

STUDY ON THE IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF LEARNING CENTRES



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STUDY ON THE IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF LEARNING CENTRES

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Council of Europe, the European Union or the UNICEF Office in Kosovo.”

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CoE	Council of Europe
LC	Learning Centre
MED	Municipal Education Department
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MOCR	Municipal Office for Communities and Return
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PRTAN	Prevention and Response Teams towards Abandonment and Non-Registration in compulsory education
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VoRAE	Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study intends to provide easily understandable and accessible information and analysis of the actual work of learning centres, best practices, challenges and their impact on children and their communities during the 2011-2015 period. The study was focused in five municipalities, namely Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Obiliq/Obilić, and Graçanicë/Gračanica.

Key findings:

RELEVANCE:

- Learning centres in Kosovo have mainly been established based on the needs of the communities, such as: unsatisfactory level of children's school performance; irregular school attendance; school dropouts; and lack of social inclusion.
- Due to the lack of a legal framework that determines the criteria for establishment and operation of learning centres, the majority of centres operate in line with donor policies.

EFFECTIVENESS:

- Throughout Kosovo around 40 centres in 15 municipalities of Kosovo have been established and are functional, mainly in the municipalities where Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities live. As per the data provided by six interviewed NGOs that manage learning centres, the number of children attending activities in centres during the academic year 2014/15 has been around 2,605 children.
- Main activities that LCs carry out are: helping children to be prepared for school enrolment; assistance in finishing homework; ensuring regular attendance of pupils in compulsory education; working with pupils who have dropped out of school; recreational activities as well as other activities regarding the education of communities in need.

EFFICIENCY:

- Between 2011 and 2015, through activities carried out in learning centres managed by six NGOs, the lives of 8,310 children have been affected. The average yearly cost per child was €123.10.
- Over the years, the ethnic composition of children participating in LCs has changed. Year after year there have been more members of different communities that attend these centres (Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Albanian, and Serbian children).
- With the goal of social inclusion of marginalized communities, learning centres have been able to increase the number of children from Albanian and Serb communities in their activities through the years, which has led to more interethnic interaction and socialization.
- In recent years, a number of memorandums of understanding have been signed between MEST, Municipal Directorates of Education and LCs that ensured school spaces for LCs to perform their activities. Through these agreements local authorities pledged to compensate monthly costs of LCs such as: the cost of rent, electricity, heating, and other equipment (inventory) for LCs located within school buildings.

- Interviewed parents stated the importance of learning centres. When explaining the reasons for that, they stressed their usefulness in preventing school dropouts (33% of interviewed parents), providing help to children that are unable to get help at home (30% of interviewed parents), helping children interact with other ethnic groups and build skills that help them for the future (23% of interviewed parents), and addressing special educational needs that schools cannot meet (14% of interviewed parents).
- The majority of interviewed stakeholders were of the opinion that learning centres have had a substantial impact on children's school performance in terms of their reading and writing skills, grades, attendance, and prevention of dropouts.

SUSTAINABILITY

- LCs operate largely through donor financial support. Only two of them are financed by municipal authorities. Donor support cannot be provided on a long-term basis. All assessed NGOs stated that they do not have a specific strategy regarding the financial sustainability of learning centres.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Kosovo is taking very important steps towards establishing a functioning society with a clear prospect towards European integration. To achieve this, many stakeholders including local and government institutions, donors, civil society, and the business community, have been supporting many sectors that are currently underperforming. Due to several reasons, among which are the poor economic situation and high level of unemployment, marginalized groups are the most affected, including members of non-majority communities (Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians), people with special needs, people living in rural areas (especially women), etc.

Apart from economic factors, members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, as marginalized groups of society, also face other challenges such as low levels of education. When comparing the level of education between different ethnicities in Kosovo, only a small difference can be observed in this regard between the majority Albanian ethnicity and the non-majority Serb ethnicity. However, a substantial difference can be observed in this regard between Albanian ethnicity and the non-majority Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian ethnicities. While 44.2 % of the Albanian population aged 15 and over had at least an upper secondary education in 2013, the percentages among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians of the same age group was significantly lower (10.8% Roma, 8.7% Ashkali, 9.9% Egyptians), as can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Population age 15 years and over by educational attainment, based on ethnicity.²

Highest completed level of education	Ethnicity				
	Albanian	Serb ³	Roma	Ashkali	Egyptian
No completed education	5.8%	6.3%	31.8%	32.9%	24.4%
Primary education	10.0%	11.2%	24.9%	27.4%	27.7%
Lower secondary	39.9%	28.2%	32.5%	31.1%	38.1%
Upper secondary	34.7%	44.5%	9.4%	8.1%	8.7%
High school	2.5%	4.4%	0.7%	0.3%	0.5%
Faculty, bachelor	6.2%	5.1%	0.6%	0.3%	0.6%
Post-graduate (Master)	0.7%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Doctorate/PhD	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Considering that only 1.3 percent of members from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities had a high school diploma or higher education, Kosovo’s institutions, NGOs, and international donor organizations have initiated a number of programs to tackle this phenomenon.

The government, in cooperation with other stakeholders, created the “Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo 2009-2015”, which aims to address the issue of the education of these communities.

² Kosovo Agency of Statistics, “Educational Characteristics of Kosovo Population”, October 2013, pg. 22.

³ Data on education of Serbs from their parallel system of education could not be secured.

There have also been legislation and policies developed to foster education of all children, including children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, such as the Law on Pre-University Education 2011, National Action Plan against Dropout 2009-2014, Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2011-2016, Strategy and National Action Plan on Children's Rights 2009-2013, etc. In general, all education-related legislation approved by the institutions of Kosovo promotes effective equality and enforces the principle of equal treatment of all people of Kosovo.

Apart from the low level of educational achievement, members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities also face low levels of formal education attendance, as well as high dropout rates. To address the issue of school dropout rates and nonattendance, Kosovo institutions and several local and international organizations have established initiatives and projects to raise the awareness of these communities on the importance of obtaining an education. Moreover, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, through an Administrative Instruction established Prevention and Response Teams towards Abandonment and Non-Registration in compulsory education (PRTANs).

In line with Kosovo institutions policy initiatives in the area of education of non-majority communities, non-governmental organizations with support from international donors established around 40 learning centres in 15 municipalities across Kosovo. The role of learning centres has been to foster community empowerment and support Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian integration in Kosovo society in general. They have provided an alternative or supplementary model of development and education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, youth and families. The learning centres share a common goal to keep Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in school, achieving better academic results.

This study was commissioned by the European Union and Council of Europe (CoE) Joint Programme "Increasing Access to Education and Intercultural Understanding" and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to assess the impact of Kosovo learning centres in keeping their beneficiaries successfully in school.

⁴ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Administrative Instruction (AI) 19/2012 on Establishment and enforcement of teams for prevention and response toward abandonment and non-enrolment in compulsory education.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To carry out this assignment, the researchers used a mixed methodology, consisting of:

- Secondary data review;
- Focus group discussions with NGOs managing learning centres;
- In-depth, semi-structured, and structured interviews with relevant stakeholders;
- Assessment of school performance of children.

The study was focused in five municipalities, namely Gjakovë/Đakovica, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Obiliq/Obilić, Graçanicë/Gračanica and Ferizaj/Uroševac.

Secondary data review

During this phase, the research evaluation team consulted Kosovo's legal framework (laws, administrative instructions, strategies), as well as the existing reports from local and international organizations which tackle the issue of education and social inclusion of all communities in Kosovo, with a particular focus on children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Furthermore, the research team analysed relevant documents of NGOs in relation to their management of learning centres, in order to understand the role and the mission of these centres.

The information gathered during a secondary data review was used as a resource for designing the study instruments: focus group discussion guide, and questionnaires for in-depth, semi-structured, and structured interviews. Additionally, information from desk research was used to analyse the extent to which the work of learning centres was in line with national policies in the field of education.

Focus group discussion

The researchers organized a focus group discussion with representatives of six NGOs that run learning centres: Balkan Sunflowers Kosova, Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, Caritas Kosova, The Ideas Partnership, Terre des Hommes, and Bethany Christian Services.

The objectives of the focus group were to:

- Identify the activities of LCs,
- Discuss the instruments for measurement of the impact of LCs,
- Discuss the level of satisfaction with the achieved results,
- Discuss the level of cooperation with other relevant stakeholders,
- Learn more in general about the experiences of NGOs (both positive and negative) during the operation of these learning centres,
- Obtain opinions on sustainability of LCs.

Depth, semi-structured, and structured interviews with relevant stakeholders

During the study, the researchers conducted in-depth, semi-structured, and structured interviews with various stakeholders: representatives of central and local authorities, school staff, LC staff, PRTANs, and parents. The full list of interviewed stakeholders is presented in the table below.

Table 2. List of interviewed stakeholders.

Type of interviews	Number of inter-views
In-depth interviews	22
o Relevant international donor organizations funding LCs	9
o Municipal Education Departments of the five municipalities	5
o Ministry of Education Science and Technology	3
o Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns	4
Semi-structured interviews	83
o School directors	11
o School teachers	40
o Local Prevention and Response Teams towards Abandonment and Non-Registration (PRTAN) members	12
o Learning Centres staff	20
Structured (quantitative interviews)	200
o Parents	200
TOTAL	305

Assessment of Children’s School Performance

The researchers, in accordance with CoE and UNICEF, agreed to assess the school performance of 50 children since they started attending LCs. The research team visited 11 schools in five municipalities and identified around 50 children who participated in LC programs. Since the selection process was random, this group included not only children from Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, but also children from the Albani-an community who attend LCs. Children’s school performance during the last three years was measured, with the main goal being to identify their progress since they started attending activities organized by LCs.

This task was realized through assessing children’s performance in Albanian and Serbian languages, and mathematics, as these were the main subjects taught by all LCs. The average school grades of pupils in these subjects were compared over the course of three years.

