




REPORT ON CHILD RIGHTS BASED ON THE MUNICIPAL MONITORING FRAMEWORK 2024



Authors:
Ljubiša Bašćarević - External Consultant
Domovik Team

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Sutjeska nn, North Mitrovica
E-mail: office@domovik.org
www.domovik.org

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1. Executive Summary

This is the second consecutive report produced based on the Child Rights Monitoring Framework in Municipalities developed by NGO Domovik, with certain adjustments to integrate lessons learned from the previous reporting cycle. The report relies on data collected by Domovik in the period January – December 2024, with reference to more than 80 indicators developed for five domains including Health and nutrition, Family environment and protection, Education, Participation and civil rights, and Poverty.

The report contains detailed findings and specific recommendations tailored to the unique needs of each local community. It provides valuable insights and actionable recommendations for policymakers and program implementers to improve the lives of children in non-majority communities in Kosovo.

This year's assessment reflects comprehensively on the state of the children rights in four municipalities in northern Kosovo and several Serb majority municipalities and settlements in Gnjilane region, tackling all child rights guaranteed by the Child Rights Convention (CRC) clustered in 5 domains. To large extent, it follows the structure of the reporting to CRC Committee recommended in its guiding documents. The indicators used in the tool developed by Domovik correlate with those indicated for reporting by the Committee.

The assessment marks certain progress in service provision to children in these communities, with generally good access to basic health, nutrition, education, and social protection services, while their quality varies across settlements.

In the Health and nutrition domain, this year's assessment confirms that access to immunisation is granted to every child in non-majority populated areas, however, delays in administering the MMR vaccine were observed due to unfounded fears of autism. Specific challenges remain with breastfeeding which requires further efforts in promotion by health stakeholders. Low-income families need support to ensure adequate and nutritious food for their children. To this end, establishing counselling centers could provide critical guidance and improve maternal and child health outcomes. Regarding the medical personnel, there is a need for additional paediatricians and paediatric pulmonologists, psychologists, defectologists, child psychiatrists, and child neurologists.

In the domain Family environment and protection, violence against women and children remains serious concern, specifically indicating inexistence of protection and reintegration services and effective prevention programs and actions. This year assessment in Zubin Potok municipality shows worsening of the situation for survivors due to closure of the shelter in that municipality. The shelter was providing services for women and children in need from all municipalities in northern Kosovo. The only functioning service provider is center for social welfare, which confirms that many cases remain unreported. Two shelters in Gnjilane region, located in Novo Brdo and Gnjilane town, operate in full capacity, providing services for women and children victims of domestic violence from several municipalities.

The trend of increase of alternative care services for children without parental care in the community continues both in municipalities in northern and southeastern Kosovo. However, this year assessment shows that essential services, such as foster care options in certain areas are still either unavailable or in need of significant improvement.

In the Education domain, access to early childhood education programs and facilities in rural areas remains an issue in municipalities in northern Kosovo. The quality of education provided at primary and secondary level requires further improvement through advancing teaching methodologies and capacity building of teachers. School infrastructure in Gnjilane region needs improvement, particularly regarding heating and sports facilities. Schools in the town of Gnjilane, and villages Šilovo, Gornji Livoč and Cernica operate in unsafe conditions. All schools require better access to computers and digital learning tools and more diverse opportunities for extracurricular activities, cultural engagement, and leisure. Apart from school parliaments, no other opportunities for participation of children in decision making processes function effectively.

The report emphasizes the need for continued efforts to improve the quality and accessibility of services for non-majority children. Addressing the identified challenges requires a multi-sectoral approach involving institutions, NGOs, communities, and international organizations.

2. Background

Due to limited access to data on the municipal level and extremely complex political environment and circumstances of institutional (non)functioning, the research focuses on specific settlements in non-majority community populated areas. They are taken as a representative sample from which more general conclusions can be drawn for the state of the child rights in the entire Kosovo Serb and other non-majority communities residing in Kosovo. Unlike last year, when the report covered municipalities in northern Kosovo including North Mitrovica, Zvečan, Zubin Potok and Leposavić, this year report expands geographic coverage to minority populated areas in Gnjilane region, in municipalities Novo Brdo, Parteš, Klokot and Ranilug, and settlements Šilovo, Koretište, Kmetovac and Cernica in Gnjilane municipality. Data were collected for child participation and education in Leposavić and Gnjilane region, in addition to health and nutrition data in North Mitrovica and Zvečan, family environment and social protection in Zubin Potok, Ranilug, Klokot, and Novo Brdo.

3. Methodology

The methodological framework used in the tool developed by Domovik integrates UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Child Rights Monitoring Framework (ECA CRM framework), fully referring to standards set in the UN Child Rights Convention. It covers five child rights domains corresponding to relevant clusters of child rights in CRC, including health and nutrition, family environment and protection, education, poverty, and participation and civil rights. Each domain is divided on sub-domains, linked to the corresponding clusters of child rights set in the UNCRC.

In addition, the framework includes child rights landscape and governance issues, linked to UNCRC General Measures of Implementation, as well as several cross-cutting issues relevant for different domains including early childhood education, gender, disability, adolescents, environment and climate change, and risks and humanitarian action.

The questionnaires that Domovik developed for the Data Collection Report were utilised as an important resource and reference, in addition to the questions on indicators developed for the tool Child Rights Monitoring Framework in Municipalities. These questions were further used as thematic base for very comprehensive surveys, leading towards in-depth assessment of the situation of specific aspects of education, social protection, child health and participation.

For effective data collection, the team of four interviewers was engaged in field visits to different areas populated with non-majority communities in Kosovo. Domovik also organised focus group meetings with stakeholders in relevant sectors covered in different municipalities including relevant departments of local administration responsible for pre-school, primary and secondary education, social protection, family medicine center in Zvečan and hospital in North Mitrovica, centers for social welfare, child rights NGOs, children and parents associations. All monitoring findings were aggregated and analysed, while the statistical data and information obtained were further cross checked and validated with multiple sources.

4. Findings of monitoring

4.1 Health and Nutrition

Data for this domain were obtained from the health facilities operating in North Mitrovica and Zvečan. The family medicine center in Zvečan provides primary health care, while the health center in North Mitrovica provides secondary health care services for all municipalities in northern Kosovo. Few years ago, health center in North Mitrovica became clinical center, and the preparations are ongoing to equip it adequately for provision of tertiary health care.

4.1.1 Nutrition

Around 1500 children 0-5 years old receive health care services in health center in North Mitrovica, out of them 12% are infants, out of 388 children aged 0 to 5 years using health care in the Family Medicine Center in Zvečan, 23% are infants. In both facilities, paediatric units apply protocols for unified measurement of child's weight and height. Infants' weight is regularly monitored in the first year of life, and after that every six months until they reach 5. Based on data from the health centers, malnutrition is noticed with less than 1% of children in North Mitrovica and Zvečan.

Both health care institutions regularly conduct and report on height measurement of children using standardized percentile tables to track growth deviations. Based on the measurements of child's height, up to 5% of children in North Mitrovica, and 7% in Zvečan are reported stunting.

Health facility informed that 70% of children 0-5 years old have access to diverse nutrition, highlighting that all children receive micronutrient supplements including vitamins and minerals (vit D3) in the first three years of life. Addressing the root causes of growth lag, such as nutritional deficiencies or socioeconomic conditions, remains a priority for improving health outcomes of children. Despite low malnutrition rates, there is a need for continuous monitoring and targeted interventions to address potential nutritional disparities in the community.

Around 60% of infants in North Mitrovica and Zvečan are exclusively breastfed in the first six months of life. Breastfeeding practices reveal that significant number of mothers combine breastfeeding with formula feeding, while less than 5% of infants continues with breastfeeding after one year. All children 0-5 age have access to health and nutrition services. Counselling programs for nutrition of children in early development stage are also available in the health centers. Further awareness raising campaigns are needed to improve breastfeeding rates and related health outcomes for infants.

All children in Zvečan have regular access to health and nutrition services, regardless of whether they have registered medical records. In North Mitrovica, 15% of households face challenges with access to food supply due to low income. Financial constraints and limited resources for nutrition counselling pose barriers and hinder full access to quality nutrition. There is a recognized need for a specialized "Nutrition Counselling Center for Children and Adults," but funding and space limitations prevent its establishment. Households with lower incomes often face food insecurity what results with diets dominated by carbohydrates, which can result in poor health outcomes, including anaemia, stunted growth, and obesity.

