

TREND ANALYSES OF THE POSITION OF CHILD RIGHTS AT LOCAL LEVEL

2022

Child rights monitoring indicators in
comparative perspective



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Trend Analyses of the Position of Child Rights at Local Level - Child rights monitoring indicators in comparative perspective

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1. Executive summary

Domovik has undertaken review and analysis of the situation and developments in the field of children rights in three municipalities Zvečan, Zubin Potok and Leposavić over the last 3 years (2020-2022). It is based on the findings of two consecutive Data Collection Reports produced by Domovik in 2021 and 2022, in comparative perspective, against indicators developed for these reports in combination with indicators integrated in the tool Child Rights Monitoring Framework in Municipalities. Even though the period of two years is relatively short for more comprehensive trend analyses, it provides information that can assist in assessments of certain trends in education and social protection sectors. In the context of this analyses, it is noteworthy that data collection process in 2022 faced serious difficulties due to latest political developments, what limited Domovik team to obtaining data only for education in Zvečan and Leposavić, and for social protection in Leposavić.

Against this background, access to education at all levels remains similar in both assessments, with fluctuations noticed in number of children enrolled in some educational facilities. The overall trend of migrations of population from rural areas towards urban parts of municipalities and beyond could be observed in both, municipalities Zvečan and Leposavić, at the level of pre-school education. For the reference, in Leposavić, total number of children attending pre-school education increased from 432 in 2021 to 458 in 2022 (6%), with number of children in preparatory pre-school education increased from 155 in 2021 to 193 in 2022 (24.5%). This can be associated with movement of families from remote villages where no kindergartens exist to larger rural settlements closer to urban parts of municipality and urban settlements directly, where all pre-school facilities are located. The total number of children attending primary education decreased from 1264 in 2021 to 1215 in 2022 (3.9%), while total number of children enrolled in secondary schools remains almost the same, 367 in 2022 compared with 364 in 2021 (0.8% increase). The assessment in 2022 marks progress in number of children with disabilities with access to pre-school education, which is increased from 2 in 2021 to 13 in 2022 (from 0.4% to 2.8% of all children enrolled). The increase is noticed in number of children with disabilities included in primary education programs, from 8 in 2021 to 12 in 2022 (50% increase). In 2022, 8 children with disabilities were enrolled in secondary education (2.1% of all enrolled children) what is increase compared with 1 child included in 2021 (0.2% of all enrolled children).

The indicators for education in Zvečan municipality in 2022 show that 185 children were enrolled in early childhood pre-school education (83 girls and 102 boys). For the reference, number of children in early childhood pre-school education in 2021 was 187 (104 boys and 83 girls). In 2022, number of children in preparatory pre-school program was 80 (44 girls and 36 boys), what is almost the same proportion compared with 81 in 2021 (44 girls and 37 boys). Number of children enrolled in primary education in 2022 is 621 (269 boys and 352 girls), while in 2021 total number of children enrolled in primary education was 627 (287 boys and 340 girls). Based on assessment in 2022, number of children attending secondary school is 250, what is an increase for 11.11% compared with 2021 (225). Regarding the inclusive practices, 3 children with disabilities have access to primary education (2 boys and 1 girl), and 1 in secondary education, in 2022. Compared with 2021, when 2 children with developmental disabilities were included in primary education and 1 in secondary education, there is slight increase in access to primary education.

Assessment of qualitative aspects in 2021 and 2022 exercises has shown that certain improvements were made on the level of individual educational facilities, however in most of them the demand is high for additional space, especially for early childhood education. On the level of primary and more specifically secondary education, additional space is also needed for specialized schools for technical education and agriculture. In most schools and pre-school facilities children have access to extracurricular activities including excursions, folklore, music and theatre sections, sport

competitions, workshops and research activities, however most of interviewed teachers and educators pointed out the need for additional and more contemporary activities and additional physical space to accommodate workshops and equipment.

As explained above, the assessment of social protection services in 2022 and comparison analyses with 2021 was possible only for Leposavic municipality. Based on assessment findings, most of advisory-therapeutic, social-educational services, independent living support and assessment and planning services reported in 2021 are not available in practice. The main recommendation for all three municipalities is that municipal centres for social welfare and municipal directorates for social issues must introduce in practice all services specified in relevant legislation. They need to maintain records of beneficiaries of different services provided in electronic databases and engage in partnership with schools and pre-school facilities for providing personal assistants to children with special needs and disabilities. The outreach to and cooperation with donors and sectorial civil society organization in fund raising for that purpose is also highly recommended.

2. Background

Following the development of comprehensive instrument for assessment of the child rights on the municipal level, NGO Domovik has undertaken two consecutive assessments of access to child rights in relevant sectors covering years 2021¹ and 2022. Both assessments faced with severe limitations for more comprehensive evaluation of child rights due to objective reasons deriving from the unfavourable socio-political context which is reflected on the institutional functioning and every-day life of residents. In addition, there is a “chronical” problem with data collection due to underdeveloped institutional culture in the field of data and knowledge management, what is an issue in many municipalities in Kosovo including those covered with these two annual assessments.