Evaluation Criteria

For this study, the researchers used the OECD’s DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, which focuses on five criteria:

- **Relevance** – The extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor.
- **Effectiveness** – A measure of the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives.
- **Efficiency measures the outputs** – qualitative and quantitative – in relation to the inputs.
- **Impact** – The positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.
- **Sustainability** – Concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.

2.1. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is intended to provide easily understandable and accessible information and analysis of the actual work of LCs, their impact, best practices, challenges and their impact on children and their community. The study will also provide recommendations on how to make LCs more sustainable and integrated within the current education system.

The purpose of this report is three-fold:

- First, it aims to analyse data (both quantitative and qualitative) in order to reach important conclusions on the current situation of learning centres;
- Second, it aims to provide reflection on and contribute to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the learning centres on the improved learning outcomes of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children;
- And third, it aims to frame lessons learned and recommendations that have been derived from interviews with key stakeholders, and findings that have been derived from other target groups.

2.2. STUDY LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study are:

- a. **Lack of baseline indicators:** This remains a wide-spread issue in Kosovo; this study's comparison of school grades over three years of learning centre participants is useful to show the progress of pupils;
- b. **Data on Serbian community:** Collecting data on the Serbian community remains a major issue in Kosovo. In most locations, Serbian children attend school in a parallel education system and therefore data could not be obtained;
- c. **Missing data on enrollment and dropout rates:** Since reliable data could not be obtained on school enrollment and dropout rates of children from majority communities or not attending learning centres, it was hard to compare the impact of learning centres in this regard. However the study captures the perceptions of stakeholders regarding learning centres in the five municipalities

3. PROFILES OF LEARNING CENTRES IN KOSOVO

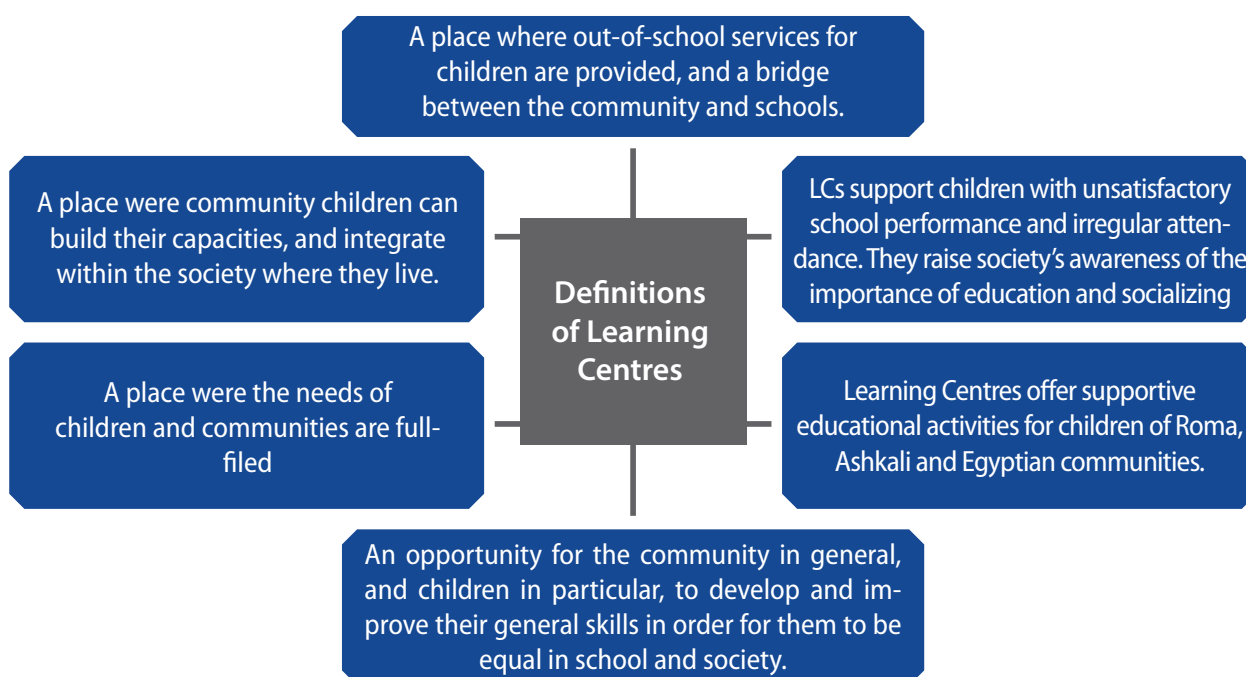
Considering that learning centres are managed by different NGOs, financed by different international donors, and destined for different communities, they are structured and operate differently from one another, mainly based on the real needs of the communities.

Although different from one-another, learning centres largely focus on one overarching objective, which is to help children with their school responsibilities such as homework, attendance, the issue of dropout risk, and their performance in general. Through LCs, several NGOs carried out activities with parents and the community at large in order to address the issues of social inclusion and education of these communities.

Although there are similarities between learning centres and community centres, there are also noticeable differences between them. Whereas learning centres mainly work with children and parents focusing on children's education, community centres work with different groups of communities and are not solely focused in the field of education. Moreover, while learning centres may be located within school facilities, community centres are usually located within the communities they work with.

Due to the different approaches these NGOs have towards LCs, they were asked to give a definition of what a learning centre is. Their answers varied to an extent, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 1. Definitions of learning centres – provided by representatives of NGOs running LCs.



Despite differences of opinions in regard to the definition of a learning centre, there were some common denominators. The words that were used most often by the NGOs in this regard are: children, community, school, needs, and support. Looking at some of the similarities and combining the definitions given by NGOs on learning centres, one definition that can be drawn for learning centres is: *"A learning centre is a place that provides supplementary education services to children in need, with the goal of improving their school performance and integrating them within the larger society"*.

In terms of their organizational structure, the following are the positions that can be found in most centres, though centres may use these titles differently:

1. Coordinator (NGO level)

The coordinator is responsible for managing the centre, leads and plans the activities of the centre, selects and delegates the responsibilities to other members of staff, and keeps contact with relevant partners (municipal officials, donors, and other relevant stakeholders). It should be noted that “on site” coordinators are rare, as only a few LCs have them.

2. Tutor /Facilitator

The tutor works directly with children, helping them with their homework and with what they learned during school classes, and also is involved in other socio-cultural activities with children.

3. Educator

Educator deals with pre-school children, assisting and preparing them for enrolment at school.

4. Volunteer

Volunteers are usually youth – mostly high school pupils (there are cases when volunteers were older) – who assist LC staff in conducting their daily activities. They are mostly engaged when LCs conduct leisure and recreational activities.

5. Mediator

The Mediator serves as a bridge between the school and the family, as well as the learning centre. Mediators are not always part of LCs, as they are part of a separate programme. The purposes of the education mediation programme is to increase access to education for the children of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, ensure timely enrolment in school, prevent dropping out of school, and return dropouts to school. The work of a mediator focuses mainly on facilitating communication and contact between school(s), municipal education departments, families, local Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, and the learning centre, if there is a learning centre in the town.⁵

3.1. BALKAN SUNFLOWERS LEARNING CENTRES

Balkan Sunflowers Kosova (BSFK)⁶, established in 2007, aims to build activist lives for social change. Its goals are to inspire and engage in community action for human rights and dignity, to work in education, health, culture, citizenship, employment, and respect for diversity.

Currently, Balkan Sunflowers Kosova manages five LCs in four municipalities. Within these LCs, they run a pre-school program, language clubs and assist children with their homework. Furthermore, they provide other activities, such as: reading corners, summer camp, parenting programme, women’s literacy programme, networking, and science activities. In Graçanicë/ Gračanica and Plemetin/a, and small part of Fushë Kosova/Kosovo Polje, the programme is functioning in Serbian language. Most BSFK LCs are located outside of school buildings, except the Shtime centre which is in Emin Duraku School.

⁵ Role of mediators in the integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the education system, KDI, Council of Europe and Balkan Sunflowers Kosova, Pristina 2014, pg. 19.

⁶ Balkan Sunflowers Kosova developed from Balkan Sunflowers, an international NGO active in Kosovo from 1999.

Table 3. Number of children involved in all LCs run by Balkan Sunflowers Kosova.

Number of children based on ethnicity, gender	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
Ashkali community pupils	240	269	361	328	1198
Roma community pupils	164	290	175	130	759
Egyptian community pupils	19	25	10	22	76
Albanian community pupils	2	3	1	30	36
Serb community pupils	1	1	0	0	2
Percentage of female participants	45%	47%	44%	56%	48%
Total number of pupils	426	588	547	510	2071

The main donors that have supported the activities of Balkan Sunflowers Kosova's Learning Centers Network are: Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust, Austrian Development Agency, British Embassy, Brot Fur Die Welt (Diakonie), Council of Europe, Czech Development Agency, European Commission, Finnish Embassy, Graçanicë/Gračanica Municipality, Kosovo Foundation for Open Society, Luxembourg Embassy, Netherlands Embassy, Norwegian Embassy, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Ministry of Education Science and Technology, Obiliq/Obilić Municipality, Office for Communities Affairs, Roma Education Fund, Shtime/Štimlje Municipality, Sunshine Lady Foundation, Terre des Hommes, United Nations Mission in Kosovo, United Nations Volunteers, United States Embassy, United States Agency for International Development.

3.2. BETHANY CHRISTIAN SERVICES LEARNING CENTRE

The aim of Bethany Christian Services, located in Gjakova/Đakovica, is to develop and improve the lives of individuals and communities, through raising awareness about human rights, and through completing social and educational needs of people in need. Moreover, this NGO provides social, educational activities and also health care services.

