to Roma families and their communities. The assignment of the Roma assistant is to monitor the school attendance of Roma children in a variety of school activities, provide them with support if needed and establish a partnership/relationship with their families.

## **Level of inclusiveness across schools**

As stated in the methodology section, the level of inclusiveness was measured using a standardized questionnaire for adults and children separately. This questionnaire consisted of 39 items and used a 1-4 grading scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree), which measured three dimensions, each containing two sub-factors:

level of inclusive culture (factors: community development and creation of inclusive values); level of inclusive politics (factors: creation of a school for everybody and support for distinctiveness); and level of inclusive practice (factors: organization of learning resources and mobilization of resources).

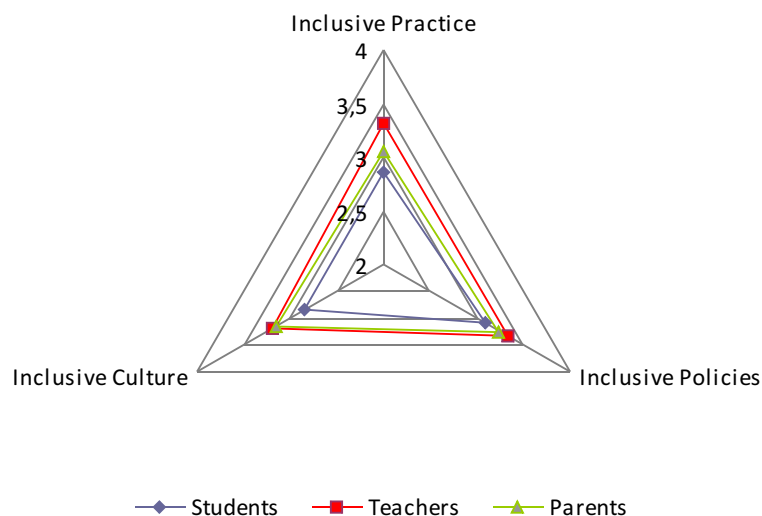
*The average level of school inclusiveness is somewhat higher in **rural** than urban schools. Moreover, higher inclusiveness is identified in schools receiving support from **mobile teams** and/or **NGOs** and in schools where teachers have received some **in-service training** related to inclusion.*

The data obtained with this questionnaire was analyzed using the SPSS program. Below, you will notice significant differences in the three dimensions (and factors), according to our independent measure such as; type of school area (urban vs. rural), level of identification/categorization across schools, level of individual programs across schools, level of received in-service training, level of cooperation with mobile teams and NGOs, and level of employed special educators within schools. Note that only statistically significant differences will be presented.

As it can be seen from the above figure, the mean level of perception of school inclusiveness is rated lowest by children (students) and highest by teachers in all three dimensions. The mean score of teachers and parents correspond to the inclusiveness of culture and policies, while they significantly differ in the inclusiveness of school practices.

The perceived mean level of inclusive culture, (including levels of community development and inclusive values), politics (support for distinctiveness) and practice (e.g., organization and mobilization of resources), is significantly higher in schools, which are in rural areas. This might suggest that children from rural areas perceive their school as a more secure and supportive community in comparison to children from urban areas. The reasons for such findings can only

**Figure 5** - Mean level of perception of school inclusiveness for students, teachers and parents (1-not inclusive; 4-fully inclusive)



be speculated as such that, the smaller number of children and teachers in rural areas might facilitate familiarity among children and provide a sense of family-like community, which is associated with higher perceived security and support. Moreover, rural areas often conduct classes with a combined group of children (varying in age), where the teaching methodology is adapted according to age. Teachers with extensive experience in combined classes have acquired skills to facilitate lessons for children with different skills, behavior characteristics and attitudes, which influence the overall perception of the school as being inclusive.

Also, both teachers and parents perceive the level of inclusive culture, practices and politics to be significantly higher in schools that cooperate with Mobile Teams and the NGO sector, and where teachers have received some professional training on inclusive education. Therefore, in-service training and cooperation with both Mobile Teams and NGOs seem to facilitate the perception of a secure and supportive community. These results stress the importance and potential outcomes of in-service training.