The period of 2 years is insufficient for capturing trends in fulfilment of child rights, however it can provide evidence on commitments and efforts of relevant duty bearers to improve overall environment for children on local level. In this respect, assessments conducted by Domovik aims to support all stakeholders involved in work with children in municipalities Zvecan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic, with baseline data in the fields of social protection and education to be utilised as a reference for their future planning and programming cycles in relevant areas.

The assessment in 2022 faced with additional obstacles in access to data sources what significantly affected data collection. Due to the most recent political developments, most of the employees in all three municipalities resigned from their positions along with all other public services and police, judiciary and public enterprises. It was almost impossible to obtain data for social protection services in municipalities Zvecan and Zubin Potok as well as for education in Zubin Potok. The schools continued with functioning, initially in teleworking mode and further continued with regular in-person attendance. This enabled better access to data sources in comparison with social welfare institutions.

The analyses are expected to be useful tool for policy planning and development and implementation of programs in education and social protection at all levels in municipalities Zvecan, Leposavic and Zubin Potok. It should contribute to further introduction and institutionalisation of the approach based on evaluation and assessment of programming for children in order to better remedy shortcomings and address the most priority needs of children in smaller and pre-dominantly rural municipalities. It is expected to support better outreach to the most excluded and most neglected children and assist relevant stakeholders for fair and equal distribution of available resources and developmental aid to all children in need.

¹ https://domovik.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/SITUAT_2.pdf

3. Methodology

All methodological aspects in data collection were explained in detail in both Data Collection Reports for 2021 and 2022, and there will be no repetition of what was elaborated in detail in these analyses. As a brief reference, for both assessment cycles, Domovik used matrix for systematic data collection and analyses in the key sectors of child rights including child policies and regulations, education, health care, social protection, juvenile justice and child-responsive governance. The framework uses a cluster of indicators to measure accountability of relevant stakeholders in meeting their obligations in relevant sectors important for fulfilment of child rights. Specific questionnaires were developed for representatives of different institutional stakeholders to support data collection process.

This concrete exercise is an attempt to conduct some trend analyses based on data provided in these two comprehensive assessments which used questionnaires and indicators developed by Domovik, adjusted for the context of referent municipalities. In this respect, recently developed Child Rights Monitoring Framework for Municipalities with set of contextualised indicators provided additional reference for comparative perspective. The overarching idea is to measure, through quantitative and qualitative indicators, the level of enjoyment of child rights in the most relevant sectors in line with standards set in the UN Child Rights Convention (CRC), and applicable legislative and institutional framework in Kosovo and specific local contexts.

4. Key findings of the assessments in 2021 and 2022

4.1. Social Protection Services

4.1.1. Municipality Zvecan

In the assessment for 2021, in the field of social protection services, under the category of independent living support, beneficiaries in Zvecan had access to service of personal assistant. Personal assistants were assigned to children with disabilities through project-based supporting activities. However, this service was not part of the regular service provision program applied by the center for social welfare. In total, 4 children in need were provided with this service (1 girl and 3 boys) in 2021. The data collection exercise identified the need for development of database for needs assessment for the services of personal assistant. It should be further utilised for requesting additional funds and resources for advancement of this service. Apart from financial means, the center for social welfare lacks additional space and equipment for work with children with special needs. In addition, the education of parents of children with special needs is very important aspect.

Under the category counseling-therapeutic and social-educational services, beneficiaries have had access to psychosocial counseling and support services in the cases of violence. Other information about this service were not available due to inexistence of the system for follow up of the number of service beneficiaries. It was necessary to upgrade the tracking mechanism to generate data against different parameters. Additional financial and human resources were needed for more effective implementation of this service.

Within the category of accommodation services, beneficiaries have access to accommodation in relative, foster or other family. In the last year's assessment, center for social work had 1 beneficiary of this service (16-year-old boy). In previous years, the center received support from UNICEF in training of professionals aimed at improving foster care capacities in the municipality of Zvecan.

Despite all efforts, data on social protection services for 2022 could not be obtained during the preparation of data collection report due to above explained reasons and consequent unavailability of data sources and professionals in centers for social welfare. Having all latest developments in mind, the assumption is that no significant improvements could be expected.

4.1.2. Municipality Zubin Potok

In Zubin Potok, under the category assessment and planning services, beneficiaries had access to services of assessment of situation, needs, strengths and risks of beneficiaries. This service includes systematic collection of information about the beneficiary in order to assess the needs for interventions, services and measures. Apart from entry assessment, the center works on verbal assessment, while specialised institutions implement specialised forms of assessments. There is no data on the number of children who used this service due to lack of a system for registering beneficiaries according to the type of service.

Within the category of assessment and planning services, beneficiaries have had access to services related to assessment of child guardians/care givers, foster parents and adoptive parents. It was realized through the teamwork of the professional service in the center for social work. The assessment is carried out by professional staff of the center for social work including lawyer, social worker, pedagogue and psychologist. As in the cases of other relevant services, there is no data on

the number of children who used this service, due to lack of a system for registering beneficiaries according to the type of service.