The organization manages one Learning Centre, the work of which is based on the MEST curricula for pre-school and the compulsory school program. There are nine permanent staff members, but depending of the project, the number of staff involved sometimes reaches 20. There is the executive director, coordinator, educators, mediator, tutors, facilitators and healthcare staff involved in dealing with LCs. The staff come from different educational backgrounds, including some with a university degree, some are students currently attending university studies, and others possess a high school diploma.

Table 4. Number of children involved in all LCs run by Bethany Christian Services.

Number of children based on ethnicity, gender	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali communities ⁷ pupils	320	320	320	320	320	1600
Albanian community pupils	5	7	5	5	4	26
Percentage of female participants	45%	46%	48%	46%	48%	47%
Total number of pupils	325	327	325	325	324	1626

⁷ Bethany Christian Services reported that parents did not state the community they belong to, thus the data was aggregated for Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali children.

The main donors that have supported the activities of Bethany Christian Services learning centres are: United Nations Children’s Fund, German Agency for Technical Cooperation, Kosovo Foundation for Open Society, Swiss Cooperation, Council of Europe, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Communities and Returns, Terre des Hommes, Advocacy Training and Resource Center, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. They have supported them through providing school material, clothing, food, trainings, and financial support.

3.3. CARITAS KOSOVA LEARNING CENTRES

Caritas Kosova was created in 1992 to respond to the extensive general poverty levels. The aim of this NGO is to offer extra help to children involved in formal education.

The organization manages two learning centres, one in the municipality of Ferizaj/Uroševac and the other in Gjakova/Đakovica. The centre in Ferizaj/Uroševac is the property of Caritas Kosova, whereas the land was provided by the municipality of Ferizaj/Uroševac. On the other hand, Caritas Kosova took under its competence the centre in Gjakovë/Đakovica (Ali Ibra) in January 2015. The centres focus mainly on helping children in Albanian language and mathematics, but they also help them with other subjects too. They monitor children at school and their success, and they also cooperate with parents to raise their awareness on the importance of sending children to school. Currently, Caritas Kosova employs 32 people in their two LCs:

- Two coordinators with university degrees;
- Four educators with university degrees;
- Nine facilitators (five with university degrees, two pursuing university studies, and two with high school diplomas);
- Two mediators (one university student and one with a primary education);
- 11 tutors/volunteers – high school students;
- Four technical staff.

Table 5. Number of children involved in all LCs run by Caritas Kosova.

Number of children based on ethnicity, gender	2013	2014	2015	Total
Ashkali community pupils	278	255	194	727
Albanian community pupils	47	45	51	143
Egyptian community pupils	0	0	163	163
% of female participants	50%	53%	53%	52%
Total number of pupils	325	300	408	1033

The municipality of Ferizaj/Uroševac supports the centre with approximately 70,000 Euros annually, which covers the cost of all services provided within the facility (including medical services and work with pre-school children).

3.4. TERRE DES HOMMES LEARNING CENTRES

Terre des Hommes is a Swiss Foundation that has worked in Kosovo since 1999 with the aim of providing help to children in need. They provide health care and child protection services, while also being involved in the field of education.

The organization currently manages seven LCs in four municipalities (Gjakovë/Đakovica, Mitrovica/Mitrovica, Peja/Pec, Ferizaj/Uroševac). All of their centres are within the premises of public schools and they conduct their activities right after the children finish their regular classes.

They provide children with assistance with homework, writing, reading, and math. Moreover, they provide leisure activities for children. Their work is based on the official school curricula. Their staff consists of 10 members: one coordinator, and nine teaching assistants and tutors (who are not hired with regular contracts, but are employed with service contracts when needed). Several staff members have completed their university studies (five of whom have earned a degree in Pedagogy), whereas others are currently attending university studies.

The table below represents the distribution of 225 children who are attending after school classes in four municipalities supported by Terre des Hommes in Kosovo. It is important to emphasize that the number of children has decreased during this year specifically as a result of the emigration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families to Western European countries.

Table 6. Number of children involved in all LCs run by Terre des Hommes.

Municipality/Village/District	The name of the school	Overall number of children	Number of children by gender	% of female participants
Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality	Primary and lower secondary school "Yll Morina"	40	22 girls 18 boys	55%
Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality	Primary and lower secondary school "Mustafa Bakija"	16	9 girls 7 boys	56%
Village Trebovic Peja municipality	Primary and lower secondary school "Skenderbeu"	41	24 girls 17 boys	59%
Vaganice district Mitrovica municipality	Primary and lower secondary school "Skenderbeu"	25	13 girls 12 boys	52%
Mitrovica municipality	Primary and lower secondary school "Bedri Gjinaj"	25	11 girls 14 boys	44%
Village Poqeste Peja municipality	Primary and lower secondary school "Pjeter Budi"	36	17 girls 19 boys	47%
Village Qyshk Peja/Pec municipality	Primary and lower secondary school "Skender Qeku"	22	9 girls 13 boys	41%
Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality	Primary and lower secondary school "Vezir Jashari"	20	11 girls 9 boys	45%
Total		225	116 girls 109 boys	

The main donors that have supported Terre des Hommes learning centres are: Swiss Church Aid (HEKS) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

3.5. THE IDEAS PARTNERSHIP LEARNING CENTRES

The Ideas Partnership (TIP) was established in 2009 by Elizabeth Gowing, Ardian Arifaj and Robert Wilton. The aim of this NGO is to support the people of Kosovo to protect their unique cultural heritage, develop their environment, and educate a new generation of citizens.

The Ideas Partnership started working with their first learning centre in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje in 2011. Currently, TIP manages one LC in Pristina, with the main goal of provision of additional classes for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. The Ideas Partnership manages a high functioning centre, which has a kindergarten with 80 children and conducts academic activities for more than 120 children, as well as activities with mothers, youth and the elderly. Some of its programs are:

- Mother’s program - microfinance projects,
- Youth activities,
- Health services,
- “Little teachers” program,
- Council of children, and
- Girls’ club.
- Weekly academic support activities.

Table 7. Number of children involved in LCs – The Ideas Partnership.

Number of children based on ethnicity, gender	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Ashkali community pupils	90	125	290	345	850
Roma community pupils	10	70	45	45	170
Egyptian community pupils	15	10	45	50	120
Albanian community pupils	0	25	30	45	100
% of female participants	57%	52%	51%	52%	52%
Total number of pupils	115	230	410	485	1240

The main donors that have supported TIP’s activities are: Austrian Development Agency, UN Volunteers, Hope and Aid Direct, Stepic Charity Fund through Raiffeisen Bank, and the Embassy of Finland.

3.6. VOICE OF ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIANS LEARNING CENTRES

Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (VoRAE) was established with the goal of contributing to the development of members of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo. VoRAE’s main focus is improvement of the lives of these communities through support in integration, reduction of poverty and discrimination, infrastructure, housing, health services, human rights, and education.

Within the education sector, Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians has been providing scholarships for high school students, and providing additional learning support through LCs. Presently, this organization manages 15 LCs in 10 Kosovo municipalities, employing 28 tutors to work with children. The majority of centres are located within the premises of public schools; this was enabled through memorandums of cooperation with local authorities. Although the majority of tutors lack adequate qualifications, they took part in trainings to prepare them to work with pupils of different levels, from pre-school to grade 9.

Learning centres mostly offer assistance with homework and activities are focused on, but not limited to, the main formal school courses: Albanian/Serbian language and mathematics. Moreover, the VoRAE centres monitor the in-school performance of children, such as their attendance and their grades. Centres also focus on work with parents, through group and individual meetings and other awareness raising campaigns, to raise their awareness of the importance of getting their children an education. To assess the impact of LCs, VoRAE uses questionnaires that are administered with teachers, pupils and parents twice per year. The following table shows the number of children that have attended activities in LCs managed by Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians.

Table 8. Number of children in all LCs run by Voice of Roma Ashkali and Egyptians.

Number of children based on ethnicity, gender	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
Ashkali community pupils	233	291	528	437	1489
Roma community pupils	133	128	159	159	579
Egyptian community pupils	0	0	2	1	3
Albanian community pupils	11	17	90	133	251
Serb community pupils	0	0	3	15	18
Percentage of female participants	41%	40%	46%	48%	44%
Total number of pupils	377	436	782	745	2340

The main donors that have supported the activities of LCs managed by VoRAE are: Swiss Church Aid (HEKS), Finnish Embassy in Kosovo, and British Embassy in Kosovo.

4. MAIN RESULTS

4.1. RELEVANCE

4.1.1. The Need for Learning Centres

The challenges confronting Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities come as a result of various factors including: high rates of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, and lack of equal opportunity. International donors, Kosovo Institutions, and local NGOs implemented a large number of programmes and activities to address the needs of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities. Several of these stakeholders have played a substantial role in improving the socio-economic situation of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities and continue to do so today. Article 3 of the Constitution of Kosovo enshrines full equality before the law. It states “The Republic of Kosovo is a multi-ethnic society consisting of Albanian and other Communities, governed democratically with full respect for the rule of law through its legislative, executive and judicial institutions”. These principles are embodied in the Constitution and are part of other laws that promote and protect the interests of minority communities living in Kosovo.

Foreign organizations have undertaken initiatives throughout the years, in which they have attempted to improve the living standard of members of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities. One very sensitive issue that has been a major concern for these communities is education. In recent years there has been some improvement, mainly because of the support and willingness of the international community (through their donor organizations). Nevertheless, the issue of education remains the main challenge for these communities. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, in cooperation with international donors and a local NGO (Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians), have set up a scholarship program for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children attending upper secondary education. Municipalities, on the other hand, have had limited direct activities on this issue, except in cases when they have signed Memorandums of Understanding with LCs, allowing them to use school facilities.

Despite efforts from different stakeholders, the levels of inclusion in regular education, school attendance rates, dropout rates, and teaching-learning difficulties have characterized the education of these communities.