4.1.2 Immunisation

Almost 100% of children 0-5 years old in the municipality North Mitrovica are regularly immunised based on the calendar of vaccination, while immunisation coverage in Zvečan stands at approximately 90%, with most children 0-5 receiving vaccines according to the immunisation schedule. Delays are noted for the MMR vaccine, primarily due to unfounded parental fears of autism. Despite these delays, outright vaccine refusal remains limited.

The health center in North Mitrovica maintains electronic register of the vaccination status of children, which is updated on monthly basis. Zvečan health center maintains manual vaccination records for children aged 0-5, which are updated regularly and reported monthly to the Public Health Agency. While statistical data processing is conducted in Zvečan, the absence of an electronic vaccination system occasionally leads to data inaccuracies, such as discrepancies observed in 2021 when predicted birth rates impacted reported immunisation percentages.

In 2024, health centers in North Mitrovica and Zvečan did not register any case of child with vaccine-preventable disease (e.g. measles, mumps or rubeola). The last notable outbreak occurred during the 2017/18 measles epidemic, highlighting the importance of maintaining high immunisation coverage. All suspected cases of vaccine-preventable diseases are promptly reported to the Institute for Public Health in North Mitrovica. In some periods, lack of vaccines may pose obstacles for full immunisation coverage.

Regarding the affirmative actions for promotion of immunisation, no specific campaign was undertaken in 2024 in North Mitrovica and Zvečan, unlike in 2023 when such activities were supported by international organisations. Yet, on the level of community nursing (patronage), medical personnel were conducting some awareness raising with children and parents. Despite these efforts, parental attitudes toward immunisation in Zvečan remain mixed, with about 10% of children not fully vaccinated. Continued efforts to raise awareness through community education, media outreach, and partnerships with non-governmental organizations are critical for addressing vaccine resistance and promoting immunisation.

Health centers in North Mitrovica and Zvečan have sufficient capacity to conduct regular immunisation cycles with children, both in the premises or health centers and mobile teams in the field. They have also adequate space and conditions for storage of vaccines. Certain disruptions in the vaccines supply chain were reported over the year due to ban in import of goods from Serbia when arrival of vaccines was delayed due to long-lasting customs procedures.

Both health centres have report the need for additional resources, including refrigerators and an expanded paediatric staff, to ensure timely and efficient vaccine delivery.

COVID 19 pandemic did not have considerable impact on the immunisation services for children aged 0-5 years in North Mitrovica, while having a notable impact on Immunisation services in Zvečan. In Zvečan. Doubts about the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines contributed to broader scepticism about all vaccines, requiring additional conversations and educational efforts with parents. Despite these challenges, overall vaccination rates for children aged 0-5 remained stable.

4.1.3 Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

In North Mitrovica and Zvečan, the access to maternal and child health services is provided to all pregnant women and mothers of children 0-5 years old, including pre-natal and post-natal care and paediatric services. All childbirth facilities located in North Mitrovica hospital are fully staffed with qualified medical personnel. The maternity hospital is well accessible to most women in need in two municipalities, except in some remote mountain villages of Zvečan municipality. However, there is a low level of awareness regarding preventive health measures for women. Free preventive examinations, such as Pap tests and colposcopy, are available in both health centers, yet only a small number of women regularly utilize these services, including during pregnancy.

In North Mitrovica, the prevalence of preventable chronic diseases (such as respiratory diseases or diseases connected with malnutrition) among the children 0-5 years old is low, and rarely diagnosed, but they make significant concern in Zvečan. Approximately 23% of children aged 0-5 in Zvečan suffer from chronic respiratory diseases, while 6% are affected by mental disorders and psychosomatic developmental delays. Cases of malnutrition and anaemia are reported at a lower rate, around 1%.

The most frequently diagnosed preventable chronic disease of mothers and newborns is anaemia.

70% of pregnant women in North Mitrovica and Zvečan have at least four home visits of community nursing (patronage) team, in accordance with recommendation of World Health Organisation (WHO). These services are of good quality and do not defer for women in need in rural and urban areas of municipalities. There are also programs which promote pre-natal care with all communities in the municipality in North Mitrovica, unlike in Zvečan where such programs don't exist.

Regarding the post-natal care, almost 100% of mothers and newborns in North Mitrovica and Zvečan receive postnatal care in the first 48 hours after the childbirth. Yet, mothers and newborn children in rural areas sometimes face difficulties in access to post-natal care services.

There is one facility fully equipped and adequately staffed with medical personnel for the childbirth functioning within the health center in North Mitrovica. It also provides services for women in other northern municipalities including Zvečan, Zubin Potok and Leposavić. 95% of childbirths is delivered in the maternal hospital, while 5% is done in the home premises. The screening system for newborns on usual diseases such as congenital disorders is in place.

While there is no established evidence of routine vaccination for pregnant women, the patronage and paediatric services ensure that newborns continue to receive scheduled immunisations after discharge. There are programs that supports awareness raising on the importance of maternal and newborns' immunisation. Strengthening maternal Immunisation programs could further enhance health outcomes for mothers and infants.

In North Mitrovica and Zvečan, 95% of pregnant women, mothers, and children 0-5 years old receive nutritive assessments. In some cases, nutrition-specific interventions for mothers and children in health care settings are provided.

Regarding the education and promotion of health care, several times per year health care facilities carry out awareness raising campaigns on mother and child health and promote community based programs on pre-natal and post-natal care.

Municipality Zvečan lacks dedicated counselling centers to educate mothers about prenatal and postnatal care. Gynaecological counselling is available in North Mitrovica, but localized initiatives to support mothers through pregnancy and early motherhood remain limited.

4.1.4 Adolescents physical, mental and reproductive health

Health centers report that that 100% of adolescents in North Mitrovica and 98% in Zvečan are covered with regular health systematic examinations. They are conducted regularly in schools and community in cooperation with health center. The most frequently identified health issue of adolescents in these examinations is obesity, posture problems, crooked spine, and flat feet, highlighting the need for targeted health interventions. There is one health counselling facility per 1000 adolescents in municipality North Mitrovica, and only one in Zvečan providing services to a significant number of adolescents from both rural and urban areas. In accordance with Law on Health Protection, the services provided include counselling on physical, mental, and reproductive health.

In North Mitrovica, there are 2-3 mental health experts employed in health care facilities per 1000 adolescents receiving services. Number of available mental health professionals is sufficient to supply existing demand for services. Zvečan health center does not have a dedicated mental health professional, such as a psychologist or counsellor, to meet the needs of adolescents. The lack of full-time mental health specialists force adolescents to seek support outside the municipality.

Mental health counselling services are available in schools, where students are supported by psychologists and pedagogues, ensuring broad accessibility to these services, including for marginalized groups. However, stigma and cultural barriers often prevent adolescents from seeking help, and parents are also hesitant to engage with mental health specialists.

Basic mental, physical, and reproductive health services are available to adolescents in North Mitrovica and Zvečan through schools and health centers. Schools organize lectures on key health topics, though the small number of paediatricians limits the frequency of these sessions. While adolescents have access to reproductive health services, such as sexual health counselling and contraception, few utilize them due to cultural barriers and stigma.

Regarding the education on reproductive health services, almost 100% adolescents in the municipality North Mitrovica have received formal reproductive health education in schools or joint programs. Reproductive health education remains insufficient in Zvečan, as formal programs in schools or joint initiatives are underdeveloped.

Adolescent health services on different levels of health care (e.g., primary, secondary, and tertiary) are fully coordinated. The referral systems for adolescents in need of specialised health services (e.g. mental health, reproductive health) is fully functional, with good cooperation between relevant institutions. No information is available on how municipal health facilities work with educational institutions to provide a comprehensive health service for adolescents.

There are programs and services in place for promoting healthy nutrition and physical activity among adolescents in North Mitrovica, implemented in the framework of systematic examinations foreseen by law. 95% of adolescents in need have regular check-ups for nutrition-related problems (e.g. obesity, malnutrition).

Adolescent nutrition and physical health in Zvečan require greater attention. There are no dedicated programs for promoting healthy nutrition or physical activity, contributing to increasing rates of obesity and physical inactivity. While systematic health examinations identify nutrition-related issues, such as obesity and malnutrition, adolescents often fail to pursue follow-up care.