Another service which was available to beneficiaries in 2021 under the category *planning and assessment services* is development of individual or family plan for providing support services and legal protection measures. In line with applicable regulations, specific timelines were determined for development and review of the plans. The initial plan of services needs to be prepared within 15 days, while family plan and individual plan must be completed within 60 days. The review and evaluation should be done after 6 months. Again, there was no data on the number of children who use this service, due to lack of a system for registering beneficiaries according to the type of service.

Under the category counseling-therapeutic and social-educational services, beneficiaries have had access to intensive support services for a family in crisis. Although the service is not formally developed, it is informally provided to beneficiaries in the center for social work. There is no data on the number of children who used this service, due to lack of a system for registering beneficiaries according to the type of service. In addition, maintaining family relationships and family reunion services were available to beneficiaries. Also, for this service, there is no data on the number of children/beneficiaries who used this service due to lack of a system for registering beneficiaries according to the type of service. Moreover, counselling and support services in cases of violence were also available to beneficiaries. They were implemented by the expert team of the center for social work including special pedagogue, psychologist, lawyer, and social worker.

The same as in the case of Zvečan municipality, it was not possible to obtain data on access to social protection services in Zubin Potok in 2022, and therefore no comparison could be made with data obtained in 2021.

4.1.3. Municipality Leposavic

In Leposavic, within the category of assessment and planning services, the following services were available to beneficiaries in 2021:

- Assessment of the situation, needs, strengths and risks of the beneficiary (and other important persons in their environment). There is no data on the number of children who use this service due to inexistence of the system for registering beneficiaries according to type of service provided.
- Development of an individual or family service provision plan and legal protection measures (including other assessments and plans). For effective implementation of this service, additional education of relevant professionals in the center for social work was needed. There was no data on the number of children who use this service due to inexistence of the system for registration of beneficiaries according to type of service.
- Shelter and other services which support the stay of users in the family and close environment were available to beneficiaries. There is a shelter in Lipljan and the center for social work facilitated one case in which parent agreed to send child there.

Within the category of advisory-therapeutic and social-educational services, the following services were stated to be available to beneficiaries:

- Intensive support services for a family in crisis (even though formally doesn't exist as a separate service, it is provided through the counselling services)
- Counselling and support services of parents, foster parents and adoptive parents

- Support for a family taking care for a child or an adult family member with disabilities
- Maintenance of family relationships and family reunion
- Counseling and support services in cases of violence

Unlike Zubin Potok and Zvečan, some data for access to social protection services in 2022 were possible to obtain. The assessment in 2022 for Leposavić, however, revealed that most of advisory-therapeutic and social-educational services don't exist in practice. Indeed, the only available service is counseling and support services in cases of violence, through which psychological counselling is provided for victims of violence. All other services are not introduced by the center for social welfare. The SOS telephone service was in place 3 years ago, however it is not active anymore, even though the SOS telephone number could be placed on the information board at the entrance of the center for social welfare. Intensive support services for a family in crisis are not in place as well as counselling and support services of parents, foster parents and adoptive parents. The same applies for maintenance of family relationships and family reunion services, family therapy service and mediation service.

The findings are even more concerning under the category support for independent living where no one out of three services foreseen by the law are not in place including supported housing, personal assistance, and training for independent living and other types of support. Personal assistant service was cancelled with outbreak of COVID-19 and currently is not available to beneficiaries.

In the field of assessment and planning services, assessment of the situation, needs, strengths and risks of the beneficiary (and other important persons in their environment) is not in place. In 2021, the information was provided that no exact data could be provided on the number of beneficiaries, but 2022 assessment revealed that it is not available in practice. There are only records of socially vulnerable individuals and assistance provided to them.

Such discrepancy in obtained data could be associated partly with political developments and potential budgetary reductions due to non-utilization of Kosovo budget along with the level of accuracy of data given by institutions in the assessment in 2021. Nevertheless, findings of the assessment in 2022 should be taken seriously, as more accurate evidence of the real situation in the access to services due to more comprehensive data check.

4.2. Education

4.2.1. Municipality Zvečan

Data and information for education sector for 2020 in previous assessment were collected in the period June-December 2021, under the specifically defined categories.

Nursery (children from 6 months to 3 years) – regular school curriculum and teaching program is provided by the Serbian Ministry of Education for each year. The service is available only in the urban part of Zvečan, while in rural areas this service does not exist and parents, beneficiaries from these areas, mostly bring children to the pre-school facility "Lane" in Zvečan. The number of children using this service in 2021 was 67 (37 boys and 30 girls). Until 2020, no comprehensive research was done for this age of children, but based on available information there was lack of junior professional staff, speech therapists and defectologists. There was lack of space, didactic material, Lego bricks, Montessori toys and some other materials important for working with children beneficiaries of this age. The institution realizes extra-curricular activities including folklore and drama section. There is a

lack of outdoor activities with children in the open space, such as organizing picnics and mini excursions with children. There was also a lack of additional educators who would organize additional extra-curricular activities.

In 2022, number of children beneficiaries was almost the same, 65 children (35 boys and 30 girls). The most common extracurricular activities included folklore and theater club. The facility still needs defectologist, speech therapist and psychologist. It lacks landscaped area outside where children can spend time outdoors. It also needs Montessori toys which are safe for children of that age, didactic materials, puzzles, etc.