Based on official statistics from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the number of pupils of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities involved in pre-university education for the academic year 2014/15 is 6867 (1918 Roma, 4177 Ashkali, and 772 Egyptian children)⁸. On the other hand, there are no reliable statistics on dropout rates. One of the reasons for the lack of data on these communities is that in some areas children of the Roma community attend schools in Serbian language, which are not managed by Kosovo institutions, which in turn makes it difficult to gather data.

The European Commission Progress Report for Kosovo in 2014 reconfirmed that Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities have low registration rates, high dropout rates and poor levels of academic performance. At the same time, this report recommended that “statistics on the dropout rates need to become more reliable and that mediators need to continue to engage with these communities to reduce dropouts, especially in schools with a higher concentration of pupils from these communities”.⁹

⁸ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, “Data on Education - Statistical Notes 2014-15 Undergraduate Education”, 2014, p. 2.

⁹ European Commission, “Kosovo Progress Report”, October 2014, p.22.

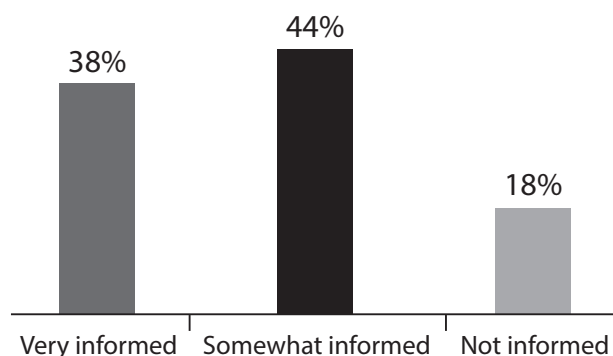
The established LCs have worked over the years to tackle the aforementioned issues in regard to the education of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children. The initiatives of learning centres have been well received by various stakeholders. The interviewed parents of children who already attend LCs attests to the necessity and the importance of the existence and proper functioning of learning centres, because they as parents cannot contribute substantially to the education of their children.

“We hope that our community will have a better future, as a result of our children’s education.”

Ashkali parent from the municipality of Fushe Kosova/Kosovo Polje

This study’s results showed that 38% of parents stated that they are very informed regarding their children’s situation in school, and another 44% stated that they are somewhat informed. Meanwhile, 17% of the parents claimed that they were not informed about the current school situation of their children. These results show that the majority of parents care about their children’s performance at school.

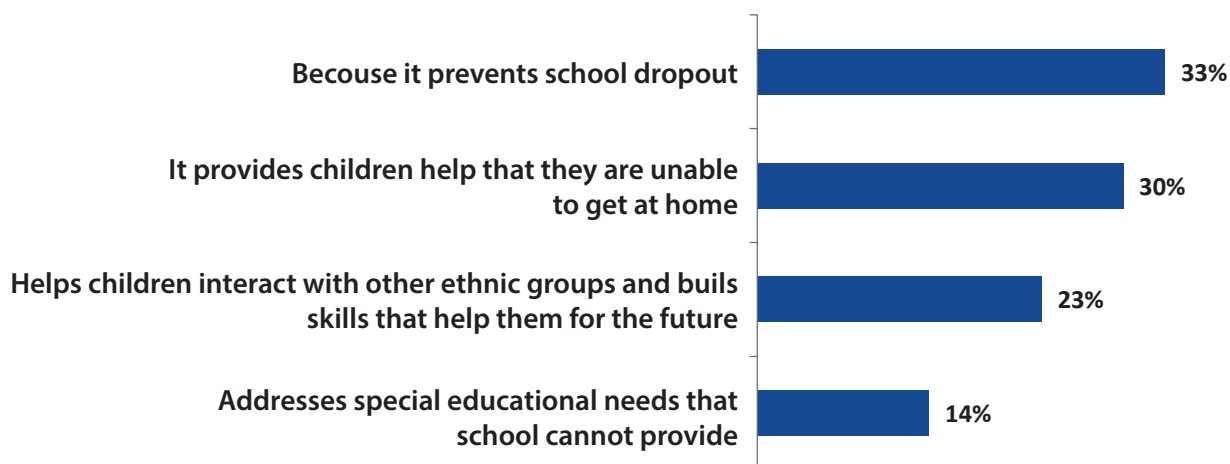
Figure 2. How informed are parents regarding their children’s situation at school?



The results of this study showed that the level of education of the parents of children that attend LCs was not very high. Twenty-seven per cent of the parents stated that they had not attended school at all, while 33% stated they had attended only a few years of primary school. Only 31% of the parents said they had finished primary school, and only 8% claimed to have attended a few years of high school. Only 1% of all interviewed parents had a university degree.

Interviewed parents said that there is still a need for learning centres because in their opinion. When asked what is the main reason of their importance, parents stated that learning centres prevent school dropouts (33% of interviewed parents), provide help that children are unable to get at home (30% of interviewed parents), help children interact with other ethnic groups and build skills that help them for the future (23% of interviewed parents), and address special educational needs that schools cannot meet (14% of interviewed parents).

Figure 3. The need for learning centres to continue operating according to parents.



Parents were asked to provide further explanation on why they think it is important that these learning centres continue to operate. All of their explanations were related to the future of their children. Parents state that the LCs are the only way to help their children get educated and build a better future. Forty-seven per cent of the parents were of the opinion that LCs are also of great importance when it comes to socio-economic assistance to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. Another reason that was provided by 17% of the parents was that the space at home is small, mainly due to large number of family members, for children to use for education purposes such as finishing homework, learning, etc.

“Learning centres are very important to us, because they assist our children on their homework, and also provide food, clothing and school materials that we as parents cannot afford to provide to our children.”

Roma parent from the municipality of Gracanica

Representatives of central and local institutions also stated the importance of learning centres to the overall education system in Kosovo. According to representatives of Municipal Education Directorates, learning centres should continue to operate because they are doing a good job in particular with the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. One interviewed representative of MEDs stated that, *“These centres are encouraging children to attend school and to an extent follow the activities conducted in schools; therefore, they assist in the learning process of children in schools”*.

Representatives of MEDs further argued that these centres must be functional and operate as part of the formal education system, and tutors from LCs need to be qualified to meet the academic needs of children. Meanwhile, one representative of MEST was of the opinion that LCs are in line with the Kosovo-wide priorities for the education sector to a considerable extent, mainly due to their focus on children of minority communities and promotion of inclusiveness. According to the representative of MEST, the LCs provide assistance on homework related to the main subjects at school, therefore their activities support the school curricula and the Kosovo priorities for education. When asked to rate the extent to which the existing LCs are aligned with Kosovo-wide priorities for the education sector on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 = not aligned at all, 10 = very aligned), representatives of MEDs, MOCRs, and MEST provided an average score of 6.5.

“There are many obstacles that LCs face while trying to reduce the school dropout rate: early marriages, migration, poverty, unemployment, low level of education of the parents, etc. However, I think once the children’s parents understand the importance of education, they will send their children to school regularly.”

Donor Representative

In regard to international donors that provide support to the education sector in Kosovo, all of the interviewed representatives stated that LCs are required for children of all communities in need, as these centres provide significant assistance to communities in regard to their children’s school enrolment, school attendance, and social inclusion, prevention of school dropouts, and improvement of school performance by children attending LCs.

All schoolteachers, directors and members of Prevention and Response Teams towards Abandonment and Non-registration were of the same opinion when asked about how important is it to them that these centres continue operating in the upcoming years, giving an average importance rating of 9.2 out 10. All of them encouraged the continuation of the work of LCs, since, the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children lack support in terms of education, integration and socialization, and LCs are providing great support in all those aspects. Additionally, 41% of schoolteachers, directors and members of Dropout Prevention and Response Teams stated that LCs contribute significantly to the overall education system in Kosovo.

“I think learning centres are very important for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. They enhance their education, emancipation, and integration and provide great support in assisting with their school tasks, which I think makes children feel more self-confident and more willing to attend school.”

Donor Representative

4.1.2. Alignment with National Policies for the Education Sector

Currently, there is no legal framework that determines the criteria for establishment and operation of LCs. Due to the lack of criteria, the operation of LCs is based on the NGO’s design, the needs of the community, or determined by donors. According to a MEST representative, during 2015 the ministry will draft an administrative instruction in order to determine the criteria for establishment and operation of LCs.

“LCs are aligned to a certain extent with Kosovo-wide priorities for the education sector, although they are more in line with donors’ policies and priorities. An administrative instruction should be drafted to set some criteria for them.”

MEST Representative

In this regard, apart from the law on pre-university education, the main document that addresses the issue of education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo is the “Strategy for the integration of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo 2009-

2015”.¹⁰ Through this strategy the institutions of Kosovo intended to create proper conditions for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities so that they can enjoy equal rights with all other ethnic communities in Kosovo without any form of discrimination. The strategy primarily addresses the improvement of the situation of those Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities still living in Kosovo, and at the same time provides solutions and recommendations for re-integration of these communities.

Among other things, this strategy specified that *local education institutions, schools, and NGOs shall engage in common activities aiming at improving school attendance: increasing the enrolment rate of children in pre-school and pre-primary education, improving daily attendance, decreasing dropout rates.*

Within this strategy there is a special section on *extra-curricular activities*¹¹ that could contribute to lowering the school dropout rates among Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children, such as providing supplementary lessons for primary school pupils, various courses, initiating cultural and sports activities with the community, offering programs for fighting illiteracy and including parents in the activities.

For the implementation of this strategy, the Institutions in Kosovo have drafted an Action Plan, which sets out priorities for each respective sector based on the strategy. Under the Education component of this action plan, there were two objectives which were directly related to increasing the enrolment rate of children in pre-school and pre-primary education: improving daily attendance, and decreasing dropout rates.