4.2 Family Environment and Protection

4.2.1 Violence against children

Domestic violence remains the problem in all municipalities, with no efforts of relevant stakeholders observed for systematic approach to its alleviation and eradication. The only functioning shelter for women and children survivors of domestic violence located in Zubin Potok practically seized with functioning. Two shelters are available in the Gnjilane region, one in Gnjilane town and another in Novo Brdo. These shelters provide housing assistance, particularly to rural areas, and are accessible through the Kosovo Police and Centers for Social Work (CSW). Shelters provide essential services, including legal, medical, and psychological support, as well as rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Investments are recommended to meet minimum SOP standards given that municipal support is limited, relying heavily on volunteers and NGOs for psychological support. Challenges persist in terms of funding, staffing, and space. Psychological support is offered through SOS lines, field visits, and online consultations, but additional investment is necessary to meet minimum standards and expand services.

In Zubin Potok municipality, 9 cases of domestic violence have been reported to the local Center for Social Welfare in the period from December 2023 until end of 2024. Even though victims of violence in all reported cases were adults (partners/spouses), in all of them violence was witnessed by children, and according to degree of victimization, they are considered victims of psychological violence and emotional abuse. Compared to the geographic distribution of cases, lower number of cases were reported in rural areas (three), while 6 cases were associated with the urban part of the settlement.

A total of 9 cases of violence against children and women were reported in the municipality Ranilug. Out of them, 4 cases involved women, 1 case involved a child, and 4 cases involved men. Apart from two recidivist offenders identified, no other specific patterns by region, age, or group were observed. Affirmative actions to increase reporting include awareness raising campaigns with media and internet to encourage victims and residents to report violence against women and children.

In 2024, two cases of family violence against women were reported in the municipality of Klokot. Patterns indicate that 50% of these cases involved recidivists. Efforts to monitor and address such incidents focus on early intervention and support mechanisms to protect victims.

According to data from Novo Brdo police station, a total of 7 cases of violence against children and women were reported in 2024. Out of them, 6 involved adults (5 women and 1 man),

and 1 case involved a child. In comparison, 13 cases were reported in 2023. Relapse occurs in 40% of cases, with 3 relapses reported in 2024, one of which resulted in detention. There are no specific patterns related to the time of year, age group, or region. Efforts to encourage reporting are ongoing through the Local Coordination Mechanism for Combating Domestic Violence, established in 2023 with support from the OSCE Regional Office in Gnjilane and the NGO WIC.

Center for social welfare in Zubin Potok does not have official data on the number of unreported cases and type of injuries suffered by women and children survivors of domestic violence in such situations. However, based on internal record of its service, physical injuries are recorded in two cases, while in other cases it was psychological suffering, emotional abuse, and neglect. Unfortunately, in most cases physical injuries remain unreported and therefore invisible for the system timely, and later difficult to be proven in the court proceedings.

For the comparison, in 2019 there were 4 cases of physical injuries, 3 cases in 2020 and 2021 each, and 4 cases in 2022. Social workers in this institution highlighted the pressing need for establishment of database with access provided for relevant professionals from different institutions in the referral system including police, health care, prosecution, CSW, and sectoral non-governmental organisations. In this way, all cases will be reported and registered in one place and provide clearer picture on the prevalence of violence against children and women. The current situation shows lack of adequate coordination among the institutions and NGOs dealing with domestic violence resulting with discrepancies in data provided by different stakeholders.

The CSW provides legal aid, psychosocial counselling and psychotherapeutic services and financial assistance, while municipality in cooperation with civil society organisations provides housing, additional financial aid, and assistance for other basic needs.

Yet, the victims are exposed to stigma in society, and CSW calls for increased engagement in awareness raising with media and public on the prevention of violence. It must be introduced in regular education from early stage to fight stereotypes, prejudices and negative social norms that nurture gender discrimination and promote violent methods of child disciplining.

In Zubin Potok, there is no specific SOS line for reporting domestic violence, but CSW provides this possibility to survivors and citizens through its official phone numbers even outside of regular working hours. They are visibly displayed on the door of the institution, and also known to the team engaged in combating and preventing domestic violence in the police station, the relevant service of the health center, preschool and school institutions.

Emergency services in Klokot, Ranilug and Novo Brdo include the Kosovo Police, shelters, health centers, and SOS lines (080021000). Services are accessible to rural populations via mobile and landline phones. Trained professionals, including police and social workers, ensure case follow-up. Capacity-building programs and ongoing professional training sessions further enhance service delivery. However, funding constraints limit resources for expansion and improvements.

Awareness raising campaigns as a prevention of domestic violence was missing in 2024 in the municipality Zubin Potok. The awareness raising activities were organised only with pupils through cooperation with schools.

In Ranilug, public awareness campaigns to prevent violence are conducted several times a year by the municipality, NGOs, and local organizations. Campaigns target education and information sharing, involving schools and community, while partnerships with specialized NGOs strengthen outreach efforts.

In Klokot, public awareness campaigns on preventing violence have become less frequent in recent years. Despite this, minority communities remain fully covered by these initiatives. Feedback mechanisms, such as evaluations, surveys, and tests, assess the effectiveness of campaigns.

In Novo Brdo, public awareness campaigns are conducted annually by the Kosovo Police under the "Sector" initiative. Partnerships, such as those within the Local Coordination Mechanism, enhance outreach efforts.

CSW in Zubin Potok reported that its professionals attended training in the framework of the accredited program for development of general competences for work in the social protection system. It includes work with children and youth, work with elderly and adults, children and adults with disabilities, families and marginalised groups in the system of social protection. There is specialised training in each of listed areas for work in the cases of violence. However, there is no sufficient training for coordination and cooperation of multidisciplinary professionals which should contribute to interinstitutional local coordination mechanism for addressing violence against women and children.

In Ranilug, training programs for professionals handling violence cases are provided by the Kosovo Ministry of Justice and NGOs. Police, healthcare providers, and social workers participate in 3–4 annual seminars focusing on domestic violence, human trafficking, and support for persons with disabilities.

In Klokot, Training programs for professionals include legal procedures, police protocols, and continuing education for health service providers and social workers. Collaborations with NGOs and shelters strengthen these efforts, enhancing the capacity of staff dealing with cases of violence against children and women.

In Novo Brdo, training programs for dealing with violence cases are available for law enforcement, healthcare providers, and social workers. Police receive training on legal and procedural requirements, while healthcare professionals participate in continuing education programs for licensure credits. However, social workers face a significant gap, as professional training programs are unavailable in Serbian. Although partnerships with NGOs and shelters exist to support capacity-building, the frequency of training has declined in recent years.

In Ranilug municipality, all survivors of violence receive psychological counselling. Victims housed in shelters have access to additional support, including free legal aid, psychosocial rehabilitation, and economic empowerment programs. Kosovo Government supports survivors through subsidized employment programs, requiring registration with the Employment Office. However, stigma remains a barrier, as 80% of victims feel self-blame and 50% refrain from reporting due to social pressure. Monitoring is conducted through regular visits, counselling, and problem-solving assistance.

Survivors from Klokot accommodated in shelters benefit from psychosocial support, legal counselling, and career guidance. Programs also promote employment and self-employment to aid social integration. However, social stigma remains a barrier to hiring survivors. Coordination mechanisms for monitoring victims' progress require further development to enhance their effectiveness.

In Novo Brdo, all victims housed in shelter have access to support services, including psychosocial rehabilitation, free legal aid, and career counselling for economic empowerment. Women's CSOs play an active role in supporting survivors through employment and socialization programs. The Local Coordination Mechanism is operational but has yet to reach its full potential.

The CSW in Zubin Potok does not have data on percentage of cases effectively processed by the criminal justice system (out of all cases reported), and percentage of children who experienced physical or psychological violence from caregivers.

4.2.2 Children without parental care

In Zubin Potok municipality, kinship care is the primary placement option for children without parental care. A significant 64% of these children are placed with close relatives, while the remaining 36% are placed in foster care families. Recognizing the vital importance of family environments, child welfare services prioritize kinship placements.

In the municipality of Ranilug, there are no children placed in kinship care. Services provided to families involved in kinship include social assistance, free textbooks for children, and professional psychological counselling.

In the territory of the municipality of Novo Brdo, 100% of children without parental care (4 children) are placed in kinship care. There is no institutional accommodation in the municipality. Kinship families receive financial reimbursements for childcare, but low reimbursements remain a significant challenge for families providing care.

No children are currently placed in foster families in Ranilug, Klokot and Novo Brdo municipalities. Financial assistance programs and training are available for potential foster families. Support includes professional development, assessments of living conditions, and regular inspections to ensure compliance with requirements for fostering.

Only one family in Novo Brdo has registered for foster status, receiving support through exemption from all municipal taxes.