Kindergarten (for children from 3 to 5 years) - the facility applied regular school curriculum and teaching activity plan. In total, 120 children (67 boys and 53 girls) were attending the program in 2020. In addition to the additional space needed, there is also pressing need to provide their services in rural areas. There were no available dentist services within the facility. The kindergarten provided certain extracurricular activities including drama section and folklore.

In 2022, the data on number of children shared are the same as for 2021 assessment (120 children, out of them 67 boys and 53 girls). Activities in pre-school yard and folklore are offered as extracurricular activities. The facility needs additional space in order to be able to provide services for children from rural areas. The same as for the nursery, it needs Montessori toys, didactic materials, puzzles, etc.

Preparatory preschool program (children of age 5 and a half to 6 and a half years) – the pre-school facility applied regular curriculum with 81 children (37 boys and 44 girls) attending the program in 2020. The institution did not organize extracurricular activities.

Based on assessment in 2022, 80 children are enrolled in preparatory pre-school program (36 boys and 44 girls). The facility does not have sufficient space, and needs inventory and materials for creative workshops.

Primary education (from 1st to 4th grades) – the primary school facilities applied curriculum provided by the Serbian Ministry of Education. The service was available in Zvečan, as well as in rural areas (Zerovnica, Grabovac and Banjska). In total, 298 children (138 boys and 160 girls) of age 7 to 11 attended regular program in 2020. There was lack of personal assistants in schools working with children under Individual Development Plan 2. Each of these schools had adequate space to conduct classes, while the need was identified for tablets/laptops for online education. Primary schools regularly implemented extracurricular activities including drama, sports, ecological and music sections.

The assessment conducted in 2022, has shown that number of children attending primary education in first four grades was 370. The most utilised extracurricular activities include folklore, drama club, choir and orchestra, sports section and environmental activities. The school needs personal assistants given that it has children that work under Individual development plans for children with disabilities (IOP2). At least three such assistants are needed whose annual payment is approximately 450 EUR. The school also need financial assistance of 500 EUR for development of the web site. It also requests assistance for purchase of geographic and history maps and geometric accessories. In addition, there is need for space for additional extracurricular activities, metal geometric bodies, biological encyclopedias and equipment and resources for chemistry cabinet. Moreover, it needs overhead projector, microphones, sound system, LCD projector and other contemporary electronic equipment.

Primary education (5th to 8th grades) - primary schools apply regular school curriculum within 3 primary school facilities in Zvečan, Zerovnica and Banjska. In total 329 pupils of age 11 to 15 years attended primary schools in 2020, out of them 149 boys and 180 girls. Schools implemented regular extracurricular activities including folklore, fairs, humanitarian actions, sports events and environmental sections.

The assessment in 2022 shows that 251 children (95 boys and 146 girls) attend higher grades of primary school "Vuk Karadžić", what is significant decrease for 23.7% compared with 2021 assessment (covering 2020). Regarding the extracurricular activities, school provides folklore, drama club, fairs, participation in humanitarian actions, ecological section and sport events. The school needs geographical and history maps, metal geometric bodies and other geometric accessories, biological encyclopedias, equipment and resources for chemistry cabinet, microphones, sound system, overhead and LCD projectors.

Secondary education (1st to 4th grades) – secondary school in Zvečan implements regular school plan and program, with 225 children of age 15 to 18 years attended it in 2020, out of them 102 boys and 123 girls. There is a need for trained teachers in the field of health care. The school does not have its own building, therefore it needed appropriate work-space, and more specifically there was lack of equipment for the health care cabinet. The school did not carry out extracurricular activities.

Based on assessment in 2022, number of children attending secondary school is 250, what is an increase for 11.11%. No major changes were made in terms of material and technical conditions for education given that school still does not have its own building what results with constant struggling with shortage of space. It needs trained teachers in the field of healthcare and organizational sciences as well as equipment for cabinets of physics, chemistry and health care.

The indicators for education in Zvečan municipality in 2022 show that 106 children were enrolled early childhood pre-school education (60 girls and 46 boys), out of them 80 from urban areas (43 girls and 37 boys) and 26 from rural areas (17 girls and 9 boys). For the reference, number of children in pre-school education in 2021 assessment was 81 (44 girls and 37 boys). In 2022, number of children in preparatory pre-school program was 80, out of them 26 from rural areas (17 girls and 9 boys). Number of pre-school facilities in municipality is 2, out them 1 in urban and 1 in rural area. Number of children enrolled in primary education is 621, out of them 477 from urban areas (211 boys and 267 girls) and 143 from rural areas (85 girls and 58 boys). Based on assessment in 2021 total number of children enrolled in primary education was 627, out of them 456 from urban areas (243 girls and 213 boys) and 171 from rural areas (74 boys and 97 girls). Overall, the proportion of children from rural and urban areas remains at the same level over the evaluation period. Regarding the inclusive practices, 3 children with disabilities have access to primary education (2 boys and 1 girl), all from urban areas. Total number of children attending secondary education is 225, out of them 102 boys and 123 girls, among them 1 child with disabilities. In 2021, there were 2 children with developmental disabilities included in primary education and 1 in secondary education. Total number of children with disabilities of all age is not available for these assessments.