Apart from the strategy, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology has issued an administrative guidance for establishment of PRTANs. This administrative instruction defines general principles, responsibilities and procedures for establishing and strengthening the Prevention and Response Teams on Abandonment and Non-registration in compulsory education. PRTANs have a role to prevent and respond to school dropout incidences in compulsory education, and to treat the matter of non-enrolment of children and young people of school age in compulsory education. PRTANs are established by the governing council of a school. Usually, members of these groups are representatives of pupils, parents and teachers. What is characteristic for these PRTANs is that they cooperate with local institutions and other institutions and non-governmental organizations in cases when activities need to be coordinated. PRTANs function at the school level but they are not part of the official administrative school structures/staff.

During this evaluation PRTANs and their work and collaboration with centres have been assessed. PRTANs usually provide recommendations and information to learning centres on actions to undertake where there is a need to intervene, or to investigate a situation that is taking place.

This study’s findings show that these teams and the learning centres have close cooperation, as both work with the same target group, and they both have the same objectives as they intend to prevent and respond to school dropouts from compulsory education, and treat the matter of non-enrolment of children and young people of school age in compulsory education.

¹⁰ Kosovo Government, Strategy for the integration of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo 2009-2015, December 2008.

¹¹ Kosovo Government, Strategy for the integration of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo 2009-2015, December 2008, pg. 25.

4.2. EFFECTIVENESS

4.2.1. Achievement of Intended Outcomes

As confirmed by NGOs running LCs in Kosovo, there are currently around 40 centres in 15 municipalities, managed by 12 organizations, which have been established and are currently functional, mainly in the municipalities where Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities live. More than half of these centres operate within school facilities, whereas almost half of LCs continue to conduct their activities in private buildings.

As mentioned earlier in the report, although the range of the services provided by these centres to pupils differs from one to another, the majority of LCs conduct the following activities:

- Help young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children to be prepared to enrol in school;
- Assist with homework;
- Assist the regular attendance of pupils in compulsory education;
- Work with pupils who have abandoned school to return them to school;
- Cooperate with parents and teachers (for example, Parents Days where parents show their success/failure as a way of motivating youngsters to continue to go to school);
- Hold parents meetings in which parents and centre staff discuss problems that children face;
- Visit parents at home in order to keep contact with them;
- Facilitate recreation and other activities regarding the education of members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Several LCs provide additional services/activities for children who attend these LCs and for their parents, such as reading and writing courses for parents; activities and counselling that are related to health matters, family planning, social issues; and marking of various celebrations such as Earth Day, Europe Day, etc.

"I have only one message: Learning centres work in different ways, have different plan-programmes and conduct different activities, but each of them has its unique importance."

NGO Representative

Some learning centres also conduct awareness campaigns on the importance of education and inclusion of children of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians into formal education. It should be noted that the learning centre that operates under Caritas Kosova provides health services to Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities.

A great variety of activities are provided in learning centres because Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children are isolated in terms of socialization (they don't hang out with children from other communities), and in terms of encountering lifetime experiences (their daily-life follows the same routine). Factors such as poverty, unemployment, family traditions (sticking together, lack of trust in others), and illiteracy contribute deeply in their isolation.

Because of this situation these centres, apart from assisting Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children on homework and learning, also organize activities that empower these children to socialize more. During this study the researchers have visited 12 learning centres in five municipalities that are managed by six NGOs. As part of this study, the team of researchers obtained information on the number of children that are currently attending the LCs. As the table below shows, a great number of children

have attended LCs over the years. The number of children attending activities in centres managed by the aforementioned six organizations is around 2,605 children for the academic year of 2014/15.

Table 9. Number of children involved in LCs.

Learning Centre Children's Participation Data				
Name of NGO operating a LCs	Number of children in 2011-2012	Number of children in 2012-2013	Number of children in 2013-2014	Number of children in 2014-2015
Terre Des Hommes	NA	NA	NA	249
Bethany Christian Services	325	327	325	325
Caritas Kosova	0	325	300	245
Balkan Sunflowers Kosova	426	588	547	510
VoRAE	377	436	782	745
The Ideas Partnership	115	230	410	485
Total	1243	1906	2364	2559

On the table below, the number of children attending LCs by gender and ethnicity is provided:

Table 10. Number of children in LCs – disaggregated by ethnicity/gender in 2014/15.

Number of children by gender and ethnicity in 2014/15	Terre des Hommes	Bethany Christian Services	Caritas Kosova	Balkan Sunflowers Kosova	VoRAE	The Ideas Partnership	TOTAL
No. of children from Ashkali community	142*	321*	194	328	437	345	2174
No. of children from Roma community			0	130	159	45	
No. of children from Egyptian community			0	22	1	50	
No. of children from Albanian community	107*	4	51	30	133	45	385
No. of children from Serbian community		0	0	0	15	0	
Female children percentage	49%	48%	53%	56%	47%	52%	~51%
Male children percentage	51%	52%	47%	44%	53%	54%	~49%

**Data from Terre des Hommes and Bethany Christian Services are not disaggregated by ethnicity.*

According to the statistics researchers obtained from the NGOs that operate the learning centres, both majority and minority communities attend these centres. This means that learning centres not only address the needs of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, but they also provide their services to Albanian and Serbian children as well. The gender ratio between female and male children attending these centres is also balanced.

In general, the learning centres established by these six organizations work with almost the same target groups:

- a. Pre-schoolers;
- b. Pupils who attend school from grades 1 to 9.

Children's School Performance

The researchers assessed the school performance through a three-year period of 50 children attending LCs. This task was performed by assessing children's performance in Albanian/Serbian languages, and mathematics, as these are the main subjects taught by all LCs. It should be noted that the study team assessed children that attended elementary education (grades 1 to 5). The table below shows that in general there is an improvement in grades for Albanian/Serbian language, and mathematics.

Table 11. Children's school performance.

Municipality	LC	School	Subject	Average grade at the beginning	Current average grade	Difference
Ferizaj / Uroševac	Terre Des Hommes	"Vezir Jashari"	Albanian Language	3.66	4.33	0.67
			Mathematics	3.66	4.00	0.34
	Caritas Kosova	"Ahmet Hoxha"	Albanian Language	3.66	3.00	-0.66
			Mathematics	3.00	3.00	0.00
	VoRAE	"Naim Frashëri"	Albanian Language	4.00	4.00	0.00
			Mathematics	4.00	4.00	0.00
Gjakovë / Đakovica	Terre Des Hommes	"Yll Morina"	Albanian Language	5.00	5.00	0.00
			Mathematics	5.00	5.00	0.00
	Bethany Christian Services	"Zef Lush Marku"	Albanian Language	3.77	3.66	-0.11
			Mathematics	3.77	3.77	0.00
Fushë Kosovë/ Kosovo Polje	Balkan Sunflowers Ideas Partnership	"Selman Riza"	Albanian Language	3.83	3.83	0.00
			Mathematics	4.00	3.50	-0.50
Obiliq / Obilić	VoRAE	"Ibrahim Rugova"	Albanian Language	2.62	2.87	0.25
			Mathematics	2.37	2.87	0.50
	Balkan Sunflowers	"Pandeli Sotiri"	Albanian Language	2.66	2.66	0.00
			Mathematics	2.22	2.33	0.11
	Balkan Sunflowers (Serbian)	"Sveti Sava"	Serbian Language	3.12	3.24	0.12
			Mathematics	2.88	2.90	0.02
Graçanicë / Gračanica	VoRAE (Serbian)	"Miladin Milic"	Serbian Language	3.23	3.33	0.10
			Mathematics	2.45	2.60	0.15
	Balkan Sunflowers (Serbian)	"Miladin Popovic"	Serbian Language	3.45	3.57	0.12
			Mathematics	2.77	3.09	0.32

According to the interviews with teachers at school, children who attend learning centres have been able to gain more knowledge regarding the subjects that were taught at LCs.

Moreover, the interviewed parents rated the work of LCs with their children with an average of 8.4/10. The majority of the parents were of the opinion that LCs helped their children with their homework (82%), encouraged them to attend school (74%), and trained them to socialize with each other while performing different activities (53%). However, some parents (27%) expressed their concern over the qualification of the tutors, as they thought that their children could perform even better if their tutors had adequate qualification.

4.2.2. Cooperation between LCs and Schools

When asked to rate their cooperation with LCs from 1 to 10, school personnel who were interviewed averaged a score of 7.3. In general, they reported good cooperation between schools and learning centres. School staff said that they have regular meetings with LC staff, where they discuss the obstacles that children face and what can be done for them to overcome these obstacles. Moreover, around half of the schoolteachers interviewed stated that they regularly meet with LCs tutors and exchange information about children's progress. Teachers also refer children with learning challenges to LCs. It should be noted, however, there were some schoolteachers and directors (17%) that stated that they do not have any cooperation with LCs staff.

Meanwhile, LC staff rated their cooperation with schools with an average score of **8.7** out of possible 10. They report that since the majority of centres are located within school premises, usually there is close coordination and cooperation between LCs staff and school staff. However, this depends on the school, as some respondents said that there are cases when schoolteachers are not willing to cooperate with LC staff. It should be noted that six LC representatives stated that in cases where there are mediators, they do a great job of coordinating between LCs and school staff.

4.2.3. Coordination with governmental institutions

Compared to a few years ago, the majority of new LCs have opened in public schools rather than in private buildings.

This was made possible through memorandums of understanding signed between NGOs, MEST and school directors. Through these memorandums, local authorities/schools took the responsibility to provide a location and inventory, as well as to cover the costs of electricity, heating and other municipal expenses.

Apart from these memorandums, three of the interviewed NGOs also receive financial support from local authorities to carry out daily activities in LCs. In this regard, a representative of Balkan Sunflowers Kosova said that the municipality of Graçanicë/Gračanica built the learning centre, has created a fund for daily operations of the learning centre, and also takes care of heating.