Based on data provided by CSW in Zubin Potok, approximately 10% of children without parental care are placed in home care/dormitories (such as small groups or assisted living homes, where beneficiaries live in a less institutionalized environment). This is the option when CSW cannot find adequate kinship or foster care family, mainly in the situation when child needs complex or special care arrangements (disability).

There are no facilities for residential care in the municipality Ranilug. Programs exist to transfer children from institutional care to family or foster care when conditions allow, based on court decisions and assessments from the CSW.

Currently, there are no children without parental care from Zubin Potok municipality placed in institutional care, but according to the statistics in last years, 10% of children are placed in dormitories or similar establishments.

No children from the municipality of Novo Brdo are placed in residential care institutions. If residential care becomes necessary, standards prescribed in Kosovo must be met, with regular inspections conducted by the Directorate of Inspection. Programs for transitioning children from institutional care to family or foster care do not exist locally but are implemented in larger urban areas with examples of good practice. The primary reasons for residential placement include absence of kinship families and limited availability of foster families.

To ensure well-being of children placed in institutions, a robust monitoring system is in place. This system involves regular reporting and progress tracking, by which institutions are legally obligated to submit regular reports on the progress of each child under their care. These reports monitor the implementation of individualized service plans, which outline specific goals and interventions for each child, and assess whether the measures, activities, and services provided are effectively leading to the desired outcomes for the child.

Institutional care facilities in Ranilug are monitored through regular inspections and reporting to ensure compliance with welfare standards. Efforts to reduce reliance on institutional care include promoting family-based alternatives and providing financial support, education, and counselling services to children in residential care.

Professionals of the CSW attended accredited trainings of the Center for Family Placement and Adoption on the topic of specialized foster care, urgent foster care and foster care for children with Down syndrome. The idea was to develop these services in municipalities in northern of Kosovo and provide family care for children with developmental disabilities and behavioural disorders. In this way the placement of these children in institutional care is avoided. Currently, trainings are available for all families interested to provide foster care for children with disabilities and children with behavioural disorders.

Regarding the resources and support systems for children placed in institutional care, CSW reported that they are provided with daily care, access to rehabilitation and stimulation programs, health care, upbringing, assistance in education and learning various social skills. Children placed in institutional care work with specially trained educators, psychologists, special pedagogues, speech therapists, special education teachers, paediatricians, physiotherapists, and nurses.

Independent living support services are not available in Zubin Potok municipality as well as in other municipalities populated with non-majority communities. However, based on applicable legislation, children transitioning out of institutional care receive professional counselling, education, and financial assistance. Programs include career counselling, vocational training, and social assistance to help children achieve independence. Support also involves collaboration with schools and social workers to provide supervision and problem-solving guidance.

Regarding the quality and availability of alternative care for children without parental care, CSW in Zubin Potok informed that there is insufficient number of trained kinship and

foster care families, what implies placement of children in need in other geographic locations, out of their homeplace, where such services exist. In addition, urgent and specialised foster care services have not been developed yet.

In Ranilug, family-based alternatives are supported through professional counselling, financial aid, and training for guardians. Municipal and NGO programs offer resources to improve foster care systems, but gaps remain in funding and outreach. Strengthening partnerships and expanding training programs are recommended to enhance quality and availability.

Family-based alternatives for children without parental care are limited in Novo Brdo, as well, with only one foster family currently available. The main factors affecting availability of kinship care include poverty and cultural traditions. Promotional campaigns, such as brochures and awareness materials, aim to encourage family-based care. However, low financial incentives deter families from becoming foster parents.

Referring to cultural and socioeconomic factors that influence availability of kinship services, CSW emphasised poverty, and stereotypes associated with misbeliefs. Kinship services are mainly promoted in media and round table discussions, however, during the last year such activities were not implemented.

4.2.3 Training and capacity building

The program for preparation and training of fosters care families “With safe steps towards foster care” is comprised of 11 workshops. They cover important topics focusing on the needs and development of the child, emotional losses of the child, protection of children from abuse and neglect, and the continuity of the child and his identity. When children are already placed in kinship and foster care families, CSW organizes group and individual visits and provide support based on the current needs of the family, assisting in the process of adaptation of the child and the family. The CSW expert team has developed the training “Providing a safe environment for children in foster care through empowering and strengthening the capacities of foster parents,” which is delivered to all foster care families in the northern part of Kosovo.

In Ranilug, caregivers receive training and participate in seminars organized three to four times a year. Topics include child development, mental health, and crisis management. Caregivers are evaluated based on training performance and compliance with care standards. Continuous training and resource availability are emphasized as bottlenecks to maintain care quality.

The Department for Social and Family Policies within Kosovo Ministry of Justice provides mandatory training and resources for foster parents and kinship guardians to ensure well-being of children. Families are under constant supervision by social workers from the CSW. Challenges include low financial compensation, even though municipality supports with tax exemptions, free health services, and reduced electricity payments.

The challenges and risks arising from the context of kinship foster care relate to the common family history of the child and the kinship foster parent. This can affect the foster parent’s strength to support the child in the process of overcoming difficult feelings. CSW is responding to these challenges by providing intensive support of its expert team to the relatives. There is a lack of counselling where foster parents and caregivers could get advice on specific childcare topics and possible challenges in the process.

The CSW conduct evaluation of the quality of care in foster and kinship families based on its own monitoring protocols and identifies areas for which additional support is needed. However, there is no counselling center or educational facility in the municipality where those interested in foster care could be provided with training before adoption of the child or immediately after that to get acquainted with the role of the guardian/foster parent. This training is carried out by CSW professionals in most cases when the child is already placed in the family. The issue of programs in place to support the physical, emotional and educational development of children in institutional care is more relevant for social protection institutions. Based on experience of CSW professionals, there is a program based on key concepts such as child development processes, affective relationship, trauma and post-traumatic recovery, losses and sadness, team work, etc. Every child is assigned with leading professional (educator or nurse), who works together with expert support team comprised of social worker, psychologist, pedagogue, doctor, speech therapist and physiotherapist.

Mental health support to children in institutional care is provided for each child individually. The individual plan is based on the child's strengths, with activities conceptualised to meet child's needs and encourage development in the current and future period most effectively. CSW expert teams together with child and respective institution participate in the planning. The institutional care facilities must have psychologists and most of them have developed counselling programs for children and families.

The CSW does not have information regarding the access to education for children without parental care placed in institutional care, but considers it is ensured equally with other children. The CSW also does not have information on whether there is a feedback mechanism for monitoring development outcomes of the children placed in institutional care.

In Ranilug, programs supporting child development in residential care focus on education, counselling, and emotional well-being. Services include regular sessions with psychologists, pedagogues, and social workers to ensure holistic development, and programs addressing physical health, social skills, and career preparedness.

4.3 Education

This year, Domovik collected data for education from Leposavić and schools applying Serbian language curricula in Gnjilane region and got insights about the access and quality of education for the non-majority communities' children residing in this part of Kosovo. Conditionally taken as representative sample, the situation analyses in this area contribute to overall picture on the state of the education system in municipalities populated with non-majority communities.

4.3.1 Education system

All schools in the municipality of Leposavić meet basic infrastructure and safety standards, ensuring a secure environment for students and staff. Schools have established safety procedures for emergencies, including fires and other hazardous situations. These procedures are regularly practiced through drills to ensure preparedness. Evacuation routes are clearly marked, providing well-defined paths for movement in case of emergencies. Additionally, schools have implemented monitoring systems and basic first-aid kits to enhance safety and security measures.

In Gnjilane municipality, schools offering education in Serbian language operate in the urban part of the town, and surrounding settlements Šilovo, Gornji Livoč and Cernica. Primary School “Vuk Karadžić” has several field units in surrounding villages and in Gnjilane town. The school building located in Šilovo is the best equipped in terms of infrastructure and safety standards, however, even this building does not meet all necessary requirements for fire safety. It also doesn't have the toilet adjusted for children with disabilities. Regarding the premisses, there is lack space for classrooms, and part of the corridor is adapted and used for that purpose.

The most disadvantaged situation is in the schools located in Gnjilane town. One of them use premises in the private house, which can hardly meet even minimal standards. Another school building in downtown of Gnjilane is very old, and in very poor conditions (built in 1893). The same applies for the school located in the village Gornji Livoč. No one school building has adequate fire safety arrangements, and provision of fire extinguishers, construction of fire safety exit stairs as well as training of employees, children and parents is of high priority.