Furthermore, the perceived (mean) level of inclusive politics and practices is significantly higher in schools that: strive to conduct both the identification and categorization of children with special needs and accordingly adapt the teaching curriculum to a child's needs and abilities; and schools that have other permanently employed special educators such as defectologists.

In this research we have identified 19 schools, which besides the school pedagogue, have other permanently employed special educators. In the majority of these schools, the special educator is a defectologist. The figure above shows that the mean level of inclusive politics is significantly higher in those schools which have a permanently employed special educator(s) in comparison to schools that only have an employed school pedagogue.

## PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

As it can be seen from the above mentioned information, schools in cooperation with various other institutions and organization use the existing resources in order to promote, encourage and enable inclusive education.

However, this process is not simple and sufficient, as school staff (mainly teachers) encounter a range of difficulties and obstacles. Below, we have listed the major problems encountered, including recommended solutions.

### **Problem 1 - There are still a number of children who are out of school**

Some schools are aware that there are certain children from their area that are not enrolled in primary education, while some schools are not aware of those children even though the community is. Furthermore, in some places, schools cannot enroll a child without a birth certificate, which affects a large number of Roma children, who do not have one.

In cases where the school is aware of a child that is out of school, the centre for social welfare is contacted, but in most cases, further action is not always taken.

### **Recommendation 1**

There should be developed mechanisms for active identification of out of school children and a development of strategies for their school enrolment and retention. The ultimate responsibility should be placed on schools instead of parents. Such a mechanism could be developed through the promotion of wider community participation in the process of school evaluation. One of the tools for assessment should be based on the number of out of school children and causes.

In cases where a child lacks a birth certificate or necessary documentation, the Ministry of Education should, where feasible, enroll the child and provide them with assistance in acquiring the necessary documents.

### **Problem 2 - The system of identification and categorization of children with disabilities does not provide sufficient information.**

Most teachers would agree that the identification and/or categorization of a child with a disability merely confirm that additional support in school is required. However, in order to identify a child's disability, a number of outdated instruments are being used. Without proper standardized approaches, useful information cannot be obtained, which poses a big problem for teachers who have to work with these children.

### **Recommendation 2**

Teachers need relevant information on a child's abilities, the type of support a child needs for learning, the type of (social) activities that should be implemented in order to enhance and develop a child's social and emotional skills etc. Unfortunately, this type of information is not available in the medical dossier. The school needs to reassess the process of identification and categorization in order to better suit the needs of the children at hand. A new mechanism for the identification of skills and potentials should also be developed as a response to school needs.

*The advancement of inclusion in schools across BiH, contributes to the overall social inclusion of marginalized groups. It seeks actions at the **community level** as well as at the level of its **respective government**.*

*It is necessary to develop mechanisms for **monitoring of implementation of laws** in relation to school enrolment and completion of all children in primary education and adherence to educational standards.*

*Furthermore, it is necessary to develop a system that **responds to all children** who need individualized teaching programs, and not only for those who are categorized.*

*The **skills and attitudes** of school staff towards the education of children with special needs, are crucial strengths for the promotion of inclusive schools. Therefore, developing inclusive communities should be a priority for education authorities.*

*The **Participation** of children, parents and the community at large in the development of the school, is recognized within the children's and parent's associations, however, their decision making power is marginal.*

***Problem 3 - Individual school programs and approaches are implemented mostly for categorized children***

As mentioned earlier, not all schools are at the same level. In some schools, teachers report to adapting the curricula to the individual needs and potentials of a child based on their assumptions of what a child can do. In other schools, mobile teams are developing individual school programs for children who are categorized. Elsewhere, it has been reported that individual school programs are developed even for children who have special educational needs.

***Recommendation 3***

In general, individual school programs for *all* children that have been identified as having special educational needs should be developed and implemented. The categorization alone, of such a child should not be the source of motivation. Doing this would also result in less discrimination.

***Problem 4 - Teachers do not possess adequate skills to develop and implement individual school programs using individual approaches***

During this research most of the teachers emphasized that they do not possess adequate knowledge, skills and attitudes to facilitate education classes where there are children with special educational needs, and also that most trainings they received, were theoretical in nature and do not apply to real life situations.