The representative of Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians said that they are in the process of signing a cooperation agreement with the municipality of Shtimje, but they do not have any cooperation in terms of financial support with other municipalities where they run learning centres.

Meanwhile, Caritas Kosova was provided land by the municipality of Ferizaj/Uroševac to build an LC. Moreover, after the LC started operating, the municipality created a budget line to support daily activities of this centre. However, the amount of support is decreasing each year and therefore is not sustainable.

Memorandums of cooperation have also been signed between Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, Caritas Kosova, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. In harmony with the priorities of the ministry, the NGOs have pledged to work towards inclusion and higher quality of education for children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Tutors also receive capacity building support from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and conduct periodic joint activities in support of children's education in Kosovo.

4.3. EFFICIENCY

4.3.1. Cost-efficiency of activities

The following table presents the 2011-2015 expenditures of five NGOs (The Ideas Partnership; Voice of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians; Bethany Christian Services; Caritas Kosova; Balkan Sunflowers Kosova) running 24 learning centres. The total money spent during this period by these five NGOs for the 24 learning centres was €1,022,980.

As can be seen in the table below, around 61% of total expenditures were allocated for human resources, such as tutors, facilitators and coordinators. Nineteen per cent of the expenditures went toward food, 10% was used to pay facility rent, electricity and other operating expenditures, and the other 11% went to material for activities.

Table 12. Expenditures of 24 Learning Centres managed by 5 NGOs (Period: 2011-2015).

Activity	TIP	VoRAE	Balkan Sunflowers	Caritas Kosova	Bethany Christian Services	Total	% of Total Expenditure
Tutor salaries	€ 23,166	€ 151,888	€ 94,992	€ 120,480	€ 9,120	€ 399,646	39%
Facilitators, coordinators	€ -	€ -	€ 221,065	€ -	€ -	€ 221,065	22%
Facility rent, electricity and municipal expenditures	€ 16,263	€ 28,430	€ 28,270	€ 9,000	€ 18,000	€ 99,963	10%
Food	€ 9,748	€ 9,037	€ 107,002	€ 9,984	€ 54,000	€ 189,771	19%
Other activities (material for activities)	€ 9,391	€ 58,060	€ 34,764	€ -	€ 10,320	€ 112,535	11%
Total Expenditure	€ 58,568	€ 247,415	€ 486,093	€ 139,464	€ 91,440	€ 1,022,980	100%
Number of children	1240	2340	2071	1033	1626	8310	
Average yearly cost per child for the 2011-2015 period						€ 123.10	

Through activities carried out in these 24 Learning Centres between 2011 and 2015, the lives of 8310 children have been affected. In average, the yearly cost for a child was €123.10, although it should be noted that there are considerable differences in this regard between different learning centres ranging from €47.23 in TIP to €234.71 in Balkan Sunflowers.

4.3.2. Coordination between donors

Throughout the years, donors provided substantial support to learning centres in the form of financial support, capacity building, supplies and equipment. However, there was evident lack of cooperation and coordination between them.

“It is my opinion that donor organizations should increase their cooperation and avoid funding same or similar projects. Local authorities should take the responsibility of coordinating donor organizations.”

Representative of a donor organization

During the interviews, three representatives of donors claimed that despite discussion between donors, they were not able to achieve tangible outcomes. Some donors were of the opinion that the lack of results was due to the shortage of organized information on the work of learning centres, their organization and the stages they were at.

Six of the nine interviewed donors were of the opinion that learning centres should get together and design a mutual strategy which they would present to governmental institutions. Many donors said that if learning centres could be incorporated in the formal education system and have a mutual strategy created for them, donors would be able to coordinate their support more efficiently. This support would decrease year after year, until LCs are completely incorporated within formal education, and local and central authorities financially support the centres.

4.3.3. Coordination between NGOs

Starting from January 2014, twelve NGOs running the 40 LCs are having several coordination meetings a year to exchange information, best practices and common challenges as well as to plan together to ensure sustainability. In cases where LCs from different NGOs are financed by the same donor organization, there is a higher level of cooperation, as is the case of Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians and Terre des Hommes which are both financed by HEKS. However, due to the fact that LCs have been established in different ways by several NGOs, there is neither a homogenous approach to provision of their services nor a commonly agreed way to assess their results.

4.4. IMPACT

Learning centres were initially established to provide support to children with their school responsibilities, such as homework, attendance, staying in school, and their performance in general. However, through the years, the scope of many LCs has widened, as they have included more children from communities other than Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and have also carried out activities with parents and the community at large. The reasons for this evolution of LCs are mainly related to the issue of social inclusion of discriminated groups of society, and raising awareness on the importance of education for these communities.

In line with the objectives of this study, the impact of learning centres was measured in the following areas:

1. Social inclusion of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children;
2. Effect on school performance of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children;
3. LCs' contribution in the conditions of out-of-school children;
4. Contribution in reducing of segregation and exclusion through LC sustainability.

4.4.1. Social Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Children

The joint participation of different communities in the activities organized by learning centres, as well as out-of-school activities have all contributed towards social inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. This was more evident in LCs that are placed within school facilities, because the possibility of befriending children of other communities has been greater. We should add here that LCs are now ethnically inclusive, as part of them are also children from other communities (Albanian and Serbian), with their number growing each year.

Around 78% of the interviewed school teachers, directors and members of PRTANs claimed that children are more encouraged to attend school and they also have become more socialized with children of other communities, due to the work done by the LCs. Social inclusion of the pupils of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities has progressed continuously. However, there were around 17% of respondents who claimed that some LCs are mainly attended by Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, therefore they do not provide a multi-ethnic environment to contribute towards social inclusion.

Representatives of local authorities stated that the children of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are socializing more, feel more comfortable with other children and also express themselves more freely due to the work done by LCs' staff.

Donors unanimously agreed that the LCs conduct different activities, but they all aim to involve children of all communities. However, according to some of the donors, as some LCs are mostly attended by Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, they are restricted in terms of providing activities that include children of different ethnic backgrounds.

When asked to rate the impact of LCs on social inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is "no impact whatsoever" and 10 is "very positive impact", the interviewed stakeholders provided the following average ratings. All interviewed stakeholders gave above-average ratings. It should be noted that representatives of local authorities (MOCRs and MEDs) rated the impact of LCs in terms of social inclusion significantly higher than representatives of central authorities (MEST).

Figure 4. What was the impact of LCs in terms of social inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children?



4.4.2. Effect on School Performance of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Children

The results from the measurement of children's school performance over the years showed that there is a positive difference in terms of success that children have shown in school courses of Albanian/Serbian language, and mathematics. Based on the comments that the respondents provided on the impact of LCs on children's school performance, there was an improvement in regard to children's reading and writing skills.

"From my point of view, it is very hard to measure the exact impact of these centres, because there are other factors that do impact the education of children in Kosovo. However, I believe that the LCs are assisting a lot the education system in Kosovo especially for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians."

NGO Representative

Around 62% of schoolteachers stated that children now regularly do their homework and go to classes more prepared. On the other hand, approximately 23% of school teachers provided a less positive assessment on this aspect. According to them, children have many other obstacles in the learning process (related to their upbringing, traditions, lack of education of parents and overall poverty) and they still need to improve their performance at school.

Donors stated that they did not actually have any data in regard to children's school performance. Their assessment was more based on the reports provided by LCs that, according to most of the interviewed donors, are not very detailed. Still, several donors said that they believed there was an improvement of children's performance in school, since LCs provide support on homework and assist towards improvement of writing and reading skills of the children.

The impact of the LCs on the children's performance at school was not rated very highly by Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns (MOCRs) either. They stated that learning centres should put in more of an effort to achieve more positive results on this issue.

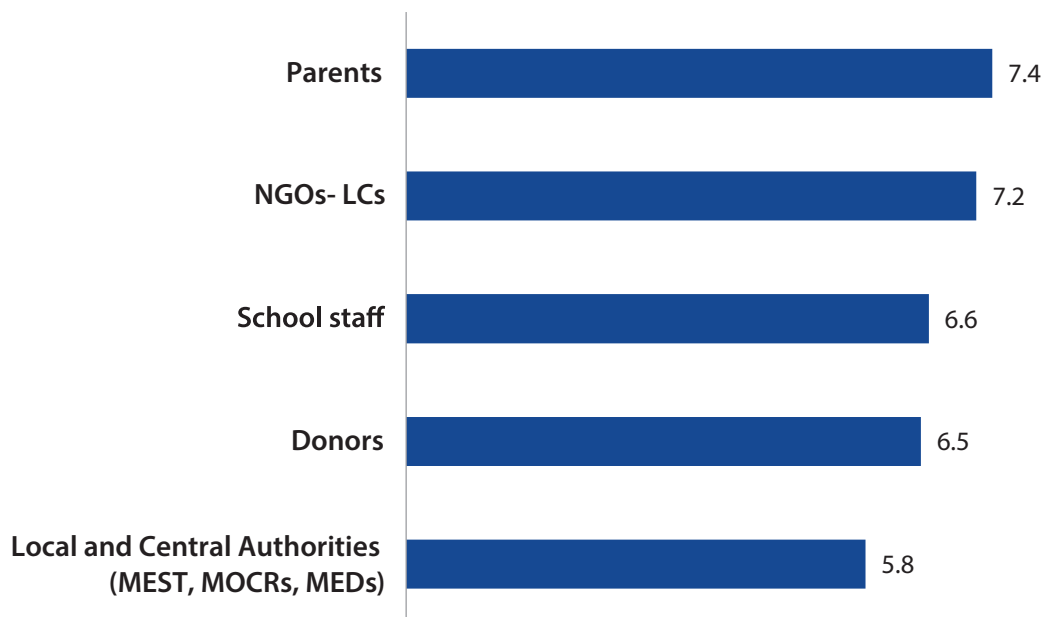
"I think children's performance at school is only being measured based on their attendance. I believe there is more to it, not just regular attendance," stated a MOCR representative. Meanwhile, in regard to children's school performance, MED heads who were interviewed, stated that though this issue is not under their supervision, school directors and school teachers report that children who attend the LCs have improved their performance in some subjects.