Schools in Leposavić municipality are equipped with learning materials, including textbooks, teaching aids, and supplementary resources. These materials are updated annually to align with curriculum changes and student enrolment numbers, ensuring relevance and inclusivity. Distribution is facilitated through school libraries and teachers, who play a key role in organizing and monitoring the availability of resources. Equal access is guaranteed across urban and rural areas, eliminating disparities in learning opportunities. Furthermore, specialized learning materials are provided for students with disabilities, in the framework of inclusive education.

Serbian language curriculum schools in Gnjilane municipality do not have sufficient funds to provide teaching materials. They rely on the support from Serbian Ministry of Education, and partially on assistance of NGOs operating in Kosovo. Available materials are in principle up to date and relevant for the current curriculum. There is a problem with supply of textbooks in Serbian language. It seriously affects the right to education for children from Serb and Roma communities, both in urban and rural areas of the municipality.

Teachers in Leposavić municipality meet national qualification standards, while their qualifications are checked before employment. Professional development is prioritized, with teachers undergoing regular training programs designed to enhance their teaching techniques and adapt to modern methodologies. These programs include workshops, seminars, and specialized courses to address specific educational challenges. The Ministry of Education prescribes training strategies, ensuring consistency and compliance with national policies. Teachers in rural and marginalized areas are equally supported, guaranteeing equitable access to quality education throughout the municipality.

Recruitment and retention of teachers are not identified as challenges, even in marginalized communities, due to attractive employment conditions and training opportunities. Teachers are encouraged to pursue further qualifications, strengthening their expertise and dedication to student development. The municipality's ability to sustain a stable teaching workforce reflects its commitment to maintaining high educational standards.

95% of teachers in Serbian language schools in Gnjilane, possess relevant teaching qualifications, while schools maintain annual capacity building plans for them. They attend regular training and seminars to meet criteria for renewal of licences, offered mainly

online. Primary School “Vuk Karadžić” has extremely low percentage of non-qualified teachers, less than 3%. Schools apply different strategies to address teacher training needs including mentoring programs, modernisation of the curriculum, monitoring and integrating their feedback. There is no discrepancy in the percentage of qualified teachers per 1,000 pupils in urban and rural areas.

Key factors influencing availability of qualified teachers in Gnjilane region include economic, demographic, and geographic issues as well as educational and professional infrastructure. Major challenges in recruiting or retaining qualified teachers, especially in minority or marginalized communities include political situation, geographic isolation and migration of youth.

All schools in Leposavić municipality provide access to computers, internet, and digital learning tools, reflecting the integration of technology into the educational process. Digital literacy is embedded in the curriculum, enabling students to develop essential skills for the modern world. E-textbooks and online resources are widely used, providing interactive learning experiences. Schools continuously upgrade IT equipment to keep pace with technological advancements, and initiatives are in place to address gaps in digital access, particularly in rural areas.

Regarding the access to technology and digital learning in Serbian language schools in Gnjilane region, almost all schools reported possession of computers. However, they don't have specialised IT labs/cabinets and supporting equipment such as Arduin and other microcontrollers foreseen in the curriculum. All schools have access to Internet. Digital learning is envisaged within the specific subjects on IT, technical subjects, and technology, while schools organise training courses on inter-subject competences and IT for students and teachers.

Schools in Leposavić municipality are required to develop Individualized Education Plans (IOPs) for students with disabilities, ensuring personalized learning approaches. Teachers receive specialized training to create, implement, and monitor these plans, with revisions conducted every three months to track progress.

All schools in Gnjilane region have teams for support to subsidiary education and for inclusive education. Individual education plans (IOP1 and IOP2) are being developed for children in need. Schools don't have specialised education materials and resources for children with disabilities. Teachers regularly attend training on inclusive education, both externally and internally organised in the schools. Lack of external, out-of-school support services and resources are main challenges for better integration of children with disabilities.

All schools in Leposavić municipality offer extracurricular activities after school hours, including sports clubs, arts programs, and cultural groups. These activities promote physical development, socialization, and teamwork, contributing to students' overall well-being. Rural schools receive special attention through environmental initiatives, schoolyard maintenance, and sports tournaments to encourage broader participation. Extracurricular programs also provide opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and explore personal interests. The municipality support these activities by allocating resources and organizing community events, ensuring students have access to diverse and enriching experiences outside the classroom.

Schools in Gnjilane region offer extracurricular activities for development of skills, physical and mental health, and wellbeing of children. To this end, school in Šilovo maintain visual arts section, theatre, folklore group and sports section. Only schools in Parteš, Koretište and Pasjane have sports halls unlike other schools in rural areas and schools located in the town of Gnjilane. Children have access to cultural programs in cultural houses in Šilovo, Parteš and Pasjane. Children's participation in extracurricular activities is promoted in sport tournaments, cultural events and creative workshops.

4.3.2 Education Access and Participation

In Leposavić municipality, majority of children aged 3 to 5 years have access to kindergartenservices. There are geographical disparities in access, as urban and rural areas are not equally served. Special measures have been implemented to promote enrolment, including awareness campaigns and collaboration with local institutions. These efforts aim to raise awareness among parents about the benefits of early childhood education and encourage participation, even in marginalized communities. Investments in expanding facilities and maintaining high standards further enhance accessibility.

In Leposavić municipality, 100% of children are included in preparatory preschool education programs. Sufficient resources and qualified personnel ensure the effective implementation of these programs. Urban and rural areas alike benefit from equal access, supported by a transportation service organized by the municipality. This service addresses potential logistical barriers, ensuring that all children, regardless of location, can participate. The curriculum focuses on early learning foundations, social skills, and cognitive development, preparing children for primary school.

All children 3-5 years old (100%) in non-majority populated areas of Gnjilane region have access to early childhood education. There are kindergartens in Šilovo, Gornje Kusce, Koretište and Parteš. These facilities have sufficient space to accommodate all children in need, while some variations exist in their quality based on geographic location. All children in the areas populated with non-majority communities have access to preparatory pre-school education. These education facilities have sufficient qualified teaching staff. The access to pre-school education does not defer in urban and rural areas, and there is no obstacle for children in any settlement to attend pre-school education.

Approximately 30% of primary school children in Leposavić municipality travel more than 2 kilometres to reach their schools, with some commuting 10 kilometres or more, particularly in rural areas. To address transportation challenges, the municipality provides organized transport services, ensuring safe and reliable access to education. These services reduce barriers for children from remote areas, promoting equal opportunities for learning. Efforts to improve transportation infrastructure are ongoing, with a focus on maintaining safe and efficient routes.

30% of schoolchildren in the non-majority populated areas of Gnjilane region need to travel from their settlements to school for more than 2 kilometres. This is not necessarily a major obstacle given that the transport is regularly provided and functioning, except during the winter, when it may be interrupted due to weather conditions. Municipality provides transport services for children in the remote rural areas. Schools make efforts to ensure that all children have technical conditions to follow online lectures. 80% of children in this area need to travel to attend secondary education. It may considerably affect school attendance and

presence in case of unavailability of public transport which is funded by municipality. Apart from transport, municipality provides other incentives such as scholarships for excellent students.

One of the specific barriers faced by children from other communities in access to education is provision of textbooks by the schools. There is no information on any policies or initiatives to support children from other communities in accessing education. Joint cultural and artistic programs, and joint visits to cultural sites could be valuable resources for inclusion and overcoming barriers between children from different communities.

In Leposavić municipality, investments in school infrastructure, including classrooms, teaching materials, and sanitary conditions, have positively influenced attendance and participation rates, especially among minority communities. While most schools meet basic standards, approximately 10% require infrastructure improvements to enhance accessibility and learning conditions. Annual planning processes identify these deficiencies, and funding proposals are submitted to the municipality for inclusion in the following year's budget. The aim is to create inclusive and engaging learning environments, reduce disparities and ensure that all students have access to quality education. Efforts also focus on providing modern resources and adaptive learning spaces to support diverse student needs.

The quality of school infrastructure may have significant impact on school attendance in Gnjilane region. This specifically apply for the school in Gnjilane town located in private house. Children don't attend this school if the weather is cold due to poor heating conditions. 60% of school buildings require additional investment in infrastructure to improve access to education. Apart from access, the improvement is needed for the quality of education. To get assistance for improvement of infrastructure and quality of education schools cooperate with projects implemented by line ministries and NGOs.

Socio-economic factors, such as family income and parental education levels, impact participation in education within Leposavić municipality. While attendance rates remain high, children from low-income families often face challenges in extracurricular involvement. Scholarships and financial aid programs, although sporadic, help address these disparities. Civic education classes and teacher-led initiatives promote equality and inclusivity, fostering a sense of belonging among students. Civil society organizations play a crucial role in raising awareness and addressing socio-economic barriers through campaigns, teacher training, and peer support programs.