***Recommendation 4***

An integration of materials on inclusive education during the teacher in-service and pre-service trainings are needed to provide information on what to do in particular situations, as well as more practical advises are needed for work in school.

***Problem 5 - Children with special educational needs often require additional support after school***

We have found a few cases where children with disabilities have to go to another city to receive specific therapy (speech therapy, physical therapy etc.).

***Recommendation 5***

In order to increase inclusiveness of the education system in BiH, the availability of professionals to all children needs to be ensured in all schools. The establishment of an available expert team comprised of defectologists, speech therapists, psychologists, social workers and doctors in all schools should be the primary task of education policy makers in order to ensure quality education and the development of children with special educational needs.

Furthermore, the Ministries of Education have not taken any steps in fulfilling their obligations under the Law on Primary Education, referring to the use of languages of national minorities in schools, with a specific focus on the Roma language. None of the Ministries of Education have initiated the development of a school curriculum for the Roma language, thereby disabling Roma children from learning their mother tongue in schools, which is a right granted to them by law.

Also, the Ministries of Education in BiH should develop a working group for development of Roma language Curriculum. Members of the working group should be Roma people from BiH that have sufficient knowledge on Roma language.

***Problem 6 - Marginalized children are isolated in the classroom, which contributes to further biased behavior and attitudes from other children***

Having children with special educational needs in a classroom without an atmosphere of acceptance, trust and support may hinder the development of a child's positive self-image as well as his or her social and emotional skills.

***Recommendation 6***

It is of utmost importance to implement activities with children that will increase tolerance, acceptance of differences, mutual cooperation and support, and diminish biased forms of behavior. These types of activities could be done through workshops, picnics, extra curricular activities, peer education, in-class support to children with special educational needs etc.

## **General recommendations:**

### **For Ministries of Education:**

- Employ more professionals (special educators) such as psychologists, defectologists, speech therapists, and social workers, preferably form professional groups, who would provide direct support to teachers in schools and be involved in the continuous observation, assessment, and adaptation of the teaching program;
- Improve cooperation between relevant stakeholders (community representatives, municipal authorities, centre for social work, health centre, NGOs, etc.);  
*"We don't have any problems here as we are all very well connected and work together towards the same goal"* (coordinator for inclusive education)
- Establish linkages with Ministries responsible for social and health issues;
- Transform special schools into daily support and rehabilitation centers.

### **For pedagogical institutes;**

- Organize regular, practice-oriented, and relevant (education) trainings in inclusion, for teachers as well as professionals working as advisors within the Pedagogical Institutes,
- Monitor the work of teachers and other professionals using standardized evaluation approaches,
- Develop clear mechanisms for the assessment of a child's development and progress.

### **For schools and teachers**

- Open up towards the whole community;  
*"We need to involve and include the entire community in the inclusion process. The Community needs to be a channel for learning and education."* (MIOS, TZ);
- Adapt conditions and resources to children's abilities, needs, and interests;  
*"You cannot change the condition of a child. What we can do is to adapt, respect, and support that child's condition."* (MIOS, Tuzla);
- Develop individualized education programs and encourage individual-oriented teaching approaches;  
*"An individual approach does not have an alternative"* (MIOS, Tuzla);
- Regular observation of each child (encourage an individual approach to each child):  
*"Every child has a story. We need to work with each child individually"* (representative from the Pedagogical Institute);
- Prepare both parents and children on the expectations, conditions, approaches, necessary procedures etc.;
- Encourage partnership between teachers and parents;
- Change the perspective on inclusion:  
*"Inclusion is not only about education. It is also about socialization."* (MIOS, Tuzla);
- Monitor a child's progress regularly using standardized approaches;
- Sensitize the environment:  
*"We need to realize that we are all part of the inclusion process. Even, the bus that drives a child to school and back is part of the inclusion process. We all are. Not only the school pedagogue and the teacher."* (Coordinator for Inclusive Education);
- Try to detect and focus on a child's 'strengths' and available resources, rather than on his/her problems and difficulties;
- Create an atmosphere of acceptance and support:  
*"Before I got to this school, I thought that nobody, except for people who had similar experience, could understand me. But when I got here, everybody wanted to help and support me so that I don't feel neglected and that my child feels accepted. And for that - I am very grateful. This school really tries to provide these children with quality socialization and education."* (a mother);
- Do the necessary preparation at home:  
*"Teachers don't understand that a little preparation is required for working with children with special needs, which they can do at home. This would facilitate a child's progress and the parents' satisfaction"* (a parent);