"There are a lot of factors that impact child's school performance, so even in cases where there is an improvement in this regard, we cannot solely credit LCs. Having said that, I strongly believe that the tutors working with children have made the learning process for children much easier."

Head of an NGO running LCs

When asked to rate the impact of LCs on children's school performance on a scale ranging from 1 (no impact whatsoever) to 10 (very positive impact), the interviewed stakeholders provided the ratings shown on the graph below.

Figure 5. What was the impact of LCs regarding children's school performance?



The assessment has also shown that the impact of the learning centres was somewhat positive in terms of children's regular school attendance. Being closer to the community, learning centres have maintained continuous contacts with children's parents in order to encourage regular attendance from children.

Regarding the impact of LCs in terms of school attendance of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children, most of the interviewed schools' staff (68%) were of the opinion that learning centres have improved the school attendance of these children.

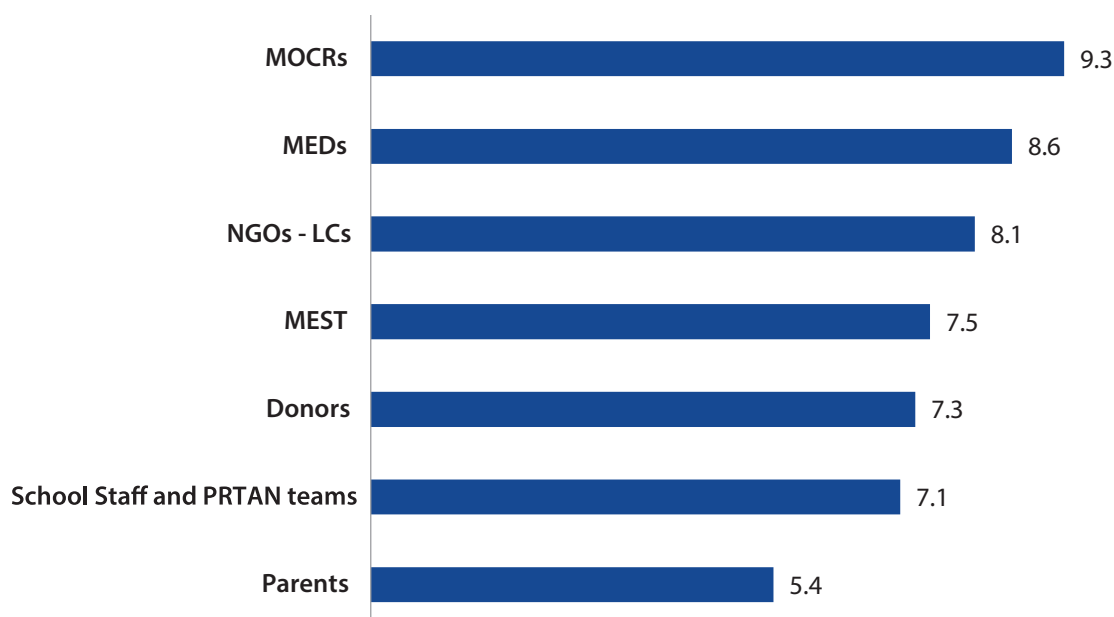
According to them, LCs have contributed in this regard by motivating children to attend school and by raising parents' awareness on the importance of school attendance of their children. It is worth mentioning that some school teachers and directors (20%) stated that LCs have also contributed indirectly in terms of regular school attendance, by providing children with clothing, food and school supplies.

Most of the donors claimed that LCs encouraged parents to send their children to school and, according to them, LCs have raised the number of children enrolled in schools. However, several donors were of the opinion that more work in other areas needs to be done as well, specifically in regard to their social and economic situation, as these affect children's attendance in compulsory education.

All interviewed LC personnel stated that they have positively impacted children's regular school attendance. They claimed that LCs have helped in this regard through: motivating children about the importance of school, providing positive feedback, and coordinating with school-teachers and parents to obtain information regarding children's absences.

The table below provides the average scores of interviewed stakeholders on the impact of LCs in terms of children's regular school attendance.

Figure 6. What was the impact of centres on the regular attendance in school by the children?



Interviewed stakeholders were also asked to share their opinions in regard to the work of LCs in preventing school dropouts. Based on respondents' comments, 76% state LCs have succeeded in prevention of school dropouts, but not everyone (24%) shared the opinion that these centres have achieved a positive result on this issue.

The majority of interviewed school staff (83%) stated that LCs have contributed on preventing school dropouts through PRTANs (who deal with identifying cases at risk of abandonment and work on getting children back to school), and also by providing social assistance to the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children (food, clothing and school supplies).

"Difficult economic conditions have forced many children to drop out of school, and that is something neither schools nor LCs can do anything about."

School teacher

On the other hand, a few respondents (17%) claimed that the issue of school dropouts is mainly related to the poor socio-economic situation of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and LCs do not have the capacity to contribute in that regard.

There were slightly different opinions among donors on the issue of prevention of school dropouts. Some of them were of the opinion that LCs have done a very good job towards prevention of school dropouts, since PRTANs have constantly been working on getting dropout children back to school. As some of them stated, the number of Roma girls who attend and finish the secondary school is growing, and, the retention rate for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children from beneficiary communities increased by 8.4% between 2010 and 2013. On the other hand, three donors argued that there are many obstacles that LCs face in lowering dropout rates (e.g. early marriages, migration, low level of education of the parents, etc.). According to them, taking into account those obstacles, LCs had limited success in this regard.

Interviewed parents were split when asked on the impact of LCs in preventing school dropouts. Whereas some of them (47%) stated that this issue was tackled by LCs by motivating children

to attend school and by following their progress, many of them (53%) believed that LCs cannot do much in this regard as this problem is mainly related to the socio-economic situation of children of these communities.

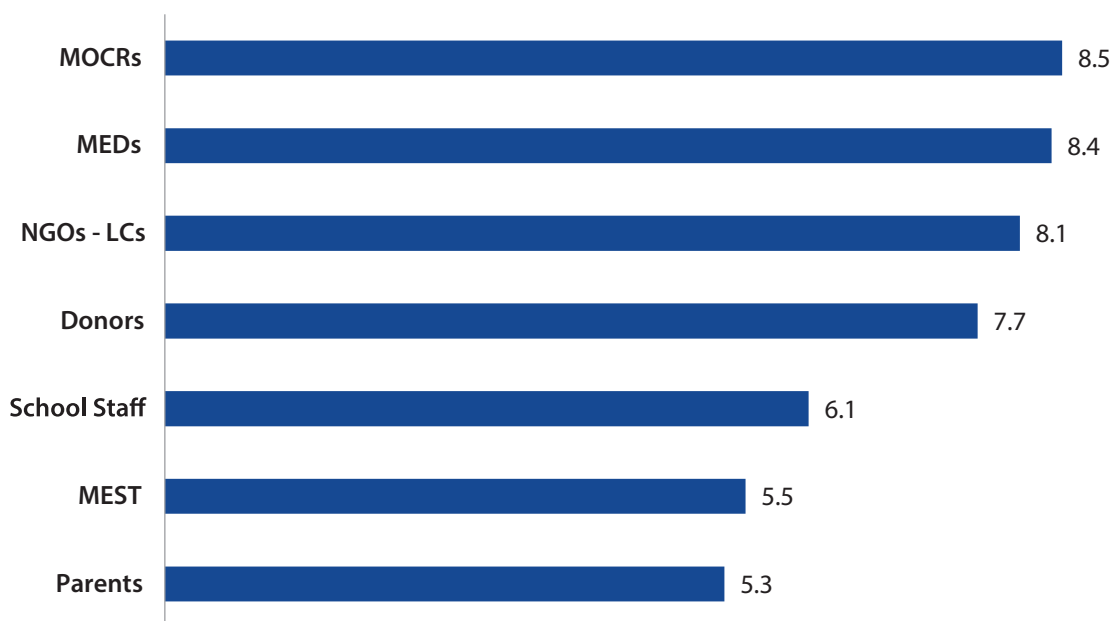
Representatives of local and central authorities agreed that LCs, in cooperation with PRTANs, have been working towards prevention of school dropouts. Still, similarly to other stakeholders, they also were of the opinion that the issue of school dropouts is mostly related to the socio-economic state of these communities, and LCs influence in this regard is very limited.

Meanwhile, LC staff were of the opinion that centres have done a great job in preventing children from dropping out of school.

Several LC staff said that no children attending activities in their centres have dropped out of school, whereas in cases where there are dropouts they were mainly children who emigrated from Kosovo due to the difficult economic state. PRTANs and mediators do a great job in preventing school dropouts according to the majority of LC staff.

The following average ratings were given by key stakeholders in regard to LCs impact on the incidence of children dropping out from school. As it can be seen, local institutions were of the opinion that LCs have had a significant impact on children's school dropout rates, whereas parents were of the opinion that LCs have had average impact in this regard.

Figure 7. What was the impact of LCs in preventing school dropouts?



4.4.3. Contribution of LCs on the Conditions of Out-Of-School Children

According to interviews with coordinators of the learning centres, nearly each centre has managed to get between five and eight children a year back to school through the help of mediators. According to them, apart from preventing other children from dropping out of school, this could be considered as the greatest success of the learning centres.

It should also be acknowledged that since the establishment of the learning centres, according to the interviewed parents, their impact in the community has been positive, since many

categories were affected by LCs operation (parents, the society of children, the community in general).