The socio-economic factors have impact on the access to education in Serbian language schools in Gnjilane region. Children from low-income families have less opportunities for purchasing school materials, uniforms, books, and other resources, what also reflects on their participation in extracurricular activities. The support provided to these children include scholarships and assistance from humanitarian organisations. Civil society organisations also provide free school materials, such as books, supplies and computers, and contribute to alleviate socio-economic inequalities. Free textbooks are provided for children who are beneficiaries of social assistance, children with disabilities, and families with three or more children. Financial support cover scholarships programs, free meals in schools, and subsidized transportation costs.

4.3.3 Learning and quality skills

In Leposavić municipality, 98% of children in grades 2 and 3 achieve minimum proficiency in reading, while 95% meet the required standards in mathematics. There is no disparity between rural and urban schools, as all institutions follow aligned curricula and monitoring systems. Teachers receive additional training to support the implementation of adapted programs, ensuring that all students can meet these minimum standards. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms are used to track progress and identify areas for improvement, providing targeted support where necessary.

At the end of primary education in 2024, 99% of students demonstrated satisfactory proficiency in reading, and 98% achieved similar results in mathematics. Gender and socio-economic factors do not significantly affect outcomes, indicating equitable access to quality education across different groups. For students following individualized education programs (IOP 1 and IOP 2), their progress is carefully documented and shared with secondary schools to ensure continuity in support. The curriculum prioritizes literacy and numeracy, complemented by ongoing teacher training and resource development. These measures aim to sustain and improve learning outcomes for all students, including those with special needs.

Based on the information from the schools in Gnjilane region, 80% of children in grades 2 and 3 achieve minimal level of literacy skills, while 60% of children achieve minimal level in numeracy skills. There is no difference in the attainments of children residing in rural and urban areas. Schools organise subsidiary and catch-up classes for children with lower attainments and children from marginalised communities. 90% of children acquire minimally required literacy skills and 80% minimal requirement in numeracy skills upon completion of the primary school. Due to language barrier, children from Roma community show lower results. At the end of school year, schools make analyses of results of children and their correlation with overall achievements of students.

The completion rate of primary education is 98% of enrolled children. School dropout or non-completion occurs with children from Roma community, mainly due to frequent change of residence place and early marriages. To prevent school dropout, schools make efforts to raise awareness with parents and children from marginalised groups on importance of education. Information on completion rate were not available for the secondary schools. As incentives for completion of secondary education, children have opportunities to gain scholarships, free transportation and increased diversity of educational profiles offered.

90% of children are developmentally on track in terms health, learning and psychological wellbeing. Yet, there is certain difference in the overall developmental level of children from Roma community. All children up to 5 years old have access to kindergartens, while cooperation between education, health and psychosocial services providers ensures holistic approach to child development.

Early learning programs and resources are available in schools in Leposavić municipality, ensuring access for children under 5 years old. However, it also depends on external programs, donor support, and special projects outside the formal education system. Steps to improve access to quality early learning, particularly in rural and marginalized areas, involve long-term planning and partnerships with NGOs. Monitoring mechanisms track the implementation and impact of these programs to ensure children achieve developmental milestones.

In Gnjilane region, there is no inequality in access to early childhood education resources between different regions or minority groups. The major actions for improved access and quality of early childhood education in rural and marginalised communities include investment in facilities, subsidies and financial assistance, and creating partnerships with local community. The monitoring of the early education service provision is carried out through self-evaluation and external evaluation activities.

All teachers in Lepsavić municipality are trained and prepared to deliver quality education in reading and mathematics. Professional development programs ensure teachers' update with new methodologies and teaching techniques. However, the intensive workload limits the time available for additional remedial lessons. Despite these challenges, teachers employ creative approaches to support students, including group work, peer tutoring, and individualized lesson plans. Continuous assessment and feedback systems are in place to monitor teaching effectiveness and address gaps, maintaining quality standards of education delivery across all schools.

In Gnjilane region, all teachers in lower grades of primary schools and in preschool education are sufficiently qualified. They are obliged to attend one professional education seminar and one congress on annual basis. The challenges teachers face with include students' low baseline knowledge in literacy and mathematics, attention and motivation, and language barrier for Roma children attending classes in Serbian or Albanian.

Schools in Lepsavić municipality provide comprehensive support services for children with learning difficulties, including remedial classes and individualized education plans. Specialized staff work closely with teachers and parents to address the specific needs of these students. Lack of consistent parental support is major challenge, which can affect attendance and participation in supplementary programs. To overcome this, schools organize parent-teacher meetings, workshops, and awareness campaigns to build stronger partnerships.

In Gnjilane region, all schools are obliged to provide additional support for children with learning difficulties including individual education plan, catch up classes, subsidiary education, and exams. There are no specialised schools or teachers qualified to provide special education for children with learning difficulties. To support children with learning disabilities, schools work with parents and professionals to develop individual education plans, and further cooperates with special education facilities.

4.3.4 Culture and leisure

In the municipality of Lepsavić, cultural programs include commemorations of UN and international days addressing issues such as violence, tolerance, ecology, and inclusion. Major events organised annually celebrate School Day, Saint Sava Day, Lepsavić Municipality Day, and others (8 in total). In rural settlement Sočanica, additional cultural activities include at least 5 film screenings and three theatre performances annually. Programs are supported by NGOs, local institutions, and cultural organizations, ensuring participation from all communities. Ongoing collaborations with arts academies and universities also bring expert-led workshops and performances to inspire young talents.

Approximately 30% of children in Lepsavić municipality participate in cultural programs such as arts, dance, and music. Schools and municipality cover expenses for these

activities, including transportation and refreshments. Efforts to increase participation include promoting activities during regular and extracurricular hours, showcasing the benefits of cultural engagement, and creating inclusive opportunities for all children. Cultural programs are designed not only to entertain but also to educate children about heritage and values, equipping them with creative skills and confidence.

There are several cultural and leisure programs for non-majority children in Gnjilane region including folklore groups and cultural-artistic ensembles as well as sports associations. Some of them are Folklore School Šilovo, Folklore Ensemble "Manasije Conić" Gornje Kusce, Folklore Ensemble "Pasjanka", Folklore Ensemble "Kosovka Devojka" in Parteš, Folklore Ensemble "Stojan Stošić" in Koretište, and Ethno-Group "Kos" in Šilovo. Almost all function in cultural centers in rural areas, unlike in the city of Gnjilane where there are no such programs. Twice a year children have access to theatre plays, while once a year there is visual arts exhibition in the school. Most of the cultural programs are funded by municipality, while some programs are supported by schools and NGOs.

According to school, 20% of children participate in the cultural programs such as music, dance, and visual arts. There are no differences in the level of participation based on the geographic area of residence or socio-economic status.

Schools in Leposavić offer 8 permanent extracurricular sections, including cultural, creative, artistic, and sports activities. Teachers identify student interests during regular classes and recommend extracurricular programs to enhance skill development and participation.

Schools in Šilovo offer a diverse range of extracurricular activities, including folklore, literature, drama, sports, and visual arts. These opportunities are accessible to students in both rural and urban areas. Schools receive support through various channels including NGO and donor funding, teacher training, partnerships with local communities and organizations. 40% of children are included in extracurricular activities, with majority girls showing interest for them compared to boys.

Sports programs in Leposavić municipality include football, volleyball, basketball, handball, and chess, with participation open to both boys and girls. Activities are conducted through school competitions and local clubs, ensuring accessibility.

More than 80% of children in Leposavić municipality participate in sports programs, reflecting widespread interest and accessibility. Although no specific programs exist for children with disabilities, adapted programs for those following IOP 1 and 2 are included. Schools work with parents and sports organizations to increase inclusion and address barriers, ensuring all children benefit from physical activities that support their growth and development.

Children in Gnjilane region have opportunities for sports programs and activities with local football schools in Šilovo, Gnjilane, Kmetovac and Gornji Livoč. Their capacity is sufficient to accommodate all interested attendees. However, training activities are held only in Šilovo where adequate infrastructure is in place.

Based on available information, up to 20% of children in the area participate in sport activities. One of the obstacles for increased participation is travel costs for children living out

of the places where sport infrastructure exist. There are no opportunities for children with disabilities to engage in sport activities.

Disadvantaged children in Leposavić municipality receive logistical support, including transportation and resources, to participate in cultural and leisure activities.