4.2.2. Municipality Zubin Potok

Data for education for municipality Zubin Potok were available only for the assessment done in 2021, while due to resignation of municipal employees following political developments in 2022/2023, it

was not possible to obtain data for 2022. Therefore, the following data are related to education facilities in Zubin Potok only for 2021 assessment.

Nursery (children from 6 months to 3 years) – the facility applies regular school curriculum developed based on 4-year planning cycle, and implements its work plan every year. Every 4 years, a new "Development Planning" is carried out. Every day, all children beneficiaries work with educators and have access to professional services. Based on assessment on 2021, the institution had 95 beneficiaries, children up to 3 years of age (53 boys and 42 girls). There is a need for comprehensive research on early development aspects using didactic boards, focus research centers, etc. The facility has a suitable space for accommodation and work with children. In addition to regular activities, extracurricular activities are realized through the drama section, humanitarian actions, sports events, competitions, etc.

Kindergarten (for children from 3 to 5 years) - the facility develops annual work plan for every year, while every 4 years it produces "development plan". Based on assessment in 2021, the program was attended by 149 children of age 3 to 5, out of them 85 boys and 64 girls. The facility lacked an action plan on compulsory learning of foreign language in kindergarten, starting from the age of 3. The institution realized extracurricular activities including drama section, humanitarian actions, sports events, competitions, etc.

Preparatory preschool program (age of 5 and a half to 6 and a half years) – the pre-school facility applied regular annual curriculum. The program was attended by 67 children of age 6 to 7, out of them 30 boys and 37 girls. The facility lacked a research center with information technology and supporting equipment. In addition to the regular program, extracurricular activities were realized through various sections, humanitarian actions, sports events, etc.

Primary education (1st to 4th grades) – elementary education in the municipality of Zubin Potok takes place in 3 primary schools which apply regular curriculum. They are:

- Primary School "Jovan Cvijić" which had 227 pupils of age 7 to 11 years (113 boys and 114 girls)
- Primary School "Blagoje Radić" which had 39 pupils of age 7 to 11 years (20 boys and 19 girls)
- Primary School "Petar Kočić" which had 50 pupils of age 7 to 11 years

Schools lack IT equipment (computers, LCD projectors, interactive boards and didactic materials) for more effective functioning. In addition to the regular program, the schools also implemented extracurricular activities through sports events, various sections and humanitarian activities.

Primary education (5th to 8th grades) takes place in the following facilities:

- Primary School "Jovan Cvijić", which had 281 pupils of age 11 to 15 years (135 boys and 146 girls)
- Primary School "Blagoje Radić" which had 38 pupils of age 11 to 15 years (20 boys and 18 girls)
- Primary School "Petar Kočić" which had 23 pupils of age 11 to 15 years (11 boys and 12 girls)

In addition to the regular program, the schools also implemented extracurricular activities through sports events, various sections and humanitarian activities.

Secondary education (classroom classes from 1 to 4 grades) – the school implemented regular school plan and program, with 271 children of age 15 to 18 years who attended it, out of them 119 boys and 98 girls. The school needed tools and equipment for the language laboratory (Russian, English and Latin). It carries out extracurricular activities.

The data for indicators in the assessment of access and quality of education in Zubin Potok municipality were available only for total numbers of children at different levels of pre-university

education. There were 67 children enrolled in pre-school education, 342 in primary education and 217 in secondary education. No other disaggregation was available for this assessment.

No data could be obtained for municipality Zubin Potok in 2022, and therefore no comparison analyses with 2021 could be made.

4.2.3. Municipality Leposavic

Nursery (for children of age 6 months to 3 years old) – the facility applied regular curriculum with annual planning and implementation cycle in place. Three facilities purposed for children up to three years old were functioning in Leposavic settlement and surrounding villages:

- PU “Naša radost”, with 256 children (129 boys and 127 girls)
- PU “Veselo detinjstvo”, with 95 children (55 boys and 40 girls)
- PU “Bambi”, with 81 children (37 boys and 44 girls).

All beneficiaries worked with educators and have had access to specialised professional services. There was lack of equipment and didactic materials. The facilities do not realize extracurricular activities.

In 2022, there is significant decrease in number of children attending the nursery, with 168 children in the age group 6 months to 3 years old in PU “Nasa Radost” in Leposavic (75 boys and 93 girls), 36 children in PU “Veselo Detinjstvo” in Lesak (18 girls and 18 boys) and 22 in Pre-school Bambi Socanica (8 boys and 14 girls). With 226 children attending in total, the decrease in number is from 442 in 2021 to 226 in 2022 (48.6%).

The most common extracurricular activities include workshops, practical activities, activities in pre-school yard and picnics/excursions. Regarding resources, space and equipment, the facilities need game rooms, podium for performances, sleeping rooms and metric games along with learning accessories, shoe racks, chairs and wardrobes. Furthermore, they need furniture, didactic equipment children’ playgrounds as well as TVs, hypoallergenic pillows, bed linen, carpets, necessary dining room equipment and toys.