Parents believe that since the establishment of LCs, they have established a very good reputation through their work with both in-school and out-of-school children, and now LCs and their staff have the respect of all members of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities.

4.4.4. Contribution in Reducing Segregation and Exclusion through LC Sustainability

In the beginning, most of the learning centres provided services only for members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Over time, the ethnic composition of children has changed, which meant that the number of children belonging to Albanian and Serbian communities that participated LCs has increased.

During the course of interviews with various stakeholders, researchers have managed to identify data that supports the proposition that in recent years there has been more interaction between pupils of different ethnicities.

The increase of the number of pupils belonging to different ethnic groups in the LCs directly influenced the enhancement of joint activities outside the learning process. An other important element that has positively affected the cooperation between pupils of different communities is the implementation of joint activities, such as marking school celebrations or marking any international celebration such as Europe Day, Earth Day, etc. For example, Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians provides 500 Euros yearly to mark different celebrations, where children attending LCs are included, thus furthering their interaction and socialization with children of communities that do not attend LC activities.

The approach of teachers to pupils attending learning centres can be challenging, since in general, teachers work more with students who do not have learning difficulties. This is confirmed by interviews with LCs. Due to time constraint and the large number of pupils in classes, teachers are not able to work enough with pupils in need on an individual basis. One result of this is that some children who attend LCs are referred from their teachers.

4.5. SUSTAINABILITY

Information obtained during the study identifies that learning centres operate mainly from donor support, and in some cases are also supported by local authorities. In order for LCs to achieve long-term sustainability, initially the cooperation between Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, municipal authorities, donors, and organizations that manage LCs should be intensified. In this section of the report, modalities of financial and institutional sustainability will be elaborated.

4.5.1. Cooperation with Municipal and Central Authorities

When taking LC financial and technical needs into account, collaboration of learning centres with local and central authorities is limited, as for example finding appropriate facilities where these LCs would conduct their daily activities, etc. However, in recent years, a number of memorandums of understandings were signed with MEST and Municipal Education Departments,

through which authorities are committed to provide school spaces for LCs to perform their activities. In financial terms, central and local authorities have failed to allocate budgets that would keep LCs functional.

It is noteworthy that from the organizations that were interviewed during this assessment, only Caritas Kosovo and Balkan Sunflowers Kosova receive financial support from municipal authorities, but even this practice is not sustainable in the long-term, as municipal funding is provided on a yearly basis and can change every year. In other cases, local authorities through memoranda of cooperation pledged to compensate LCs monthly cost such as: the cost of rent, electricity, heating, and other equipment (inventory) for LCs which are located within school buildings.

Interviewed stakeholders shared the opinion that the functioning of LCs based solely on the support of donors is not sustainable in the long-term. The majority of donors also were of the opinion that these centres do not have a concrete strategy for their financial sustainability and they rely heavily on voluntarism. Several donors stated that learning centres should be recognized by MEST and should be operating under the competences of MEST and MEDs.

“Funds are being reduced; these centers are based only on the donor’s help. Unless the government (MEST-MED) steps in and takes them under their competences, it will be very hard for these LCs to be sustainable.”

Norwegian Ambassador in Kosovo

4.5.2. Future Sustainability without Donor Support

The majority of donors expressed their willingness to support LCs in the future, either financially or through capacity building. Still, the majority of donors believe that governmental institutions should recognize LCs and an administrative instruction should be drafted for them. Moreover, many donors believe that these centres should have commonly agreed standards and have a clear vision and a concrete plan to carry out in the upcoming years.

All interviewed municipal directors showed their willingness to support LCs in the future. However, their limited financial capacity has hindered their possibility to meet the financial needs of LCs. Several directors have requested MEST to create a fund for financial support of LCs in Kosovo.

“Municipalities face financial difficulties in meeting the needs related to obligatory education. Hence, including learning centres within the municipal budget is currently very difficult. One method that could solve this issue is the creation of a fund by MEST which would be dedicated to covering the costs of learning centres in Kosovo.”

Municipal director

Around two-thirds of LC representatives (64%) argued that the way LCs could become financially sustainable, in case the donors cut their support, is by receiving financial support from central and local institutions: MEST and MED. Seventy-three per cent of interviewed LC staff were of the opinion that LCs cannot continue operating without financial support from donors.

Similarly, only a few interviewed school staff (14%) stated that LCs can operate without financial support of donors. All others claimed that they do not believe that these centres can function without financial support from donors.

Around 67% of them said that they cannot think of any alternative solution. Those who provided alternatives said that financial stability of LCs can be achieved through support from MEST, municipal authorities, and volunteer work of tutors and teachers.

Overall, the majority of interviewed stakeholders were of the opinion that without the establishment of a legal framework and allocation of funding from governmental institutions, LCs cannot operate without support from international donor organizations.

“From now on, we think that the LCs should operate under the umbrella of municipal and central level institutions. MEDs and MEST should not have ownership of these centres, but they should be directly involved in the functioning of these centers.”

Representative of a donor organization

5. LESSONS LEARNED

The majority of stakeholders confirm that learning centres have contributed to the improvement of the school performance of children involved in day-to-day activities of LCs. Their work has resulted in more regular attendance at school, better grades, lower dropout rates, and enhanced social inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in particular. According to interviewed stakeholders, the LC element that delivered the greatest impact was the help children received with homework, which directly affected their school performance.

During this study, the evaluation team visited both in-school and out-of-school learning centres. According to most LC staff, centres located within public school performed better and had a larger impact in the lives of children attending them. Many factors favour centres located within schools, including: improved conditions, better work environment, proximity, cooperation with teachers, and easiness in monitoring children's progress in schools. Several donors also stated that some LCs are isolated within one community which hinders their integration within the larger community.

Currently, there is no legal framework that regulates the establishment and operation of learning centres. Moreover, despite coordination meetings between twelve NGOs running the 40 LCs, as LCs have been established in different ways by several NGOs, there is neither a homogeneous approach to provision of their services nor a commonly agreed way to assess their results.

The qualification and level of preparation of tutors, educators and facilitators working in LCs has been questioned by several municipal representatives, teachers and school directors. This highlights the need for an official certification program for these LC positions. Several teachers also expressed their concern over some centres, mostly those located in private buildings, due to: lack of cooperation with school staff; lack of curricula designed based on the needs of the children; and lack of categorization of children based on their age (in some cases children of different ages attend LCs at the same time).

Currently, due to the lack of financial capacity, almost no municipality had the possibility to include centres within the municipal budget. All local representatives interviewed (MEDs and MOCRs) suggested that central authorities could do more in this regard, and let the local authorities be the implementing partner.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study on impact and sustainability of learning centres, the research team has derived the following recommendations to be taken under consideration by local and central authorities, the donor community, and LCs:

Recommendations for central and local authorities

- ▷ Creation of a policy that would determine the criteria for establishment and operation of learning centres.
- ▷ Central and local authorities and the donor community should initiate a consultation process to find a modality that would secure long-term financial sustainability for LCs.
- ▷ MEST and the donor community should establish capacity building programs for LC programme staff working with LCs.

Recommendations for NGOs and learning centres

- ▷ NGOs that manage LCs that are located in private buildings (where conditions are not adequate) should sign memorandums of understanding with local authorities and school leadership to relocate these centres within school buildings.
- ▷ LCs should improve the quality of their services by designing curriculums based on the needs of children and in line with the compulsory education system.
- ▷ Learning centre staff and schoolteachers should create a mechanism of continuous cooperation in order for the impact of LCs to be larger in the lives of children that attend these centres.
- ▷ Learning centres should increase their cooperation with parents and the community in order to achieve higher impact in raising the awareness of the importance of education and social inclusion.
- ▷ Learning centres should continue their cooperation with mediators and PRTANs in order to increase children's participation in formal education and to avoid school dropout.
- ▷ A standardized mechanism of evaluation and monitoring of learning centres should be established.

ANNEX I: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

Could you please tell us what is your general assessment on LCs? Please, provide your assessment from 1, meaning “not positive at all” to 10, meaning “very positive”.

Donors	8.1
Directors, Teachers and Prevention Teams	7.0

Could you please tell us what was the impact of the LCs on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children? Please, provide your assessment from 1, meaning “no impact whatsoever” to 10, meaning “very positive impact”.

Donors	7.6
NGOs	7.6

In your opinion, to what extent have LCs contributed in community development in the field of education in terms of children’s improved performance in school?

Donors	6.5
NGOs	7.2
MEST	5
MOCRs	6.8
MEDs	5.6
School Staff and PRTAN Teams	6.6
Parents	7.4

In your opinion, to what extent have LCs contributed to community development in the field of education in terms of regular attendance in compulsory education?

Donors	7.3
NGOs	8.1
Parents	5.4

What was the impact of LCs on the school attendance of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children?

MEST	7.5
MOCRs	9.3
MEDs	8.6
School Staff and PRTAN Teams	7.1

In your opinion, to what extent have LCs contributed to community development in the field of education in terms of school dropout rates?

Donors	7.7
MEST	5.5
MOCRs	8.5
MEDs	8.4
NGOs	8.1
School Staff and PRTAN Teams	6.1
Parents	5.3

What was the impact of the LCs in terms of social inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children?

MEST	6.5
MOCRs	8.5
MEDs	7.8
School Staff and PRTAN Teams	7.0

Could you please rate your cooperation with LCs?

MEST	7
MOCRs	8.3
MEDs	9.2
School Staff and PRTAN Teams	7.3

How important is it to you that these centres continue operating in the upcoming years? Please, provide your assessment from 1, meaning “not important at all” to 10, meaning “very important”.

MEST	8.5
MOCRs	10
MEDs	9.4
School Staff and PRTAN Teams	9.2
Parents	9.2

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