### For parents

- Establish good cooperation with both the school as well as the teachers;
- Constant work with a child at home (maximize involvement in a child's education and socialization);

*“A parent of a child with special needs cannot achieve a lot without the support and understanding offered by the school ...but at the same time, the school cannot achieve anything if it does not cooperate with parents and if parents don't work enough with their child at home. One without the other won't work.”* (a foster parent of a child with special need).

## CONCLUSIONS AND OPEN ISSUES

As it can be seen from this study, schools do try to implement the policy of inclusive education using various strategies. In most cases, these strategies refer to a) the inclusion of children with special needs into regular schools, hence enabling children with special needs to attend regular classes; and b) the adaptation of the school curriculum to a child's specific needs in accordance to the available resources. Unfortunately in many schools we visited, such an adaptation implies the reduction of course requirements (although it must be noted that the inclusive practices vary significantly from school to school).

The efficiency and effectiveness of curriculum adaptation depends on several factors: teachers' commitment, motivation, and knowledge; direct and indirect support provided to teachers (e.g., by special educators and/or Mobile Teams); school management; and level and type of received in-service training.

The data from the current report suggest that the level of the above mentioned factors differs significantly across schools. During this research, we identified schools that not only provided teachers with a significant amount of professional training but also employed other special educators to provide direct support to the teachers. In these schools, children seem to be more satisfied with the quality of education. On the other hand, we also encountered schools, which reported to have no cooperation with any significant institution or organization, hence have fairly low levels of support for their teachers.

Independent of whether some schools are a few steps ahead in creating and implementing effective inclusive practices, the majority of teachers are united in their perception of requiring more direct support (such as assistants), and more skill and practice oriented training/education, for they (teachers) encounter a significant amount of obstacles during the process of effectively implementing inclusive education principles. These problems refer mainly to their lack of education on inclusive education, lack of skills on how to work and teach children with special needs, and lack of support. In order to address these issues and problems, schools cooperate with various institutions and organizations such as Pedagogical Institutes (which aim at providing professional training for staff), Mobile Teams (which provide support to teachers in the identification and teaching process), and NGO's (which provide professional training) etc. Such practice needs to be further encouraged.

Regarding the level of inclusive culture, politics, and practices across schools, the following conclusions have been reached:

- a. Both children and adults perceive the level of inclusive practices to be significantly higher in schools which are located in rural vs. urban areas. In addition, children (but not adults) also perceive the level of inclusive culture to be significantly higher in rural vs. urban areas;
- b. Schools, which strive to conduct professional identification of all children with special needs (including necessary categorization) and adapt the teaching curriculum to a child's needs and abilities are perceived to have higher levels of both inclusive politics and practices;
- c. Schools that have, besides the school pedagogue, additionally employed special educators, are regarded as having higher levels of inclusive culture (by children), inclusive politics (by adults), and inclusive practices (by adults);
- d. Both children and adults, perceive schools where teachers have received significant professional training on issues related to inclusive education to have significantly higher levels of all three dimensions, hence inclusive culture, politics, and practices;
- e. Schools, which reported to have significant cooperation with both the mobile teams and NGOs are perceived to have higher levels of mobilization resources (by children), inclusive culture, politics, and practices (by adults).

These findings provide support for beneficial and effective outcomes of the following factors:

1. in-service professional training of teachers;
2. sufficient cooperation with Mobile Teams and the NGO sector;
3. employment of special educators within schools;
4. commitment to professional conduct identification/categorization of children with special needs;
5. commitment to professional development of individual programs and/or individualized teaching approaches.

### ***Understanding of Inclusion***

The analysis of data obtained from various stakeholders, refers to the understanding of inclusion and suggests that the process of inclusion is mainly associated with the integration of children with severe mental disabilities into the regular education system. It is believed that only those children, who have severe mental or learning difficulties, fall under the notion of inclusive education. Following such an understanding, inclusion is both implicitly and explicitly understood in defectological terms: *“The issue of inclusion should not be regarded exclusively as an issue of defectology.”* (Coordinator for Inclusive Education).