According to the school in Šilovo, Roma children have access to all cultural activities organised in the schools they attend. They participate in all cultural events organised to mark important dates. School in Šilovo organised one theatre play in Roma language.

Leposavić municipality features a variety of infrastructure for leisure, including 6 school sports halls, 3 football fields, and dedicated playgrounds. Urban areas face maintenance challenges, but schools and municipalities plan annual improvements. NGOs occasionally invest in infrastructure upgrades, ensuring facilities are safe and accessible.

In Gnjlane municipality, schools in Šilovo, Gornje Kusce and Kmetovac have outdoor sport playgrounds, but don't have indoor sports hall. Schools in Gornji Livoč and Gnjlane town don't have outdoor playgrounds, while schools in Parteš and Pasjane have indoor sport halls.

4.4 Participation and Civil Rights

4.4.1 Child Participation

In the municipality of Leposavić, all schools have established active school parliaments to encourage student participation in decision-making processes. These parliaments are supported by teachers assigned to facilitate their operations, ensuring guidance and oversight. Each school parliament follows an annual work plan, which can be adjusted during regular meetings. Meetings occur at least once a month and more frequently if urgent issues arise. Approximately 95% of school parliaments meet consistently, reflecting their commitment to student representation and involvement in school activities.

These parliaments create a structured platform for students to voice their opinions, propose initiatives, and address school-related issues. Topics discussed include school improvement projects, extracurricular activities, and initiatives to promote inclusivity and tolerance.

The school parliaments also collaborate with parent councils and local organizations to implement projects that benefit the wider school community. Activities often include organizing cultural events, awareness campaigns, and charity drives, fostering a sense of social responsibility among students.

Schools aim to strengthen parliaments further by increasing student engagement and providing additional resources for their activities.

Efforts are underway to expand the roles of school parliaments, enabling them to participate in municipal youth councils and regional student forums. These initiatives seek to build connections between schools and local governance structures, giving students a voice in broader community issues.

All schools in the areas populated with non-majority communities in Gnjilane region have established students' parliaments. The information on activities of these establishments is available for primary school in Šilovo, and Grammar School in Gnjilane. The main challenge they face with is lack of financial resources for activities.

No information was available on whether the local institutions maintain feedback mechanisms for participation of children in decision making processes. The only known existing feedback mechanisms for children are in schools, they are available online and in-person.

To raise awareness of children about the possibilities and options for using feedback mechanisms, schools promote their involvement in the school parliament, and setting up the boxes for proposals and suggestions in schools.

Children in Leposavić municipality are engaged in decision-making processes at the school level through student parliaments and peer teams. These platforms allow students to voice their opinions on matters related to education. Meetings are organized regularly to discuss important topics, and feedback is shared with school administrations. However, direct engagement with local authorities is limited, and most consultations occur indirectly through schools. There are no established forums for consistent dialogue between children and decision-makers. Efforts to create such forums could strengthen children's role in shaping policies that affect them.

School in Šilovo have children represented in the School Board and Parents Council. Information for other institutions were not available. Local authorities don't maintain forums, mechanisms and practices for consultations with children, and integration of their views in policies and projects. The information they need for planning and programming are taken directly from schools and health facilities.

In Leposavić, initiatives aimed at including marginalized groups, such as children with special needs, are accessible and supported by the municipality. An interdepartmental committee monitors the progress of these students and provides necessary resources, including teaching assistant and pedagogical assistants, to ensure their inclusion. Schools work closely with families to identify needs and implement individualized support plans. Financial and logistical assistance is provided to enable participation in cultural, educational, and extracurricular programs.

In Gnjilane municipality, children from Roma community have access to child participation mechanisms in school in Šilovo. They are encouraged to participate and share their views on community issues in school parliaments, in public events and creative workshops. There is no information on how municipalities monitor and track participation of children from minority and marginalised groups or whether they provide any financial or logistic support to these children to influence decision making processes that concern them.

In Leposavić, public awareness about children's rights to participation is primarily promoted through NGOs, which develop and implement programs based on available funding. These initiatives include workshops, campaigns, and training sessions designed to inform children and their families about their rights and the importance of participation. Programs are inclusive, featuring materials in minority languages and highlighting diverse cultural

perspectives. However, there are no permanent awareness programs led by the municipality, leaving a gap in consistent advocacy for child participation rights. Expanding these efforts through partnerships and sustained funding could enhance awareness and engagement among children and their families.

Regarding the awareness raising activities on the importance of child participation, the school in Šilovo reported activities in the children's week organised in the framework of celebrating the Child Right Convention. Children from minority communities also take part in these activities. Information was not available for other schools in the region.

4.4.2 Civil and Political Freedoms

Approximately 10% of children and adolescents in Leposavić municipality actively volunteer in civil society organizations. Activities include participation in Red Cross programs, Earth Day events, sports tournaments, and environmental initiatives. NGOs play a critical role in providing targeted programs that are fully adapted to children's needs. Schools and municipalities collaborate with NGOs to ensure children have access to resources such as transportation and facilities, enabling their involvement without financial barriers. These efforts highlight the importance of extracurricular engagement in promoting social responsibility and personal development among youth.

In Gnjilane region, the estimate is that up to 5% of children and adolescents participate in the work of civil society organisations. The activities in which they are involved include training on project cycle, educational workshops, and arts. Information on the programs that promote youth volunteering were not available.

In Leposavić, child participation in local policy planning remains limited, mainly due to the lack of municipal structures designed to facilitate consistent child consultations. While schools provide some opportunities for students to share opinions, these mechanisms rarely influence broader local governance decisions. Occasional surveys by local authorities seek input from children, but the absence of structured forums hinders systematic participation and expression of views. Developing platforms for regular dialogue between children and policymakers could strengthen civic engagement and empower youth to contribute meaningfully to local development processes.

Regarding the local policy planning initiatives that include consultation with children, its noteworthy that some activities were implemented by the Office for Youth of Gnjilane, which involved children in some activities such as workshops, and preparation for enrolment in college.

The methods applied for consultations with children include mainly workshops, while there are no specific protocols developed by local institutions to regulate consultative processes and children voices to be heard in them. There are no feedback and reporting mechanisms in place for that purpose or specific arrangements for expression of views of children from marginalised groups.

In Leposavić, awareness about child civil freedoms and participation rights is largely promoted through school-based civic education programs and the efforts of class teachers. Formal awareness campaigns, however, are limited and depend on NGO initiatives. Training programs focus on empowering students with knowledge about their rights and encouraging active participation in school governance and civil society.

In Leposavić, schools and NGOs provide logistical support, such as transportation and access to facilities, to ensure that children can participate in civil society activities. Partnerships with regional organizations enable the implementation of inclusive programs, and available resources are distributed equitably to promote access for all children. Reports on school activities emphasize transparency and encourage greater engagement from students and families.

Marginalized children, including those from minority groups, are encouraged to participate in civil society activities through culturally sensitive and inclusive programs.

In Gnjilane, the awareness raising activities on civil and political freedoms of children are mainly done self-initiatively or through civil society organisations. There is no information on how frequently these programs are implemented and are they adapted to different age groups and communities, and what percentage of schools and community centers organize or participate in awareness programs.

Children from marginalised communities are mainly involved in awareness raising activities on civil freedoms in schools. No information was available on whether materials and sessions on child participation are tailored to be culturally sensitive and inclusive, or how does the municipality monitor the participation rates of children from minority and marginalized communities in such activities.

4.5 Poverty

4.5.1 Social Protection System

There are 186 socio-economically vulnerable families with children which are beneficiaries of social assistance scheme in Zubin Potok municipality. The CSW does not have data on the exact number of children living in these families. These families receive financial allowance worth between 90 and 165 EUR. Regarding the support programs, children from these families are entitled to additional support including provision of textbooks and student meals free of charge, one-time financial assistance, free of charge stay in preschool facility, recreational trips, school trips and excursions. The most frequent obstacles for these families to improve socio-economic status are usually the same that brought them in the vulnerable situation such as illness of family members, disability, substance abuse/addiction, low education level, social deprivation, unemployment, etc.

Approximately 15% of children in the municipality of Ranilug belong to low-income families, with an average monthly income of about 200 euros. Social assistance programs are currently available, while challenges for improvement of their socio-economic status include lack of education and poor health among families. Monitoring is conducted monthly through direct communication with residents to assess needs and support interventions.

505 children in the municipality Novo Brdo live in low-income or no-income families. These families receive social assistance benefits including allowances for children up to 5 years old and child allowances for children up to 18 years. Major challenges preventing improvement of their socioeconomic status include low levels of education, disabilities, and issues such as addiction.