Kindergarten (for children age of 3 to 5 years) - the institution had an annual plan and program which is being revised and supplemented every year. In 2021, the kindergarten facility PU „Naša radost“ has had 171 children beneficiaries (93 boys and 78 girls). There was a lack of equipment, inventory, and didactic material. The facility realized extracurricular activities through workshops, humanitarian actions, sports events, visits, English language classes, practical activities, etc. Data were not available for other kindergarten facilities.

In 2022, number of children (3-5 years) attending kindergarten in PU “Nasa Radost” was 129 (56 boys and 73 girls), what is declining trend in comparison with 2021 (171). In percentage, the decrease amounted to 24.5% of children less after one year. In other facilities, number of children in 2022 was 75 (32 boys and 43 girls) in pre-school “Veselo Detinjstvo” in Lesak, and 38 (24 girls and 14 boys) in pe-school Bambi in Lesak.

The most common extracurricular activities included workshops, practical activities, exhibitions, picnics/excursions, and folklore section as well as humanitarian actions, competitions, and visits. In addition, paper crafting, sports events, sport sections and excursions were available to children of that age group. The number and types of activities offered to children in kindergartens in 2022 marks a considerable increase in comparison with 2021. However, when it comes to necessary resources,

space and equipment, the same as in 2021, there is a need for additional space for kitchen, dining room and pantry as well as rooms for games and space for playground and yard. Bathrooms and classrooms are missing as well as space for performances and practical activities. Regarding the specialised professional services, the facilities need speech therapist. Concerning the furniture and equipment, there is a need for beds, tables, chairs, carpets and linen. In addition, clothes wardrobes, shelves for toys, study equipment, toy cabinets and cribs are to be provided.

Preparatory preschool program (from 5 and half do 6-and-a-half-year-old children) – in 2021/2022, the facilities applied regular curriculum updated on annual basis. In 2021 number of children attending were as follows:

- PU „Naša radost“, with 89 children (50 boys and 39 girls) in 2021
- PU „Veselo detinjstvo“, with 37 children (16 boys and 21 girls) in 2021
- PU „Bambi“, with 29 children (14 boys and 15 girls) in 2021

In addition to the regular curriculum, extracurricular activities are realized through various excursions and forums, sections, humanitarian actions, sports events, etc. (2021 assessment)

Based on assessment conducted in 2022, 83 children attended preparatory pre-school program in PU “Nasa radost” (44 girls and 39 boys), what is slight decrease compared with 2021 (6.7%). On the other side, 86 children (50 boys and 36 girls) attended preparatory pre-school program in PU “Veselo detinjstvo”, what is an increase for more than 300% compared with 2021. In addition, 24 children (15 girls and 9 boys) attended preparatory pre-school program in PU “Bambi”, what is decrease for 17% compared with 2021.

The most utilized extracurricular activities include folklore, game shows, field trips and competitions. Pre-school facilities organize sport competitions and sales exhibitions, while children also have access to information technologies (IT) and music activities (choir and orchestra). In addition, different types of creative workshops, practical activities, English language classes and excursions are organized for children beneficiaries. Compared with 2021, there is significant improvement in number and diversity of available extracurricular activities. However, in comparison with 2021, the situation did not change in terms technical and material conditions as there is still lack of different resources, equipment and space for effective implementation of programs with children. The newly established kindergarten facilities do not have heating and outdoor classroom. When it comes to human resources, there is a need for English teacher, speech therapist and psychologist. The facility needs tables, chairs, blackboards and cabinets. There is general lack of space for practical activities, exhibitions and workshops. The same applies for necessary accessories for pre-school learning including toys, balls and consumables. In addition, the facility needs learning equipment including smart boards, equipment for sport activities and others.

Primary education (1st to 4th grades)

Primary education in the municipality of Leposavic takes place in 3 primary schools which apply regular annual school plans. They are:

- Primary School "Leposavic" with 309 pupils of age 7 to 11 years (168 boys and 141 girls) in 2021
- Primary School "Stana Bačanin" with 205 pupils of age 7 to 11 years, in 2021
- Primary School "Vuk Karadžić" which had 115 students of age 7 to 11 years in 2021

In 2021, schools lacked school inventory, IT equipment (computers, LCD projectors, interactive boards, didactic materials), equipment for the gym and costumes for drama section. In addition to the regular

program, schools were also implementing extracurricular activities through sports events, various sections and humanitarian activities.

In 2022 assessment, under the age group 7-11 years old (1-4th grade), number of children in Primary School "Leposavic" was 256 (103 boys and 153 girls), what is decrease for 17.1% in comparison with 2021 (309 pupils). The decrease was marked also in the Primary School "Stana Bačanin" which had 138 pupils in 2022 (58 boys and 80 girls), what is decrease for 32.7% compared with 2021. Number of children attending Primary School "Vuk Karadžić" was slightly increased in 2022, with 123 pupils (48 boys and 55 girls), what is an increase for 7% in comparison with 2021.