Based on such an understanding of inclusion, the solutions aimed at improving the 'quality of education for all' are often being sought through the employment of additional special educators (e.g., defectologists) in schools. Whether the employment of defectologists in schools would add to the quality of inclusive education is debatable. On one hand, some officials and school employees believe that having defectologists in schools would significantly facilitate the process of inclusive education, while others believe that they should be working in daily rehabilitation/support and medical centers, and not in schools:

*“We don't need defectologists in our schools. We need trained teachers. Teachers are the ones who need and who can implement inclusive education within schools and not the defectologists.”* (a representative from Pedagogical Institute).

A suggestion based on such an understanding would be to change the perception/understanding of inclusion so that it addresses individualization, integration, and participation, and not only difficulties experienced by children to different degrees:

*“Inclusion should not be regarded at the level of difficulties and problems but rather perceived as a need for an individual approach to every child.”* (MIOS, Tuzla).

In addition to understanding inclusion solely in defectological terms, it is also mainly associated with education and not so much with socialization aspects. Based on such an understanding, teachers feel pressured to achieve set educational goals for all children (including children with special needs) and neglect the importance of socialization. A suggestion for all teachers would be to re-focus from education to socialization and effective integration of children.

In the end, as stated by one professional from Brčko, inclusion refers to all of us and requires the engagement of all instances. Inclusion is not a matter of one question or one issue and hence cannot be implemented, created, facilitated by one party.

### ***Do we need special schools and if so, why?***

According to the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in BiH, the possibility for education of children with special needs in special schools is left open.

However, whether we still need special schools if we are to integrate and accommodate all children (including children with special needs) in regular schools, is an open question. In this research, we have posed this question to a majority of included stakeholders and concluded that opinions differ. Although some participants believe that special schools should be abolished as such as their existence facilitates further segregation among children, the majority of our participants judged that the existence of special schools is very beneficial for children with special needs for the following reasons:

- special schools are better equipped not only technically but also professionally;
- there are no architectural barriers around and within the school;
- more time can be committed to each child as there are fewer of them in comparison to regular schools;
- there are more available didactical and teaching materials;
- there are more employed special educators who not only have more knowledge about specific needs but also more skills on how to work with them.

In addition to this issue, the majority of our participants who supported the idea of special schools believe that these schools should be transformed into daily rehabilitation-education-support centers. Following this idea, children with special needs should appropriately be included into the regular educational system, which in turn, should be tailored to every child's needs and abilities. However, those children with special needs should still have an option of visiting a 'special' institution renamed into rehabilitation-support centre- where they can receive more specialized educational or other kinds of support offered by special educators and professionals.

#### Good practices of inclusive education depend upon the following factors:

- Policies that support inclusive education and are followed by financial allocations;
- Efficient communication and good relationships between school staff;
- Application of different teaching and learning models;
- School directors who stimulate the employees by encouraging novel teaching and learning approaches, and appreciates and respects employees' advices and suggestions;
- Teacher's treatment of each child individually;
- Quality of teaching material and available didactical means;
- Involvement of other special educators, teaching assistant etc.

#### Characteristics of an inclusive school:

- *Integration* of all children, independent of their ethnic, national, educational, psychological or physical background in the educational system;
- *Transformation* of the school system so that it addresses children's diversity of needs, abilities, and interests; encourages the use of creative and novel methodologies, which in turn, facilitate different modes of thinking;
- *Cooperation* (rather than competition) is being encouraged among and within all relevant stakeholders (e.g., children, teachers, parents, school management etc.);
- *Diversity* of children' needs, teaching content and methods, roles etc., is visible and encouraged;
- *Participation* of all children and the entire community is encouraged so that everybody can learn from everybody (interaction);
- *Individualization* of the teaching curriculum to every child's needs, abilities, and interests so that self-confirmation of each child is enabled;
- Atmosphere of openness, warmth, acceptance, and respect for diversity if permanently sustained.

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