Low-income families with children have access to support programs including social assistance to the most socially vulnerable population, which provides one-time financial assistance based on the vulnerability level, health status, etc. There is a program of continuous financial social assistance implemented through the CSW.

The municipality Ranilug provides social assistance, free textbooks, and clothing support as part of its community programs for low-income families. Monthly outreach programs ensure eligible families receive aid, including food, shoes, and firewood, facilitated in partnerships with organizations and local visits. Mechanisms are in place to promote two-way communication and ensure effective service delivery.

There are no formally established feedback mechanisms in place to improve information and support for low-income families. Most of the feedback is received in direct contact with beneficiaries. It is evident that information does not reach everyone in need and that information flow should be improved. This applies especially in rural areas with no Internet connection, and access to institutions is difficult for the population there.

4.5.2 Child poverty and material deprivation

The CSW in Zubin Potok does not have data on the percentage of children living in poverty in inadequate housing. Poor housing affects all aspects of the child development and well-being. It specifically affects children living in rural settlements, where their position is even more vulnerable in terms of social exclusion, access to education, health care, culture, and social welfare services.

The main challenges in providing adequate housing for low-income families include small number of housing units built for these families, ensuring continuity in the distribution of funds for the payment of the lease of the apartment, forced eviction, and insufficient financial means to provide land and building materials.

About 10% of children in Ranilug live in poor housing conditions, which negatively impact their well-being and school performance. Programs and organizations assist with building houses, providing materials, and kitchen elements. Challenges include extensive documentation requirements for assistance programs, prompting the municipality to seek additional organizational support to address housing stability issues.

5. Cross Cutting Issues

Housing stability remains a challenge for children in poverty in Novo Brdo. Municipality and CSW collaborate in finding donor support for building or renovating homes. Poor housing conditions negatively impact children's physical and psychological development, as well as their health and educational outcomes. Limited property ownership further complicates efforts to provide stable housing, as many families lack property documents due to generational inheritance disputes. Maintenance costs for houses are also significant barrier for low-income families.

5.1 Early childhood education

Access to early childhood education remains challenge for children residing in some rural areas. While the overall coverage of children in non-majority communities is higher than average in Kosovo, early education programs are not introduced in villages surrounding urban settlements in municipalities Zvečan, Zubin Potok and Leposavić. Combined with other existential conditions, it largely contributes to migrations of entire families from these settlements. Consequently, these children don't have equal start in regular education compared with their peers in urban parts of municipalities. The situation is much better in non-majority villages and settlements in Gnjilane region, where all children have access to early education programs in kindergartens.

5.2 Gender

Traditional perception of gender roles and negative social norms are still present with all communities in Kosovo. They contribute to unequal power relations between women and men and create cultural and structural barriers for women and girls to equally participate in all aspects of life. This makes them more vulnerable to become victims of domestic and partner violence. Girls and boys from non-majority communities in Kosovo have equal access to early, pre-school, primary and secondary education. The same applies for access to health care and social protection services, while more pro-active efforts are needed to provide reproductive health counselling services for girls in adolescent age. While considerable progress could be observed in last several years, early marriage practices are still present in some communities, affecting in most cases girls as intersectional problem, violating their rights to private life, right to education (school dropout), and right to be protected from violence and abuse.

5.3 Disability

Children with disabilities remain the most discriminated in many aspects, before all, in access to education, quality health care and social protection services. Inclusive education is only introduced as a concept in laws and policies, however its implementation in practice requires much more efforts of all stakeholders. Investment is needed for infrastructure adaptation, employment and training of teachers and supporting staff. Insufficient number of teaching assistants and personal assistants results with most children with disabilities remaining without access to this vital service for their participation in education and creates additional burden on their parents. With closure of Serbian institutions in northern municipalities, provision of these services is additionally affected in these areas. They played critical role in assessments and assigning personal and teaching assistants and other entitlements for children with disabilities and their families. Most children with disabilities attend special education schools which are yet to be transformed into resource centers and provide subsidiary services to children

with disabilities included in regular schools. Sectoral NGOs such as “Podrži me” provide assistance to these children and their families, however in limited capacity and largely depending on access to fundraising opportunities.

5.4 Adolescents

Adolescents remain in socioeconomically disadvantaged position due to lack of opportunities for employment and limited access to informal education what increase their vulnerability to exploitation. While education access has improved, disparities persist for adolescents from marginalized communities, such as Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians. They often face significant barriers to quality education, including limited access to resources and discrimination. Early marriage and unwanted teenage pregnancy remain concerns, particularly among girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. These issues can have severe consequences for girls’ education, health, and overall well-being. High youth unemployment rates can lead to migrations, and increased vulnerability to crime and substance abuse. Access to quality mental health services for adolescents remains limited, hindering their ability to cope with stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.

Vibrant youth culture and strong interest in arts, music, and sports, requires additional investments in these fields. For that purpose, more support should be provided to youth organizations and NGOs actively working to empower young people and address their needs. Additional efforts are needed to improve the quality of education and increase access to vocational training, non-formal and higher education. To this end, support from international organizations and donor agencies to address youth-related issues could be utilised at larger scale. Empowering adolescents through education, skills development, and participation in decision-making processes is crucial, while reducing poverty and inequality is essential to improve their lives. Addressing gender disparities in education, employment, and decision-making is crucial for the empowerment of adolescent girls.

5.5 Environment and climate change

The environmental issues were not high in the agenda of stakeholders in non-majority populated areas. These communities remained almost excluded from the energy transition processes and environment protection programs apart from sporadic actions of civil society organisations. Due to political developments in northern Kosovo, the regional land-fill constructed with support of EU still waits for the official opening and use. Additional problem is with public utility companies which were supported by recently closed Serbia run institutions. The positive development is opening of the office of Kosovo Energy Efficiency Agency in North Mitrovica, where citizens may apply for subsidies for energy efficiency of individual households. This year was one of the warmest since the measurement of temperature started, what seriously affected river Ibar, which almost droughted in upper part of the flow. As in many other aspects, children are more vulnerable in the situations of environmental degradation and climate change.

5.6 Risks and humanitarian action

In the end of November this year, an explosive device was set in the Ibar – Lepenac water supply pipeline, and heavily damaged this facility which is vital for water supply in several municipalities in Mitrovica and Pristina regions and cooling the electric power production facility of Kosovo Electric Corporation (KEK) in Obilić. It caused temporary interruption of water

supply in North Mitrovica, Zvečan, and several other settlements. During the one-week period after explosion, local water supply companies provided citizens with access to potable water. The damage was fixed in relatively short period and water supply is back to normal.

6. Conclusions

This year assessment of child rights in non-majority communities based on the monitoring framework developed by Domovik integrating UNICEF ECA framework, provided even more in-depth analyses of the state of the child rights in target areas populated with these communities. The tool developed by Domovik was enriched with very comprehensive questionnaires for most indicators, what significantly empowered data collection process. The approach this year enabled high-quality comparative analyses of the situation of children residing in urban and rural areas in northern and southeastern parts of Kosovo. Findings integrated in the report provide useful guidelines for all relevant stakeholders in policy and program planning and implementation to ensure more targeted interventions in the areas of child rights where support is needed.

Overall, children residing in non-majority populated areas of Kosovo have access to basic services in the areas of health and nutrition, family environment and social protection, education, and participation and civil rights. However, their quality requires improvement in some settlements, and some inexistent or unavailable services need to be introduced. This particularly refer to promotion of foster care services in the field of alternative care for children without parental care in all settlements covered with this assessment. In addition, the shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence in Zubin Potok needs to be urgently reopened and functionalised given that more than 60,000 population living in northern Kosovo were left without this important protection service, guaranteed by the European Convention on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), integrated in the Kosovo Constitution in 2020.

Additional efforts and investment are needed for further promotion of breastfeeding of infants and children in the first two years of life, having in mind its importance for child development and wellbeing. Low-income families with children shall be additionally supported to provide adequate quantity and nutritive quality of food for children in need, both in northern Kosovo municipalities and Gnjilane region. Urgent investment in school infrastructure in Gnjilane region is needed, especially for provision of heating, and construction of indoor and outdoor sport facilities. These schools also need support for establishment of computer labs and digital tools for education. Employment of teachers in schools where missing and capacity building of teaching staff should be also priority for educational stakeholders. Additional and more diverse opportunities for extracurricular activities, culture and leisure, shall be provided for children in all areas populated with non-majority communities.