The most common extracurricular activities offered to children in 2022 include folklore, drama club, grandstands, and field trips. In addition, children are involved in humanitarian actions, different competitions, and sales exhibitions. They are also provided with access to information technologies, sport competitions, research activities as well as choir and orchestra, additional math classes and artistic events. The schools lack gym space, sufficient classroom space, yard and library. In addition, they need space for exhibitions, quizzes, and work of the folklore section. The IT cabinet is insufficiently equipped, and functions with outdated equipment. There is a huge demand for sport field, as well. Comprehensive technical support is needed for cabinets of geography, chemistry, physics, and mathematics. Schools also need support for purchase of hygienic materials and consumables. Overall, the situation did not change in 2022 in comparison with 2021 concerning the need for support. However, the progress is marked in increased number of diverse extracurricular activities available to pupils.

Primary education (5th to 8th grades) – the institutions apply regular plan and program. There are Primary School "Leposavic", with 337 pupils aged 11 to 15 attended in 2021, Primary School "Stana Bačanin" which had 184 pupils of age 11 to 15 years, and Primary School "Vuk Karadžić" which had 114 students of age 11 to 15 years in 2021. In addition to the regular program, the schools also implemented extracurricular activities through sports events, various sections and humanitarian activities.

In the age group 11-15, (grades 5th to 8th), number of children in Primary School "Leposavic" increased to 376 (166 boys and 210 girls) in 2022, what is 11.5% increase compared with 2021. In Primary School "Stana Bačanin", number of children in 2022 also increased in comparison with 2021. Number of schoolchildren in this school is 222 in 2022, what is an increase for 20.6%. Finally, in the Primary School "Vuk Karadžić", number of children attending is 120 in 2022, what also is an increase for 5.2% compared with 2021.

The schools offer extracurricular activities to children including folklore, theater club, grandstands and game shows. In addition, there are field trips and excursions, different competitions and humanitarian actions along with outdoor recreative sections, research and practical activities. Children have access to information technologies, additional math classes, sport events, choirs and orchestra. The assessment has shown improvements in number and types of extracurricular activities offered to children compared with 2021. However, additional resources, space and equipment is needed to fully comply with requirements of contemporary education. Before all, the elevator is needed for children with special needs and classrooms need to be adapted for these children. In addition, there is lack of consumables for cabinets as well as geographic maps, globes, microscopes and historical maps. Furthermore, there is a need for space adapted for sections, workshops and exhibitions and

specialized rooms for chemistry, biology and for additional classrooms in general. Equipment is needed for cabinets, office, IT cabinet, for work with children with disabilities and for gymnasium.

Secondary education (1st to 4th grades) – two (2) secondary schools were functioning in the territory of Leposavic municipality including Technical School Nikola Tesla, which had 282 students of age 15 to 18, in 2021, and Lešak Agricultural School which had 82 pupils of age 15 to 18, in 2021. In addition to the regular school curriculum, both schools were implementing extracurricular activities including drama sections, sports activities, humanitarian actions, practical activities, research, etc.

The assessment in 2022, has shown that number of children attending the Technical School is the same as in 2021 (282, out of them 159 boys and 123 girls), while the Agricultural School in Lešak has slightly increased number of pupils, 85 (45 boys and 40 girls). The increase of schoolchildren in this schools compared with 2021 is 3.6%. The most utilized extracurricular activities include theater section, fairs, visits and research activities. In addition, there is folklore, humanitarian actions, access to information technologies and practical activities for children. The schools maintain sport sections and organize sport events as well as competitions and grandstands. Students are offered English languages classes, choir and orchestra, sales exhibitions and field trips. Considering the necessary equipment, space and resources, one of the most pressing issues is lack of cabinets for professional subjects. The Agricultural school lacks kitchen, agricultural machinery and tools for practical education, and space for cold storage of agricultural products. Technical school needs workshops and cabinets for metal processing, students' kitchen, wet rooms and hall for practical activities. In addition, both schools need additional space for cabinets and cabinet equipment, refrigerators and sport fields.

If we refer to indicators for education in Leposavic municipality, total number of children enrolled in pre-school education is 458, out of them 13 children with disabilities (2.8%). The exact number of children of pre-school age and children with disabilities is not available. Therefore, it is not possible to measure real level of inclusion of children with disabilities. Total number of children included in preparatory pre-school education is 193. There are 3 pre-school educational facilities in the municipality, out of them 2 in rural areas, what could be assesses as satisfactory. However, data is missing on how many children in villages remain without access to early childhood education programs. The total number of children attending primary education is 1215, out of them 12 children with disabilities (1%). Number of children included in special education schools based on data of intersectoral commission is 11. Again, the total number of children with disabilities of primary school age is not available. Total number of children enrolled in secondary schools is 367, out of them 8 children with disabilities (2.1%, 8 boys and 2 girls from urban areas). Number of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian schools enrolled in secondary education is 4 (total number of these children of secondary school age is not known). Number of children dropped out from secondary school is 6 (1.6%).

The indicators in 2021 assessment, has shown that 432 children attended pre-school education, out of them only 2 children with disabilities. Therefore, the assessment in 2022 marks progress in number of children with disabilities with access to education, which is increased from 2 to 13 (0.4% to 2.8%). Again, the total number of children with disabilities was not available, therefore it was not possible to measure the percentage of these children which remained out of pre-school education. Number of pre-school facilities available to children is 3, out of them 2 in rural areas, what is assessed as satisfactory proportion. Number of children included in preparatory pre-school program was 155. Both, number of children enrolled in early childhood education programs and preparatory pre-school program mark an increase in the assessment in 2022 compared with assessment in 2021, for 6% and

24.5% respectively. Number of children enrolled in primary education is 1264, while number of children with disabilities included in special educational programs was 8. It is not clear how many of them are effectively included in regular schools at this level. Number of children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities included in primary education was 2 based on assessment in 2021. Number of children from those communities attending secondary education was 1. For the reference, 4 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children were enrolled in secondary education in 2022 (increase for 400%, but should be taken with reservation due to small numbers taken for comparison). Also, there was 1 child with disabilities included in secondary education in 2021, while, for the reference, number of children with developmental disabilities enrolled in secondary education in 2022 was 8 (6 boys and 2 girls). Again, total number of children with disabilities residing in the municipality was not available as well as the total number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

With reference to findings of 2021 and 2022 assessments, the main conclusion is that access to education at all levels remains almost the same, with changes in number of children enrolled in some educational facilities at levels. The overall trend of decrease of population in rural areas could be observed in both municipalities Zvečan and Leposavić with reflection on decrease in number of children attending education facilities located in rural areas. Insufficiently available data and information on indicators developed by Domovik cannot give precise picture on the status of the most disadvantaged groups.

Due to lack of precise data on total number of children with disabilities and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in assessed municipalities the level of their inclusion in regular education remained unknown. Girls are ensured equal access to education based on the available data on their proportion at different levels in all three assessed municipalities. School dropout is very low and captured only in secondary school in Leposavić. The access to early childhood education programs was also not possible to adequately measure due to unavailability of data on total number of children of the relevant age, especially in rural areas. When speaking about access to education, it is always important to know how far the schools from the place of residence of children are. These data should be also collected given that some children living in remote villages need to travel to school facilities much longer than those living in urban areas. It specifically refers to secondary schools which are all located in urban centers, and only limited number of these children can be accommodated in high school students' dormitories.

Assessment of qualitative aspects in 2021 and 2022 exercises has shown that certain improvements were made on the level of individual educational facilities, however in most of them the demand is high for additional space, especially for early childhood education, but also on the level of primary and more specifically secondary education, in specialized schools for technical education and agriculture. It is worth noting that in most schools and pre-school facilities children have access to extracurricular activities including excursions, folklore, music and theater sections, sport competitions, workshops and research activities, however most of interviewed teachers and educators pointed out the need for additional and more contemporary activities and additional physical space to accommodate workshops and equipment.

Equipment, space, and resources are needed for cabinets for technical and natural sciences, but also for other subjects in all schools. Didactic materials, consumables and even hygienic materials are needed, as well. Contemporary technological assistive tools including tablets, laptops, LCD and overhead projectors are highly demanded by teachers in most schools and pre-school facilities in all three municipalities. In terms of human resources, the most pressing need at the lower educational levels, before all early childhood education, is for speech therapists, defectologists, psychologists, and English language teachers.

The key recommendation to relevant stakeholders is to conduct comprehensive needs assessment of each individual educational facility against the contemporary educational standards and requirements at all education levels. Ideally, each facility should develop at three-year development plan which will include all necessary human, technical and budgetary resources for implementation of regular and extracurricular programs with beneficiary children. With available information on the requested budget, the fund-raising efforts needs to be made with different sources. Apart from municipal departments of education and line ministries, international organizations, local and international

NGOs, and private sector should be approached and advocated with for support in fund raising initiatives. They will be much more effective if the assessment provides clear guidelines on the most priority needs of each facility.

Certainly, the most disadvantaged situation is with educational facilities located in rural areas, given that they are remote from donors and major developmental programs implemented in more densely populated urban areas. However, with less opportunities for education of children, the trend of migrations will be additionally amplified, and many settlements will remain without population or only with elderly inhabitants. Given that all schools, kindergartens and nurseries emphasized lack of physical space for activities, the priority investment is needed for expanding schools' and other educational facilities' infrastructure, or building new school facilities, with sufficient space for all cabinets, workshops, indoor and outdoor playgrounds and other necessary premises. All cabinets must be adequately equipped with all assistive tools and consumables in place. Continuous teachers' professional developments, introduction of informal education programs, and support to practical education must become one of the top priorities for all relevant stakeholders in education.

Despite slight progress in inclusive education, access to regular education remains challenge at all levels of education, as it was shown in both assessments in 2021 and 2022. Efforts of all stakeholders must be multiply increased to prepare the system for this important task in countering discrimination in education sector.

In the field of social protection services, municipal centers for social welfare and municipal directorates for social issues in all three municipalities through cooperation with line ministries need to introduce in practice all or most services specified in relevant legislation. They need to maintain records of beneficiaries of different services provided in electronic databases. They need to engage in partnership with schools and pre-school facilities for providing personal assistants to children with special needs and disabilities. Increased investment is needed to provide more opportunities to children for improvement of access to quality counseling-therapeutic and social-educational services. The same apply for provision of alternative care for children without parental care. It is important to follow up to the program on foster care initiated by UNICEF as well as for more investment in provision of daily services in the community and independent living support services (supported housing, personal assistance and other).

